

# **Guidelines for Public Speaking**

**by Elisabeth Gareis**

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## Introduction

Of all the skills employers desire in employees, oral communication skills rank highest. Survey after survey reports that oral communication skills are considered even more important than writing and math skills, as well as a number of other job-related qualities, such as initiative, technical competence, and organizational abilities (Adler & Towne, 1996; Hagge-Greenberg, 1979; Waner, 1995).

Oral communication encompasses a variety of genres: conversations, interviews, discussions, debates, and negotiations, to name just a few. Many of these speech events take place in fairly nonthreatening settings, with interactions occurring either between two people or within small groups. While feelings of communication anxiety do occur in these settings, they are usually infrequent and of minor proportions. Public speaking is a different matter: Here the speaker shares his or her views with a larger audience and often experiences apprehension and nervousness before and during the presentation.

However, there are times in almost everybody's life when public speaking is required. Occasions can be as informal and brief as offering a toast at a party or as formal and involved as delivering a speech at a graduation ceremony. Many careers are based on a certain amount of public speaking. Take teachers, trial lawyers, politicians, broadcast journalists, or preachers, for example. For all of them, public speaking is an integral part of daily life. Likewise, people in leadership positions are routinely asked to share their views or provide guidance in larger settings. But even for those whose careers don't call for public speaking, opportunities for speaking in front of audiences abound. There are individual or group presentations in a classroom setting, for example, contributions during a town meeting, or reports as members of a committee in school, at work, or in the community.

In short, almost everybody sooner or later has to speak in public. Try not to see the task as unpleasant. Instead, try to see it as a chance to have an impact or to improve yourself. The earlier you start gaining experience and honing your skills, the better. There are many techniques and "tricks of the trade" that can help you become an effective and confident speaker.

## Preparing Your Presentation

### Considering Your Audience

The most important aspect of public speaking is the audience. At all times during the process of preparing and delivering a speech, we need to keep in mind that we are speaking to an audience and not just to ourselves. Whether the goal is to entertain, to inform, or to persuade, we should try to reach our listeners and tailor the speech to them.

To do this effectively, engage the audience in a dialogue in which the audience members interact mentally with your ideas. For this purpose, choose a topic, examples, and language appropriate to your listeners.

## **Key Points**

### Getting to Know Your Audience

- What are the age range and educational background of your audience? Marital status? Children? Gender and sexual orientation? Occupations?
- What do you know about their ethnic diversity? Languages represented? Group affiliations? Regional characteristics?
- Do you know something about their interests? Values? Political views? Religious beliefs?
- What do the audience members know? What do they want to know? What are their reasons for listening?
- What is the relationship between time of delivery and expected states of mind (e.g., hunger before lunch, tiredness in the evening), between the physical environment and its effect on the audience (e.g., lighting, temperature, seating arrangements, outside noise), between occasion and emotional climate? Are there reactions to previous speakers?

If you don't know who will be in your audience, the answers to these questions will have to be educated guesses. If your audience is predetermined, however, you may want to gather information through surveys or other research and tailor your speech to the exact needs and interests of your listeners. Your efforts will be rewarded by the feedback you receive for a presentation that is interesting and sensitive to your audience.

### Choosing a Topic

When speeches are given in political or professional contexts, speakers focus on their areas of expertise. They may have some freedom in choosing a topic, but the broader theme is predefined. An environmental activist at a political rally, for example, is expected to talk about environmental issues, and a sales representative of a computer software company will probably discuss software.

Students in public speaking classes generally have more freedom in selecting their speech topics. In most cases, limits are set only by sensitivity considerations or taboos, usually eliminating such themes as sex, religious proselytizing, and extremist political persuasions. Sometimes, this freedom of choice makes it difficult to select a topic. If you are undecided, consider the following techniques.

## **Key Points**

### How to Search for a Speech Topic

- Skim headlines in newspapers for current events.
- Check television schedules for interesting news programs or documentaries.
- Surf the internet.
- Think about people (individuals or groups), places (local, national, or international), objects (natural or human-made), events (personal or public), processes (how something is done or made), concepts (theories, complex ideas), and controversial issues.
- Make an inventory of your own interests, experiences, and classes you have taken.
- List things you are curious about and skills you have always wanted to learn.

Write down everything of interest to you. Here is an example of what a list of search results might look like. Do you find any of the topics interesting? Do they make you think of other possibilities?

- The Geological Features of Yellowstone National Park
- The Safety of Internet Sales
- Differences Between American and British English
- Extreme Skiing
- Chocolate and Fair Trade
- A Day in the Life of a Homeless Person
- African-American Travel to Africa
- The Future of the Automobile
- Your Children's World: Will Polar Bears Survive?
- Table Manners in Chinese Culture
- "Once in a Blue Moon:" The Origin of Idioms
- The Music of Australian Aborigines
- Children and TV Advertisement

When you have brainstormed possible topics, go through the list and evaluate them.

## **Key Points**

### How to Select the Most Suitable Topic

1. Which topics stimulate your imagination the most? (In order to excite your audience, it is important that you be enthusiastic yourself.)
2. Which topics will be of greatest interest to the audience?

After you make your final selection, you need to assess whether you can cover the topic in the time allotted for your speech. If you have too much material, you need to narrow

your topic down in some way. For example, if you want to talk about the islands of Indonesia (there are more than 13,000!) and have only five minutes, you will not be able to include enough details to make your speech interesting. To make the topic more manageable, you could focus on the Spice Islands and their role in international trade, for example, or on the living conditions of orangutans in Borneo and Sumatra. In any case, it is much better to speak at a comfortable rate and flavor one's speech with examples and stories rather than hurry and attempt to cover too much material in too little time.

### **Warning**

Be careful with topics that have been covered extensively in the community or in the media (e.g., the death penalty, abortion, smoking). Even if you feel strongly about these topics, your audience will most likely be familiar with them. To be truly stimulating, your speech should explore unusual material and contribute significant knowledge. It is difficult to present unusual and significant information on widely covered topics.

### Determining Your Purpose

To fine-tune your focus before you start researching your topic, determine the general and specific purpose as well as the central idea of your speech. The general purpose of a speech usually is to entertain, to inform, or to persuade; the specific purpose describes exactly what a speaker wants to accomplish; and the central idea is the core of your message. Here is an example.

Topic:	Video Editing on Home Computer
General Purpose:	To inform
Specific Purpose:	To inform my audience about the processes involved in editing videos on one's home computer and to introduce commonly used software
Central Idea:	Video editing skills are easy to acquire.

### Researching Your Topic

After you have selected a topic and determined your specific purpose, you should research it thoroughly. Your audience will expect comprehensive and up-to-date coverage. There are many sources for information.

### **Key Points**

#### Sources for Conducting Research

- Books
- Encyclopedias
- Almanacs
- Atlases

- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Professional Journals
- Audiorecordings
- Videos and Films
- Internet
- Electronic Databases
- Lectures
- Interviews
- Surveys

To ensure the validity of your material, look for authoritative sources that will be credible to your listeners. When in doubt, try to find several sources that agree on the point under contention.

There are many ways to record the information you find: You can copy exact quotes, you can paraphrase passages, or you can summarize the contents. Notes can be kept on index cards, on regular paper, or in computer files. Select whichever method suits you best. No matter what you do, however, make sure you note exact references for your material. Here is an example of a source card for a speech on word and phrase origins. The card contains bibliographic information and a quote from the source.

#### Sample Source Card

Source: Morris, W., & Morris, M. (1977). *Morris dictionary of word and phrase origins*. New York: Harper & Row.

Page: p. 70

Quote: “*Blue-chip stock* comes from the chips used in gambling games like poker. These chips or counters range in value from red (cheapest) through white to blue (most valuable—usually worth ten times the red). So a *blue-chip stock* is one likely to give the greatest return on an investment.”

#### Selecting Support Material

Research furnishes you with information about your topic and can lead you to suitable support materials. These materials are essential for effective speech-making because they arouse interest, provide substance, and emphasize important ideas. Here is a list of typical kinds of support material.

## Key Points

Support Material	Subcategory	Example
Facts	Definition	A black hole is a celestial object with a gravitational field so strong that light cannot escape from it.
	Description	In Europe, temperature is measured in degrees Celsius (centigrade).
Statistics	Enumeration	Our college has 3,000 full-time and 5,000 part-time students.
	Means	The average family income in this town is \$55,000 per year.
	Percentages	Water covers about 74% of the earth's surface.
	Ratios	In the gym, women were outnumbered 3:1.
Testimony	Expert	Prof. Jones gave the following explanation: "... "
	Lay	As one of my friends explained: "..."
Examples	Factual	Different nesting behaviors of birds.
	Hypothetical	Imagining life in the next century.
	Brief	The name of a famous actress who had a child after age 40.
	Extended	A personal account of a trip to Brazil.
Humor		A funny personal anecdote about a travel mishap.
Analogies	Literal	Comparing the health care system of in the United States and Canada.
	Figurative	Comparing urban sprawl to cancer.
Quotations		Charlie Chaplin once said: "The saddest thing I can imagine is to get used to luxury." (Daintith, et al., 1989, p. 342)

Support materials not only make your speech colorful, they also give your listeners a reason to accept your conclusions. Every major point in your speech should therefore be accompanied by one or more supporting materials. While supporting materials are at the core of an interesting speech, they can be used ineffectively and unwisely.

### **Warning**

- Be selective. Don't overwhelm your audience.
- Use only reliable facts and statistics.
- Don't confuse your audience with too many numbers. Round off numbers when possible.
- Use visuals to make statistics more understandable.
- Humor should be relevant to the speech topic and sensitive to the audience. Don't poke fun at people; humor can easily give offense. Humor is most suitable for entertaining speeches. The speaker needs to be comfortable with the audience to inject humor into a speech.

### **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

When choosing support materials, consider the background of the audience. Some concepts and examples are more common in some cultures than in others. Make sure to choose support materials with which the audience is familiar.

### Organizing Your Speech

Once you have researched your topic and collected support materials, the first part of your speech preparation is completed. Now, it is time to organize your ideas. The most common and versatile pattern is the division into introduction, body, and conclusion.

Body. You may be tempted to plan the introduction first. The easiest way to organize a speech, however, is to start with the body. Look at your material and divide it into major points. In general, the fewer main points you have, the better. A relatively small number of main points makes your speech more translucent and memorable for the audience. A short speech of five minutes, for example, should not have more than three or four main points.

The next step is to arrange your main points within the body. For this purpose, you need to consider the general content of your main points. Depending on this content, your speech will probably lend itself to one of the following traditional organization patterns.

## Key Points

Organization Pattern	Speech Content	Example
Spatial	places or locations	Tour of Manhattan A. Downtown B. Midtown C. Uptown
Chronological	sequence of events or procedures	The Vietnam War A. 1941–1956: Early Conflicts B. 1956–1961: Vietcong Guerrilla Campaigns C. 1961–1975: U.S. Involvement
Topical	series of loosely connected topics	Online Communication A. E-mail B. Chat C. Discussion List
Causal	causes and effects	Rainforest Clearcutting A. Causes: Scarcity of Farmland, Timber Trade B. Effects: Erosion, Habitat Loss, Loss of Plant Diversity
Pro/Con	arguments for and against an issue	Luxury Cars A. Pros: Comfort, Safety, Prestige B. Cons: Price, Mileage, Possible Theft
Problem/Solution	problem and suggested solutions	Nearsightedness A. Problem: Reduced Vision B. Solutions: Eyeglasses, Contact Lenses, Laser Surgery
Comparison/Contrast	similarities and differences	Cow Milk vs. Soy Milk A. Similarity: Protein, Versatility B. Difference: Digestion, Additives, Environmental Impact

After you have determined the general organizational pattern of your speech, you can create a more detailed outline. In most cases, you will have to select subpoints to elaborate on each major point. You will also have to decide in which order the main points and subpoints should appear (e.g., from least important to most important, from simplest to most complex, etc.). A detailed body outline with main points and subpoints for the Spatial Organization speech above might look like this.

### Sample Body Outline

Title: Tour of Manhattan

#### A. Downtown

1. Lower Manhattan
  - a. Battery Park and the Statue of Liberty
  - b. Wall Street
2. Chinatown
3. Greenwich Village

#### B. Midtown

1. Empire State Building
2. Central Park

#### C. Uptown

1. Museums
  - a. Museum of Natural History
  - b. Metropolitan Museum
  - c. Guggenheim Museum
2. Harlem
3. Columbia University

Determining the content of the body will help you plan an effective introduction and conclusion for your speech. The body is best done first so that it can provide an anchor for the beginning and ending of your presentation.

Introduction. One of the most important parts of a speech is the introduction. The introduction should function as an attention-getter, create interest, motivate the audience to listen, establish your credibility, and give a preview of your main points. While there are different ways to accomplish these goals, the following pattern has been proven effective and may serve as a guideline.

## Key Points

### How to Create an Effective Introduction

#### 1. Gain the Attention of Your Audience

The first few sentences of your speech should serve to gain the attention of your listeners. Instead of saying “Today, I will speak about . . . “ or “My topic is . . .,” begin with one of the following openers.

- A rhetorical question (no answer expected)
- A participatory question (wait for answers from the audience or a show of hands)
- A colorful description
- A quotation (from a famous person or from a piece of literature or music—you can find quotations arranged by subject matter in quotation dictionaries in any library or bookstore)
- An audiovisual aid
- A suspenseful story
- A joke or funny anecdote
- A reference to a current event
- Surprising statistics

#### 2. Motivate Your Audience

Point out how the topic relates to your listeners and why it is relevant for them. This part of your introduction should answer the question: “Why should the audience listen?”

#### 3. Establish Your Credibility

Tell the audience what makes you knowledgeable on the subject. You may list classes you have taken, professional training, research projects, or personal experiences that make you a credible speaker. This part of your introduction should answer the question: “Why should the audience listen to *you*?”

#### 4. Preview Your Main Points

There is a saying: “Tell them what you are going to say; say it; then tell them what you said” (Jaffe, 1998, p. 172). To list your main points briefly before you move to the body of your speech (where you mention them again and elaborate on them) may seem like overkill to you; however, for your audience, this preview provides invaluable guidance that helps them focus on each point with more ease and follow your train of thought throughout the speech.

## Tips for Nonnative Speakers

Some cultures discourage individuals from recounting their own accomplishments. If you are from such a culture, the steps necessary for establishing credibility may seem boastful to you and be a cause for embarrassment. Don't omit this important step in introducing your speech, however; learning about your background and knowledgeability will help the audience connect with you and respect you as a speaker.

Conclusion. While the introduction leads into the body, the conclusion leads out of it and provides closure. Introductions and conclusions should be about equal in length and significantly shorter than the body. As a rule of thumb, the introduction and conclusion together should be about one fifth of the total speech (i.e., in a five-minute speech, the introduction and conclusion should be about half a minute each).

## Key Points

### How to Create an Effective Conclusion

#### 1. Signal the End

Pause slightly before you start your conclusion. Use a term like *to conclude* or *in conclusion* to show your listeners that you have completed the main part of your presentation.

#### 2. Review Your Main Points

Just as you listed your major points during the introduction, list them again in your conclusion. This will help your audience recall your major ideas and result in a sense of accomplishment.

#### 3. Refer to the Introduction

Referring to the introduction will provide your audience with a sense of closure. For example, if you started with a suspenseful story, provide the conclusion now. Or if you mentioned some surprising statistics, repeat them again and relate them to your overall presentation.

#### 4. End with an Impact

Use the last few sentences of your speech to ensure that you leave a good and memorable impression. The following are a few techniques useful in ending with an impact.

- Humor
- A thought-provoking question

- A quotation
- A call for action
- A connection to a larger context

A complete outline for a demonstration speech on flower arranging might look like this. Note the numbering for the divisions in the outline: Roman numerals (I, II, III) for introduction, body, and conclusion; capital letters (A, B, C, etc.) for main points; Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) for subpoints; and lower-case letters (a, b, c, etc.) for sub-subpoints.

### Sample Speech Outline

Title: Flower Arranging  
 General Purpose: To inform  
 Specific Purpose: To inform my audience how to arrange flowers in a vase  
 Central Idea: Arranging your own bouquets is a fun and inexpensive way to surprise a loved one.

#### I. Introduction

- A. Gaining Attention: Anecdote: I once received a dozen red roses from a secret admirer.
- B. Motivating the Audience: Arranging flowers is fun and affordable.
- C. Establishing Credibility: I took a flower arrangement course last year.
- D. Preview of Main Ideas: I will describe how to select flowers, use the equipment, and display the bouquet.

#### II. Body

- A. How to select flowers
- B. How to use the equipment
  - 1. Choosing a vase
  - 2. Anchoring the flowers
    - a. “Oasis” (spongelike cube)
    - b. “Frog” (platform with spikes)
- C. How to display the bouquet
  - 1. Cutting the flower stems
  - 2. Arranging the flowers in the vase
  - 3. Using fillers (e.g., the plant “Baby’s Breath”)

#### III. Conclusion

- A. Signaling the End: “to conclude”

- B. Review of Main Points: I have discussed how to select flowers, how to use the equipment, and how to display the bouquet.
- C. Reference to Introduction: I ended up marrying my secret admirer.
- D. Ending with Impact: Flowers don't need special occasions surprise a loved one with a bouquet tomorrow.

Copy and fill in the following form for your own speech.

### Speech Outline Form

Title:

General Purpose:

Specific Purpose:

Central Idea:

#### I. Introduction

- A. Gaining Attention:
- B. Motivating the Audience:
- C. Establishing Credibility:
- D. Preview of Main Ideas:

#### II. Body

A. (fill in subpoints and sub-subpoints)

B.

C.

#### III. Conclusion

- A. Signaling the End:
- B. Review of Main Points:
- C. Reference to Introduction:
- D. Ending with Impact:

### **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

The linear, straightforward thinking style used in English-speaking countries means that all parts of a speech need to be clearly and logically connected. To ensure that your listeners can follow you with ease, organize your speech in a

linear fashion. To highlight the connections in your speech, it is important to use appropriate connectors at transition points between sentences and ideas. Here are some examples.

Transitions	Sample Connectors
Addition	again, and, also, as well as, at the same time, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, not only . . . but also
Cause/Effect	accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, due to, for this reason, in that, on account of, owing to, so, therefore, thus
Comparison	another type of, compared with, in comparison, just as, like, likewise, similarly
Condition	as far as, even if, if, in case, lest, or else, otherwise, provided that, supposing that, unless
Contrast	although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, no matter how, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, still, unfortunately, whereas, yet
Ending	finally, in conclusion, in short, to conclude, to summarize
Explanation	for example, for instance, in fact, in other words, of course, to clarify, to illustrate, to simplify, such as
Importance	above all, indeed, keep this in mind, most importantly, remember, take note
Interruption	anyway, at any rate, by the way, in any case, in any event, incidentally, in general, of course
Order	first/second/third/last, eventually, finally, in the first place, initially, next, to begin with
Space	above, alongside, behind, below, in back of, in front of, in the distance, eastward, nearby, next to, to the north, to the left
Time	after, as soon as, at present, at the present time, at this point, before, during, earlier, five years ago, in the future, in the past, just last month, meanwhile, now that, later, once, previously, since, sooner or later, until, when, whenever, while

When you have collected all the support materials and finished your outline, you are ready to think about the actual wording of your speech. When planning what to say and how to say it, the issues of language use and ethics need to be considered.

### Language Use

Spoken language is more informal than written language and often more vivid and intense. Because listeners cannot go back and re-read what a speaker says, effective oral language is also simpler and more repetitious. In addition, it contains plentiful examples and illustrations to assist listeners in understanding the message. The following guidelines provide tips for effective language use.

#### **Key Points**

To be effective, language should be

correct	Use correct vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. When in doubt, consult reference books or ask for help.
clear	Avoid unnecessary jargon and define any technical vocabulary you must use.
concrete	Use specific rather than vague language (e.g., change “for a small amount of money” to “for three dollars”).
concise	Eliminate unnecessary verbiage (e.g., change “what you do is you push this button” to “push this button”).
appropriate	Use the language suitable for your setting and the audience (e.g., avoid slang terms in educational and professional settings).
culturally sensitive	Avoid sexist language (e.g., change “he” to “he or she” or “they” and “chairman” to “chairperson”), ageist stereotypes (e.g., “set in her ways,” “over the hill”), any terms that could potentially offend racial, ethnic, religious, or gender groups.  Use euphemisms to make unpleasant ideas sound more agreeable (e.g., use “passed away” instead of “died”).

(cont. next page)

colorful Use some of all of the following language terms to add vividness and intensity to your language.

Language Form	Explanation
alliteration	words beginning with the same sound (e.g., “Be <u>s</u> mart: <u>S</u> eatbelts <u>s</u> ave lives.”)
antithesis	juxtaposition of opposite ideas (e.g., John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you: Ask what you can do for your country.”)
colorful vocabulary	words that paint a picture in one’s mind (e.g., “The ice-cold lemonade transformed the boy scouts from drowsy sloths to a herd of springboks in a matter of seconds.”)
hyperbole	exaggeration for effect (e.g., “If we don’t start preparing for retirement immediately, we will all be poor and miserable in old age.”)
metaphor	comparison without the word <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> (e.g., “Youth is a budding rose.”)
parallel construction	sentences beginning or ending with the same words (e.g., “Our children need love. Our children need security. Our children need education.”)
personification	human characteristics used in nonhuman settings (e.g., “The sky wept tears of joy.”)
repetition	words or phrases repeated throughout the speech (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr. repeated the sentence “I have a dream” many times during his famous speech.)
rhyme	words ending in the same sound combination (e.g., “He’s a <u>lean</u> and <u>mean</u> selling <u>machine</u> .”)
simile	comparison with the word <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> (e.g., “It was as humid as in a steam room.”)

## **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

One of the guidelines for effective language use is to be correct. However, as a nonnative speaker, you may not be sure of what is correct and incorrect. If this is the case, you may want to go over your speech with a native speaker who can advise you on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. While it is not necessary to achieve a native-like accent in English, you can make it as easy as possible for your listeners to follow your presentation by making sure your grammar is correct and your vocabulary is appropriate and accurate.

Another guideline for effective language use is to be concrete. Some cultures don't focus as much on details and examples as American culture. If you are from such a culture, make sure you avoid vague and abstract expressions in favor of concrete language, full of details and examples.

If you come from a culture where public speaking is a formal event, remember that U.S. culture allows for a fair amount of informality. Try to adjust to this speaking style to connect with your audience effectively. Make sure you observe American speakers in their use of informality before you speak to get a sense of how much informality is appropriate. Don't become too informal.

## Ethics and Plagiarism

The Romans described an effective orator as “a good man, skilled in speaking” (*vir bonus, dicendi peritus*). As we know, history has produced quite a few skilled speakers who, for one reason or another, may not have been “good persons.” What makes a person “good,” in general, is difficult to define. The task becomes easier when we limit ourselves to the realm of public speaking. Here a “good” person is one who is guided by speaker *ethics*.

The governing principle of ethics is a sincere concern for the audience. This concern shows itself through a speaker's attitude of respect and appreciation of the listeners as well as through the speaker's responsible handling of the information he or she presents.

## **Key Points**

### Guidelines for Responsible Sharing of Information

1. Research your topic well so that you don't present falsehoods and half-truths.
2. Avoid plagiarism and identify all of your sources.
3. Don't even think about fabricating information!

## Modes of Delivery

The three basic modes of speech delivery are impromptu, extemporaneous, and manuscript. Impromptu speeches allow for little or no preparation. You may be asked to “say a few words” at a reception, for example, give an answer to a question, or express your opinion during a meeting.

Extemporaneous speaking is based on thorough preparation, but the speaker presents his or her ideas freely, using only an outline or keywords. Extemporaneous speeches are the most common speech form, used in many educational and professional settings.

Manuscript speeches require a written text and are delivered word for word. They are appropriate for formal occasions where a record of the speech is desired (e.g., the keynote address at a conference, the president’s speech at an important function).

## Rehearsing Your Speech

The different modes of delivery necessitate different preparation and rehearsal methods. In *impromptu speeches*, speakers are asked to speak without little time to prepare.

### **Key Points**

#### Preparing for an Impromptu Speech

- If you have to give an impromptu speech and have a little time to prepare, jot down three or four main points.
- Think of a few examples to illustrate each main points.
- To prevent forgetting something important, think of the question *who, what, when, where, why, and how*.

*Extemporaneous speeches* should be prepared well but delivered without the help of a written-out text. It may be tempting to use a text initially and memorize it, but this method is not a good idea, for the following reasons.

### **Warning**

Don’t memorize your speech.

1. A memorized speech usually does not sound as fresh and direct as an unmemorized speech.
2. The need to remember every line prevents the speaker from focusing on and interacting with the audience.
3. Memorized words and sentences take on so much importance that forgetting one often throws a speaker off track and seriously interrupts the flow of the speech.

## **Key Points**

### Rehearsing an Extemporaneous Speech

- Use your outline or a small number of index cards to serve as a memory aid. Don't write out the text of your speech. Use major key words only.
- When you rehearse your speech, change the wording of your sentences a little every time. This will help you remain flexible and not get locked into the trap of memorization described above.
- Make sure you time yourself during rehearsal so that your speech fits within the given time limit.
- Practice all elements of delivery (including eye contact, gestures, posture, and facial expressions). If available, audio- or videotape yourself or rehearse in front of one or more friends or family members. This will allow you to receive feedback and cut down on your nervousness later on.

A *manuscript speech* is based on a written-out text. It is suitable to give a manuscript speech when the text of the speech is to be published later or when exact wording is of importance (e.g., during presidential addresses). The first drafts of a manuscript speech can be written in any format. However, sound guidelines exist for the preparation of the final script and the rehearsal of a manuscript speech.

## **Key Points**

### Rehearsing a Manuscript Speech

- Type your script triple spaced and in a large font size. Sufficient "white space" will help you follow your text as you speak.
- Use slashes where you want to pause and highlight words or phrases you want to emphasize.
- Write only on one side of the paper, leaving the back blank.
- Number all pages.
- Print your script on pastel-colored rather than white paper to reduce glare from lights.
- Read the script several times silently, then several times aloud.
- Practice your speech so that delivery becomes as natural as possible (including frequent eye contact, vocal variety, gestures, posture, and facial expressions). It may be helpful to trace your utterances with your index finger on the left side of the script so that you don't lose your place.
- If possible, audio- or videotape your speech and ask for feedback from friends or family members.

## Delivering Your Speech

### Setting Up

Before you deliver your speech, take time to set up. Don't hurry. Having everything in good working order will help you feel confident as you move on to the delivery of your speech.

- Make sure the stage is arranged according to your needs (e.g., move chairs out of the way, lower blinds if there is sun glare).
- Arrange your notes (manuscript, outline or index cards—depending on your speech) so that they are easily accessible.
- Prepare your audiovisual equipment (e.g., focus the overhead projector for your transparencies, get a pointer ready for overhead projections, insert your videotape in the VCR and make sure it is forwarded to the correct spot, etc.).

### Appearance and Body Language

As the saying goes, “One cannot *not* communicate.” Even if we don't speak, we communicate through our appearance and body language. Make this fact work for you when you deliver your speech. In general, all nonverbal behavior should reinforce the verbal message of your speech. The audience will understand you more easily and believe you more when nonverbal actions support your words.

Appearance. The first impression your audience will get of you as a speaker is through your appearance. Make sure you find out what clothing is appropriate for the occasion. If you speak in a classroom situation, dress a little more formally than usual. This will communicate that your audience and speech is important to you. With respect to accessories (such as jewelry), less is more. Don't distract your audience by being too flashy and overpowering in your appearance.

Eye contact. Body language consists of eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body posture, and movement. Eye contact is maybe the most important of these elements. As an effective speaker make sure you maintain constant eye contact with the audience. Look at your listeners directly and include all parts of the audience (including listeners in the back, and on the left and right). Avoid looking down on the ground, over the heads of your listeners, or out the window. Remember that the main purpose of public speaking is to reach the audience. Eye contact is essential in achieving this goal.

Facial expressions. Appropriate facial expressions can connect with your audience and reinforce the content of your speech. You can show your friendly intentions through a smile at the beginning of your speech, for example. During your speech, you can signal the importance of words and phrases through widened eyes and raised eyebrows and accompany accounts of excitement, puzzlement, or unpleasantness with the respective expressions.

While facial expressions, like all nonverbal support, can bring a speech to life, take care to stay natural and authentic. Anything that is overdone distracts the audience rather than contributes to the message.

Gestures. Similar to facial expressions, you can use gestures to establish contact with the audience and provide visual support for your message. Here are some dos and don'ts.

## Key Points

### Gesturing

- Don't put your hands in your pockets or lock them behind your back. This will prevent you from gesturing freely.
- Likewise, don't clasp your notes or hold on to the lectern. In fact, if possible, don't use a lectern at all. Not only do lecterns tempt speakers to use fewer or no gestures, lecterns also place a physical barrier between the speaker and the audience and therefore create a feeling of distance and disengagement.
- Don't fold your arms. This communicates closedness rather than openness and will disconnect you from the audience.
- In general, people who use their hands for gesturing appear more open and honest to the audience. Gestures should therefore be an integral part of your speech.
- Gestures should be conscious and purposeful. Don't use too few or too many gestures. Aim for a medium amount and use them in a natural manner.
- Vary your gestures. Anything overly repetitive distracts the audience.
- Avoid nervous mannerism such as twisting your hair, scratching your face, rubbing your hands together, or playing with an object (e.g., a pen, your necklace, an earring). Remember that gestures should strengthen your verbal message. Mannerisms don't.
- Consider which gestures to use before your speech and practice them during rehearsal.

### *Examples:*

1. When counting (e.g., first, second, third), don't just say the numbers, also indicate them with the use of your fingers.
2. When discussing measurements (e.g., three feet), use your arms to show the length.
3. When using phrases like "on one hand . . . on the other hand," support your words by first turning one palm up, then the other.
4. Phrases such as "we don't know whether . . ." can be visualized by a shoulder shrug.
5. Think of gestures that would be appropriate for the following statements: "This affects *all* of us," "We have to *stop* immediately," "This machine is powered by a *tiny* battery."

Body posture and movement. A powerful speaker shows confidence through body posture and movement. There are some occasions where a speaker may sit while delivering a speech (e.g., during a business meeting); in most cases, however, standing will be more effective.

When you stand, adopt a comfortable pose and use the space provided effectively. If you have room to move around, do so. You may want to walk toward the audience during a crucial point in your speech, for example, or step back right before your conclusion. As with gesturing, use your movements consciously and don't overdo them. A speaker who paces back and forth in front of an audience tends to confuse rather than enlighten.

### **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

Nonverbal behavior differs from culture to culture. Direct eye contact is considered rude in some cultures, for example. Speakers in these cultures may instead look at listeners' foreheads or divert their eyes altogether. Likewise, facial expressions may be discouraged in favor of a neutral look, and the meaning and amount of gesturing and other body language may differ.

Since a great deal of information is transmitted through nonverbal behavior, it is advisable for a public speaker to adjust to local norms. If a speaker doesn't employ expected nonverbal behavior, he or she is not communicating as effectively as possible. For one, the audience may misunderstand signals (and misinterpret indirect eye contact as lack of interest, for example). In addition, the audience is deprived of all the nonverbal reinforcements that facilitate the comprehension of a verbal message—which is especially valuable if the speaker speaks with a nonnative accent.

To become aware of local nonverbal behavior patterns, you may want to videotape yourself and analyze the tape with the help of a native speaker. Another technique is to place a mirror next to a TV set, turn the volume off, and mimic facial expressions, gestures, and other body language of effective speakers. Your efforts will not be in vain. Nonverbal communication is an important element of public speaking. If you tap into it, you will be more effective in reaching your audience.

### Vocal Behavior

The term *vocal behavior* refers to the way we use pitch, rate, and volume when we speak. A dynamic speaker varies his or her vocal behavior throughout a speech to underscore the message and to keep the audience interested.

Pitch. Everybody uses a mixture of low and high pitches—a pitch range—when speaking. Variation in pitch is a tool for stressing words and adding emotion to

sentences. When utterances are flat and monotone (i.e., when the pitch range is too narrow), listeners become bored and tune out. Make sure, therefore, to vary your pitch levels sufficiently.

*Example:*

Compare the following two renditions of the same utterance. The first one is spoken on the same pitch. The second one has higher pitches on the stressed syllables and falls to a low pitch at the end.

- - - - -  
1. "And finally, the most important point."

- - - - -  
2. "And finally, the most important point."

### **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

Pitch variation in English is often a problem for speakers of Slavic languages (e.g., Russian, Czech, etc.). If your pitch range is not wide enough, practice expanding it with the help of exercises like the one above. Select some sentences, mark the stressed words, and then say the sentences with a greater pitch variation than usual. Don't be afraid to exaggerate. An exaggerated pitch difference may sound unnatural to you, but it probably sounds normal to a native speaker's ears.

Rate and fluency. The rate of speech includes speed and pausing. As with pitch, try to vary your rate throughout your speech. You may want to speak more slowly at the beginning of your speech, for instance, to give your listeners an opportunity to get used to your voice. You may also want to slow down when discussing important points. Exciting narratives and accounts involving actions or adventure are examples for times when a faster rate of speech is appropriate.

### **Warning**

It is very important not to speak too fast. While fast speech may be understood in small settings and among friends, larger audiences usually find it difficult to follow.

1. The acoustics of large rooms often cause a slight echo which interferes with comprehension.
2. The information presented in public speeches is usually dense and complex. Listeners need to have sufficient time to understand the material.

3. Many audiences include nonnative listeners or people who are hard of hearing. Both groups may require slower, more deliberate rates of speech for comprehension.

A normal rate of extemporaneous speaking is about 125 words per minute. Time yourself to see whether you approach this number. If you are too fast, control your speed and slow down. If this means that you have to cover less material, do so. It is much better to speak deliberately and reach the audience than to hurry through a speech and lose half of the listeners.

An element related to rate is pausing. As with all other nonverbal and vocal behavior, try to make pauses work for you and use them consciously to contribute to your message. Small pauses are necessary to separate thoughts and sentences, for instance. Larger pauses work well between major ideas to give the audience time to think; they are also effective during suspenseful narratives to heighten interest and before main organizational divisions to indicate a transition (e.g., before the conclusion).

While intentional pauses enhance your message, unintentional ones (e.g., when our memory fails) can interrupt the flow of your speech and throw you off track. Should you forget what you wanted to say, calmly consult your notes and continue at the next main point. If the silence is too long or awkward, you may want to fill it by paraphrasing the last sentence you said. Retain composure and chances are that the audience won't even notice the mishap—even if you omit a sentence or two by mistake.

### **Warning**

While it is acceptable to use vocalizations and fillers occasionally when pausing (such as *um*, *er*, *well*, and *okay*) occasionally, they should not be used too often. Likewise, filler phrases like *you know* and *something like that* should be avoided. They don't reinforce the message and become distracting if used repeatedly.

### **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

Fluency is often a concern for nonnative speakers. It helps to know that fluency is not a question of speed (one can be fluent as a fast *or* as a slow speaker); rather, it is a question of appropriate pausing and the connectedness of thought groups. Pauses should occur only at the end of thought groups and sentences; and the words within a thought group should be linked closely together and not separated by hesitations or unnecessary repetitions of syllables. Make sure you rehearse sufficiently to be able to finish each thought group and sentence without interruptions.

*Example:*

Say the following tongue twister fluently (not necessarily fast). Stop only at the end of the indicated thought groups (slash) and sentences (double slash).

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.// A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.// If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,/ where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?//

Fluency for nonnative speakers is also often a matter of following a natural English-language rhythm. English differs from some major languages (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, French) in that it is a stress-timed, rather than syllable-timed language. In English, the stressed syllables in important, content-carrying words (e.g., full verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs) create a regular beat and the typical rhythm of English. The time between the beats remains the same; i.e., unstressed syllables—no matter how many—have to share the space.

*Example:*

Say the following sentences out loud while clapping your hands on the stressed (underlined) syllables. The beat should be the same for each sentence.

Bears                came.  
Lions                came.  
The lioness                came.  
The lioness                arrived.  
The lionesses                arrived.  
The lionesses have arrived.

Since English is a stress-timed language, each of the above sentences has the same length. By contrast, in syllable-timed languages, where all syllables have approximately the same length, the first sentence (*Bears came*) would be much shorter than the last sentence (*The lionesses have arrived*), since the last sentence has many more syllables than the first.

Try to create a regular, stress-timed rhythm in your speech. It will match your audience's aural expectations and make your speech appear more fluent.

Volume. Make sure that everybody in the audience can hear you without straining. To project your voice effectively, it helps to direct it to the person sitting farthest away from you. Even when you vary the volume of your voice at appropriate times in your speech, keep in mind that everyone needs to be able to hear you.

### Audiovisual Support

Audiovisual (AV) aids (e.g., posters, overhead transparencies, computer presentation graphics, audiorecordings, etc.) have many advantages.

- They help listeners understand the material better.
- They can make a speech more interesting.

- If attractively designed, they enhance the speaker's credibility.
- They provide something for the audience to see besides the speaker and can thus reduce speaker nervousness.
- They can serve as a memory aid for the speaker.

When preparing AV support for your speech, you need to decide first which parts of your speech would best be reinforced through AV aids. Don't use too many AV aids. Select wisely. Rather than simply projecting a copy of your outline on a screen, choose segments that are abstract or complex and would gain from audiovisual representation. Comparative statistics, for instance, are more easily understood when presented through a graph than just with words. A map can facilitate the discussion of geographical features. And an audiorecording of a piece of music can illustrate its qualities much better than a verbal description.

Using AV Aids Effectively. In the design of your AV support, strive for the most professional look possible. Use quality materials and color when possible. It may take some time to create your aids, but the effort is well worth it. Here are some tips on how to use AV aids effectively.

## **Key Points**

### Audiovisual Aids

#### Audiorecordings

- Audiorecordings are ideal for music or spoken examples that can't easily be replicated (e.g., foreign languages).
- Select clips that illustrate rather than replace your words.
- Cue the tape or CD in advance.
- Plan your start and stop carefully.
- Limit audiorecordings to short excerpts.

#### Black- or Whiteboards

- Boards are good for brainstorming with the audience.
- They are suitable for working out unfolding problems (e.g., math).
- Turn around frequently to maintain eye contact with the audience and keep on talking when you write on a board.
- Make sure your handwriting is legible.

#### Computerized Presentation Graphics

- Keep your graphics simple and uniform throughout your speech (e.g., use the same organizational format on each slide).
- Don't put too much text on a slide; a few lines are enough.

- Use high contrast (dark on light or light on dark) on your slides.
- Adjust room lighting so that the audience can see you as well as your slides.
- Make sure you use colors and contrast visible even in well-lit rooms.
- During the presentation, make sure you don't obscure the audience's view of the screen.

### Drawings

- Drawings are a great substitute for illegal objects or objects that are too large or small.
- Drawings can show processes (e.g., acid rain).
- Make sure your drawing looks professional and is effectively designed.

### Handouts

- Distribute handouts face down before your speech and ask the audience to turn them over only at the appropriate time.
- Mark points with a letter or number to refer to later.

### Maps

- Maps are best displayed as transparencies or handouts (remember to mark points).
- Show the larger context of a detailed map (e.g., show where an island is located in relation to the next continent and where a city is located in relation to its home country or state).

### Models

- Models are ideal for scaled-down versions of larger objects (e.g., buildings), enlarged versions of small objects (e.g., atoms), and objects that are difficult to bring (e.g., a skeleton).
- Don't pass models around; by the time everyone has seen it, your speech may be over (= time lag effect).

### Overhead Projectors (OHP)

- Make sure the letters and images on the transparency are big enough. (Rule of thumb: You should be able to read the transparency without the help of a projector from 10 feet away.)
- Make sure the projector is focused and the projected image visible to all audience members.
- Uncover each new point gradually.
- Use a pointer on the transparency (not the screen).
- Don't obscure the audience's view of the screen.

## Objects

- Objects are ideal for certain types of demonstration speeches (e.g., how to make a kite).
- Avoid illegal objects (e.g., firearms) and objects that are difficult to manage (e.g., animals).
- Don't pass objects around (time lag effect).

## People

- People are ideal for certain types of demonstration speeches (e.g., how to dance the samba).
- Rehearse well and make sure your human AV aid is on time and knows where to go.
- Ask the person to sit in the front row so that he or she can get up and sit down quickly.

## Photographs

- Enlarge photos so that everyone can see them or transfer them onto a handout, overhead transparency, or slide.
- Don't show photos that may offend the audience.
- Don't pass photos around (time lag effect).

## Posters

- Mount your poster on sturdy backing so that it doesn't bend and use an easel for display.
- Use stick-on letters rather than handwriting to make the poster look as professional as possible.

## Slides

- Make sure the room can be darkened to ensure visibility.
- Show several slides at a time.
- Put a black slide between sections of content (to avoid keeping slides on display for too long and to avoid the glare of a white screen).

## Videorecordings

- Videorecordings are ideal when movement and sound are important.
- Select clips that illustrate rather than replace your words.
- Cue the tape or DVD in advance.
- Plan your start and stop carefully.
- Limit videorecordings to short excerpts.

There are some general guidelines that apply to the use of all AV aids.

- Everyone in the audience must be able to see or hear well without strain.
- Use large font sizes. Don't use all capital letters; they are hard to read.
- Sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial or Helvetica) are easier to read than serif fonts (e.g., Times or Times New Roman).
- Look at the audience, not at your aid.
- Point to the part of your aid that you are discussing in your speech.
- Cover or turn off your aid when you don't use it.

### **Warning**

When using technology, make sure you arrive early to set up and check the equipment. Prepare an alternative way of presenting your material in case of power or equipment failure.

Illustrating Statistics. Often visual aids show statistical information that can be displayed in a variety of ways. Use the following guidelines to select the most appropriate mode.

Line graphs are best for showing fluctuations (e.g., stock market gains and losses).

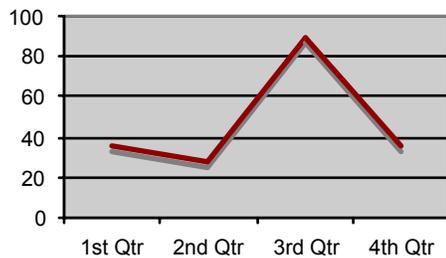


Figure 1. Line graph.

Bar graphs are best for comparing data from groups (e.g., average regional salaries).

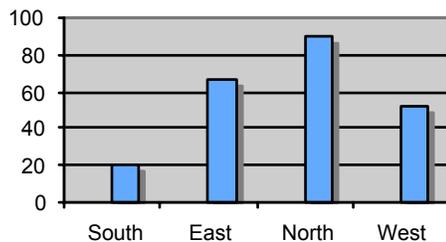


Figure 2. Bar graph.

Pie graphs are best for showing divisions of a population or parts of a whole (e.g., ethnic groups in a country).

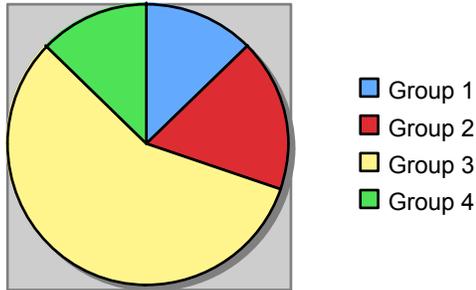


Figure 3. Pie graph.

Tables are best when data can be arranged in columns and rows (e.g., film awards per category and year).

Year	Best Picture	Best Directory
1980	Ordinary People	Robert Redford
1981	Chariots of Fire	Warren Beatty
1982	Gandhi	Richard Attenborough
1983	Terms of Endearment	James L. Brooks
1984	Amadeus	Milos Forman
1985	Out of Africa	Sydney Pollack

Figure 4. Table (Wright, 2004).

Lists are best for things that are done in stages or occur in steps (e.g., preparing for a wedding).

#### Preparing for a Wedding

1. set a budget
2. start compiling an invitation list
3. book your reception site and hire a caterer
4. select a site for the ceremony and reserve an officiant
5. discuss and order apparel for the bride, groom and bridal party
6. choose and hire a photographer and videographer
7. choose and hire a dj or band for the reception

Figure 5. List.

Flow charts show the order in which processes occur (e.g., the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly).

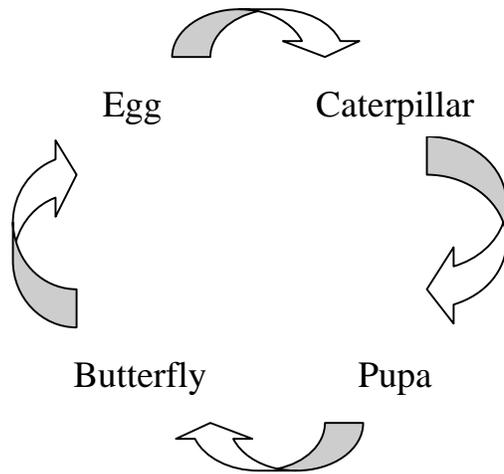


Figure 6. Flow chart.

Organizational charts show hierarchies and relationships (e.g., the different employees of a company from CEO to assembly line worker).

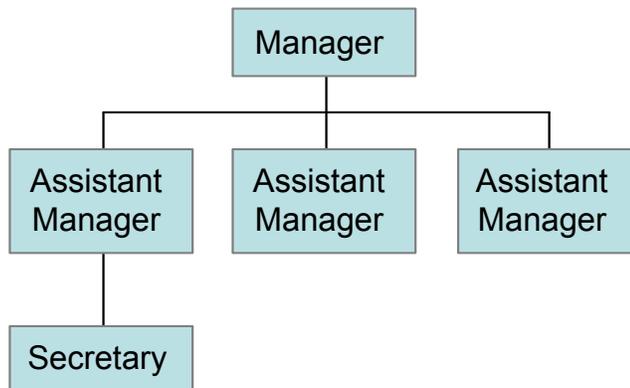


Figure 7. Organizational chart.

Pictographs are best for data that relate to objects or people (e.g., map showing African nations with the highest fertility rates per woman from 2000 to 2005—an average of 6 children per woman in a number of countries, including Chad and Ethiopia; 7 children per woman in Mali, Angola, Uganda, and Somalia; and 8 children per woman in Niger, the world's highest fertility rate) (Wright, 2004).

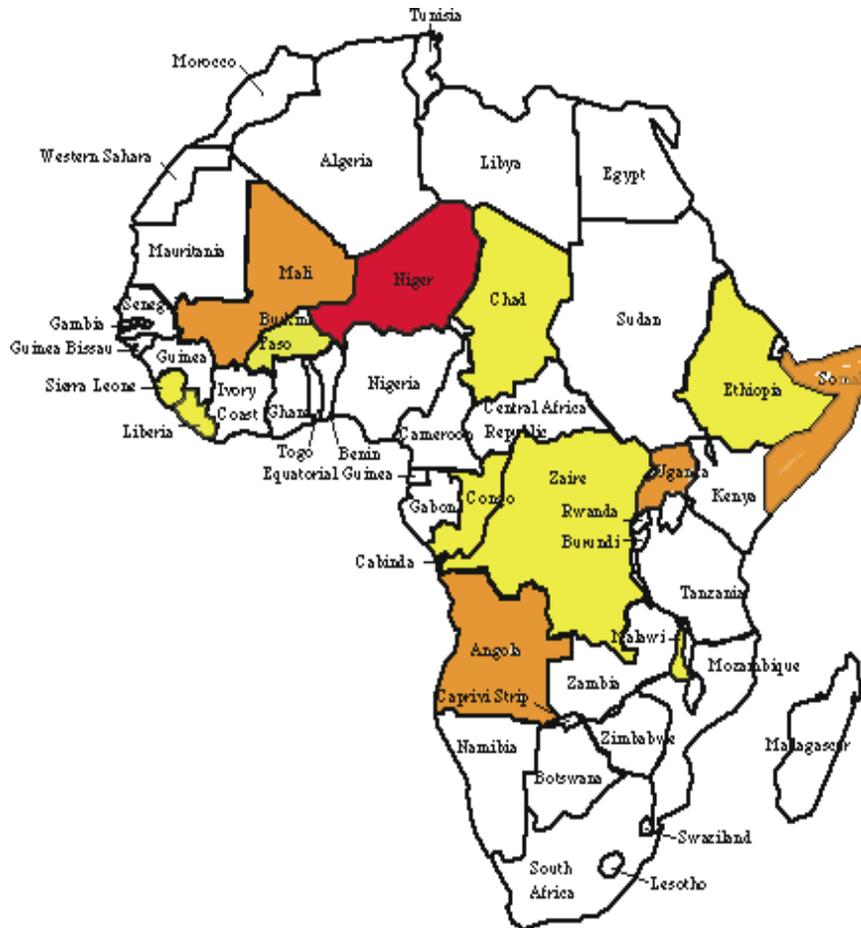


Figure 8. Pictograph.

### Question-and-Answer Sessions

After your speech, you may want to invite questions from the audience. Even though you won't know precisely what the listeners will ask, many questions can be predicted. Prepare answer for the most likely questions in advance and use your general knowledge about the subject to respond to the rest. Having researched your topic well will help you. Here are some guidelines for handling question-and-answer sessions.

### **Key Points**

#### Question-and-Answer Sessions

- Repeat or paraphrase questions before answering them. This ensures that you have understood the questions correctly and that everyone will have heard it clearly.
- Maintain eye contact with the whole audience, not just the person who asked the question.

- Provide facts and examples in your answers, but keep them short and to the point.
- If you don't know the answer, say so and offer to obtain the requested information later.
- Deal with hostile questions politely.
- If someone starts to dominate by providing lengthy comments, interrupt at an appropriate point, thank him or her for the contribution, and move on to the next question.
- At the end of the question-and-answer session, reemphasize your message and thank the audience for listening.

### **Tips for Nonnative Speakers**

In some cultures, the audience provides audible feedback throughout a speech through vocalizations, applause, and verbal signs of approval (or disapproval). In other cultures, the audience is supposed to concentrate quietly on the speaker's message. These cultures may also not have question-and-answer sessions at the end of a speech since questions would be a sign that the speaker has not been effective in explaining the subject matter.

If you are from a culture with more feedback than customary in mainstream U.S. culture, don't be concerned. Your listeners are showing their respect by being quiet. If you do want to determine the audience's level of interest, observe their body language. Signs of involvement are revealed by the listeners' eye contact, facial expressions, and body posture.

Likewise, if you are from a culture with less audience involvement, the question-and-answer session is no cause for embarrassment. Questions at the end of a speech are a positive sign and show that the speech was stimulating and interesting to your listeners.

### Types of Speeches

#### Narrative Speeches

A narrative speech is a speech telling a story. While stories can be told in many different ways, they usually consist of five parts (Labov, 1972).

1. Opener: A short statement announcing the story (e.g., "You won't believe what happened to me . . .," "Did I ever tell you . . .," "I'll always remember when . . .").
2. Orientation: Introduction of time, place, and characters (e.g., "Last Saturday, I went canoeing with my boyfriend on Bear River.").
3. Complicating Events: The events of the story (e.g., "We arrived at the rental place at 10 a.m. Events and got a really nice, red canoe . . . Suddenly, the water swept us away . . . Next thing we knew, we capsized . . . And as if

that wasn't enough, we lost everything to the river: our lunch, sun hats, and towels.”).

4. Resolution: How the story ends (e.g., “We were soaking wet but still alive.”).
5. Coda: A connection between the past and the present (e.g., “Looking back, it was quite funny, really.”).

When people tell a story well, they also employ techniques to make it worth listening to. These techniques include directly telling the audience how to feel (e.g., “you’ll be amazed”), recreating noises (e.g., “the water went s-w-o-o-s-h”), exaggerating (e.g., “we were under water for an eternity”), and evaluating individual events (e.g., “I was so scared”).

In a narrative speech, the story is told for its own sake. Short narratives can also be told as part of another speech, however, in form of anecdotes or jokes that serve as attention-getters or examples for a point. Stories catch the interest of most audiences and should be incorporated freely into speeches.

### Demonstration Speeches

Demonstration speeches show how something works (e.g., a camera) or how something is done (e.g., CPR). Audiovisual aids are therefore essential. Sometimes, demonstrations show something that takes place on the floor (e.g., how to brake on inline skates). During such a speech, it is important that all listeners have a clear view.

If a process takes too long to demonstrate (e.g., folding an intricate origami pattern), speakers may choose to demonstrate only part of it during the speech. The rest can be shown through visuals depicting the different stages of the process which are prepared beforehand.

At times, it may be necessary to pause while demonstrating an action (e.g., when showing how to play the clarinet). In general, however, pauses should be kept to a minimum. Speakers should continue speaking during the demonstration and accompany actions with words. By the same token, they should maintain as much eye contact with the audience as possible.

### Informative Speeches

Informative speeches aim to educate the audience. Speakers basically act as teachers and provide new knowledge and ideas. Topics can include people (e.g., Jimi Hendrix, the Ainu people in Japan), places (e.g., India, the Bermuda triangle), objects (e.g., chopsticks, a sculpture by Rodin), events (e.g., folk festivals, space missions), concepts (e.g., intelligence, alternative medicine), and issues (e.g., assisted suicide, industrial pollution).

To give an effective informative speech, it is helpful to find out what the audience already knows and what they want or need to know. The speaker should strive to sustain

the listeners' interest throughout the speech (by using captivating language, personalizing the message, and approaching the topic in fresh ways). In the end, the audience should feel enriched.

### Persuasive Speeches

The goal of a persuasive speech is to convince the audience. Persuasive speeches can be centered around claims of fact (e.g., "the earth is in danger of being destroyed by meteors"), claims of values (e.g., "factory farming is immoral"), and claims of policy (e.g., "we should adopt a flat rate tax system").

If the listeners oppose the speaker on an issue (e.g., the death-penalty), the speaker will attempt to change their minds. If the listeners agree with the speaker but don't act on their beliefs (e.g., they think that donating blood is important but haven't done so themselves), the speaker will try to actuate them (i.e., persuade them to be more consistent). Finally, if the listeners are convinced and already act accordingly, the speaker can use persuasive speech techniques to provide reinforcement and encouragement, to strengthen their conviction.

In order to plan the most effective strategy, the speaker should survey the audience on their beliefs before the speech. No matter whether the audience is unconvinced or convinced, however, they speaker will have to provide proof to make his or her views compelling. Several factors can contribute to a persuasive argument.

- Convincing evidence (e.g., facts, statistics, testimony)
- Sound reasoning (e.g., analogies, examples, narratives)
- Appeals to emotion (e.g., sympathy, guilt, revulsion)
- Promise of needs fulfillment (e.g., physical security, well-being, adventure)
- Positive speaker characteristics (e.g., dynamism, good character, good will)

Often, persuasive speeches follow patterns that are slightly different from regular organizational designs. Here are some examples.

- Problem-solution pattern (= describing a problem and offering solutions)
- Comparison-contrast (= showing the advantages of one's own proposal vis-à-vis opposing views)
- Negative method pattern (= focus on the shortcomings of other proposals)
- Motivated sequence (= five steps: arousing attention, demonstrating a need, satisfying the need, picturing the results, calling for action)

Possibly more than any other speech type, persuasive speeches need to be tailored to the audience. Each listener will ask "What's in it for *me*?" An effective persuasive speaker has to keep this question in mind at all times and aim to provide the answer.

## Speaking on Special Occasions

There are a number of occasions that call for short speeches. Here are some guidelines.

### **Key Points**

#### Speaking on Special Occasions

##### Introductions

- Give the person's name and title. (Make sure you know the correct pronunciation.)
- Provide a few pertinent details about the person's educational or professional background.
- If the person is to give a speech, prepare the audience for its content.
- Be brief.
- Welcome the person.

##### Award Presentations

- Describe the nature of the award and its significance.
- Explain what the recipient did to qualify.
- Name the recipient and offer your congratulations.

##### Acceptance Speeches

- Thank the people who honored you.
- Give credit to people who helped you.
- Mention what the award means to you.

##### Announcements

- Draw the audience's attention to the event.
- Provide information about the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* of the event as well as the cost.
- Describe the benefits of attending the event.
- Conclude with a summary of the most important information.

##### Toasts

- Begin or end with "Here's to . . ."
- Select one characteristic in honor of the person or event and give an example of that characteristic.
- Be brief.

### Bidding Farewell to a Person Who Is Leaving

- Mention the accomplishments of the person.
- Share funny anecdotes or happy memories.
- Express your sadness and sense of loss.
- Wish the person well.
- Give the person a farewell present (if appropriate).

### Bidding Farewell When You Are Leaving

- Tell the audience what they have meant to you.
- List lessons that you have learned during your residence.
- Share funny anecdotes or happy memories.
- Express your sadness but also your hopes for the future.
- Invite people to stay in touch or visit you.

### Eulogies

- Express your pain of loss.
- Describe the personal characteristics and accomplishments of the deceased.
- Offer comfort.
- Celebrate the values for which the deceased stood.

### Communication Anxiety

If you are nervous about speaking in public, you are not alone. Many people list public speaking as their greatest fear—greater than the fear of death!

Having stage fright is normal, even for experienced speakers. In fact, a little nervousness may actually help you get focused, be alert to the audience, and deliver a more effective and captivating speech.

The first step in managing communication anxiety is to become aware of and understand its symptoms: the queasy stomach, dry mouth, rapid breathing and heart rate, perspiration, trembling hands, and knees. These symptoms are a speaker's response to the stressfulness of the situation. Interestingly, the symptoms are identical to the ones associated with "fight or flight" reactions during real, physical danger.

Imagine yourself hiking in the mountains. If a grizzly bear appears suddenly in the distance, your body immediately goes into automatic pilot and prepares itself for fight or flight. The symptoms you experience are your body's way of ensuring that you are ready for top performance.

### 1. Butterflies in the Stomach

To prepare you for fighting or running away, as much energy as possible is needed in your arms and legs. Digestion is of low priority now. Any food you have eaten just sits in your stomach and creates the queasy feeling we call “butterflies.”

### 2. Dry Mouth

Likewise, saliva production stops, resulting in a feeling of dryness in your mouth.

### 3. Rapid Breathing

In preparation for the expected physical effort, your rate of breath increases to supply your body with extra oxygen.

### 4. Rapid Heart Rate

To transport the oxygen through your body, your heart starts beating faster.

### 5. Perspiration

The heightened circulation in your body makes you feel hot. Your body starts to sweat in order to decrease your body temperature.

### 6. Trembling Hands, Weak Knees, and Unsteady Voice

The muscles in your body are under tension. If you fight or run away, this tension is released through action. If you stand still, the tension manifests itself in trembling hands and weak knees. Similarly, your voice may become unsteady because voice production is also controlled by muscles.

Knowing that your body reacts in much the same way no matter whether it is confronted with physical danger or an upcoming public speech may be of little comfort. But if you use this knowledge to alleviate the symptoms of nervousness, you are on the way to controlling your stage fright and making it an ally rather than a foe. What follows are relaxation exercises and other techniques that have proven effective in relieving anxiety.

## Key Points

How to conquer communication anxiety

Several days or weeks before your speech:

- Put the situation in perspective. Remind yourself that you've been talking to people all your life.
- Select a topic that interests and excites you. If you truly wish to share your knowledge and communicate with the audience, you will probably forget your nervousness and focus on the topic instead.
- Research your topic well. Nothing helps reduce anxiety better than thorough preparation.
- Plan your opening carefully. Nervousness is at its peak at the beginning of a presentation. A well-prepared introduction will help calm you down and build your confidence for the rest of your speech.
- Imagine that you are giving your speech first to one person, then two people, then five, and finally to the whole audience.
- Don't forget to rehearse gestures and body movements. Don't force them, but let them become an integral part of your presentation.
- Check out the room in which you will deliver your speech and determine the best location for visual aids.
- Practice, practice, practice!

The night before and the day of your speech:

- Try to get a good night's sleep before your speech so that you are physically and mentally rested and at your best.
- Explain to yourself what's happening to your body. Remember that the symptoms you are experiencing (butterflies, dry mouth, etc.) are your body's ways of helping you through stressful situations.
- Burn up excess energy. Relieve the tension in your muscles by getting off the bus a stop early, walking around the block, or taking the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Practice relaxation exercises. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly. Tense and then relax your muscles, starting with your toes and working up to your neck and face.
- Identify negative self-talk (e.g., "My audience will be bored.") and replace it with positive messages (e.g., "My speech is important and interesting.").
- Have a positive attitude toward your listeners. Assume that they will be supportive and attentive. Expect that they understand the speechmaking process and will be helpful. They know just how you feel!
- Visualize success. Imagine that you are part of the audience and watch yourself deliver your speech competently and with confidence. If you *think* you can do it, you *can* do it.

Right before, during, and after your speech:

- Take a few deep breaths.
- Act with confidence and you will feel that way. Show your listeners a confident speaker communicating well-researched and carefully prepared ideas.
- Focus on your message, not yourself. Don't talk *about* your speech to your audience (e.g., don't say "I hope you will like my presentation."), and never ask for sympathy (e.g., don't say "I'm nervous" or "I'm scared"). Remember that your audience is with you and wants you to succeed.
- Pause before you speak. Gather your thoughts, make eye contact, and start with conviction. Don't be afraid to smile—the audience will smile back!
- Use energy while you talk. Employ gestures and utilize the space provided by moving around just a bit. But keep in mind that too many gestures and movements may be distracting; so be aware and move naturally.
- Use visual aids. They create interest and make you feel less self-conscious because they help the audience to focus on something besides you.
- Make eye contact with all parts of your audience, but also search for friendly faces. They can provide an anchor of reassurance throughout your speech.
- If you make a mistake, it is not the end of the world! Most mistakes are not even noticed by the audience.
- Pause before your conclusion, and then present the rest of your speech with special emphasis.
- Don't end with a statement that expresses relief (e.g., "I made it.) or disappointment (e.g., "This was not very good."). The focus should remain on your message, not on yourself.
- Don't go back to your seat immediately after your speech. Accept applause, invite questions, and thank the audience for their interest.

Confidence builds with time and exposure. You will find that the more you speak in public, the less nervous you will be. It is therefore a good idea to use any opportunity to practice and gain experience. Even short "speeches" (such as questions asked in a class setting, participating in a discussion, offering a toast, or making an announcement) add up. Remember: Practice makes perfect!

### Conclusion

There are different ways to evaluate the effectiveness of a speech. Ultimately, the audience's reaction is the best measurement of success. In most cases, however, this reaction is closely tied to the thoroughness of preparation and the use of the public speaking techniques discussed in this chapter. To provide you with a checklist, here is an example of a speech evaluation as used by public To briefly summarize the guidelines of this chapter, here is a checklist of the most important features.

## Key Points

### Checklist of Effective Public Speaking Techniques

- \_\_\_ Planned speech with audience in mind.
- \_\_\_ Researched topic thoroughly.
- \_\_\_ Collected suitable support material.
- \_\_\_ Organized speech well.
- \_\_\_ Consciously selected effective language.
- \_\_\_ Rehearsed speech sufficiently.
- \_\_\_ Practiced techniques for reducing communication anxiety in case of nervousness.
- \_\_\_ Before delivering speech, took time setting up.
- \_\_\_ During speech, maintained constant eye contact with all parts of the audience.
- \_\_\_ Supported verbal message through appropriate nonverbal behaviors (including gestures and body movement).
- \_\_\_ Varied pitch, rate, and volume.
- \_\_\_ Used attractive and professionally prepared audiovisual support.
- \_\_\_ During the question-and-answer session, repeated or paraphrased questions before answering them.
- \_\_\_ At the end of the question-and-answer session, reemphasized message and thanked the audience for listening.

### Further Readings

*Guidelines for Public Speaking* is based on the professional experience of the author and represents content commonly discussed in public speaking textbooks. There are many books that cover public speaking techniques in great detail. Some examples of excellent texts are listed below.

- Bryden, S. R., & Scott, M. D. (latest edition). *Between one and many: The art and science of public speaking*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Jaffe, C. (latest edition). *Public speaking: Concepts and skills for a diverse society*. New York: Wadsworth.
- Lucas, S. (latest edition). *The art of public speaking*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
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