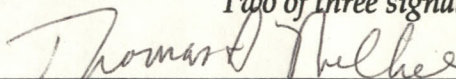


**LET'S TALK:  
A COMMON-SENSE APPROACH  
TO PUBLIC SPEAKING**

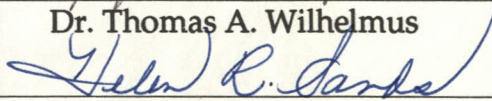
Sherry Crawford  
MALS Program  
Capstone Project

Capstone Committee  
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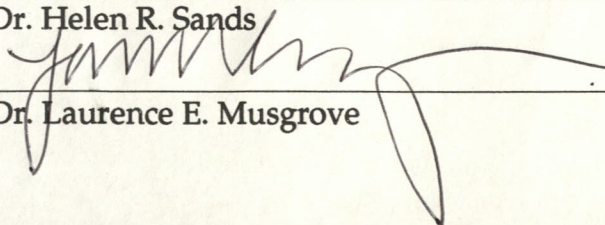
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Dr. Thomas A. Wilhelmus



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Dr. Helen R. Sands



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Dr. Laurence E. Musgrove



To Mom, who believed in me and encouraged my every step, even when I stumbled;  
and  
To Jeanne and Dean, who supported, shared and listened, even when I whined;

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the help and insight from my committee:  
Dr. Thomas Wilhelmus, Dr. Laurence Musgrove and Dr. Helen Sands.

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## Foreword

As you look at this book for the first time, some of you might find it a bit different from what you might have encountered in high school. Good -- that's exactly what I had in mind when I began this project. As an instructor of speech, interpersonal communication and composition at a community college for ten years, I have been frustrated as I watched many fledgling communicators struggle with putting together concepts that seem to be somehow unrelated in the traditional public speaking texts. Each book offered much the same information, but none of the texts really answered the questions novice speakers brought up repeatedly: How does all of this fit together? What am I supposed to do with it now that I have read it? What order do I do it in? Why can't we practice all of this more? Why wasn't this part mentioned earlier?

Perhaps it was that last question that set me to thinking about why I wanted to undertake writing a speech text specifically for students who will likely only take one communication course during their college career. As I better understood my students' concerns and needs over the years, I consistently adjusted my syllabus to take chapters of conventional speech textbooks out of their normal sequence. That often involved giving a major speech before studying any of the principles involved in becoming a good speaker. Students need to have a strong sense of what to think about before they begin speaking instead of speaking first and then backtracking to fine-tune areas that they would have benefited from understanding earlier. The approach to this material is, to me, rather like putting together children's building blocks. Each part fits into the next, adding on and becoming something else in the end. But what must come first is the foundation on which everything else rests, one that many think is in place when students come in the door.

Traditionally, texts have generally given only a quick mention of students' anxiety several weeks into a class, if they dealt with the issue at all. My students have reported that they appreciate addressing their fears early and discussing how to begin to remove them the first week. It's rather like acknowledging that fear exists and beginning to get it out of the way so other, more important issues may be addressed. By ignoring the reality and presence of fears, most courses fail to help students find the source of their anxieties and to help make them manageable.

Language as a chapter is normally included late in the text as a sort of afterthought. Instead, it should be the very first consideration when a student is learning to be an effective speaker. I see language as the very basis for how people frame their thinking and their understanding of issues and topics. Dealing with language later in the course and carrying misconceptions and misuse into the development of their speeches will affect how they think and write as well as how they speak. If students do not deal with these misunderstandings until after they have developed their speeches, then the adjustment of the problems at that point will demand less focus on crucial elements such as organization and delivery when it is necessary. It's simple, really; remove the problem early before it gets a chance to be deeply rooted and impossible to remove.

Listening is another area that needs to be dealt with early. If students have no notion of what an audience listens for or responds to, how can they hope to construct an effective speech? How can the speaker hope to be a solid communicator if he or she doesn't listen to the audience? Listening is the key to becoming a participant in the communication process, so it is clear that the better the speaker and the audience are at listening, the better chance there is of communication between them.

Another concern is that deciding on a topic, outlining, researching and developing a speech have always been separate entities. When I experimented with integrating them and putting them in a sequence that mirrored the students' development of a presentation, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive from my classes. It is essential that inexperienced speakers understand how to build a complete, clear speech, and the best way to do that is to help them to develop the ability to be structured, thorough and organized. Their success as speakers also lies in helping novices to understand the relationship between good writing and good speaking.

In this text I have tried to include not only most of the elements that are common to speech texts, but also a few extras that often turn up in lectures or class discussions. I have used a broad variety of examples from different time frames to reflect not only the fact that these elements have been integral parts of public speaking for as long as we have spoken, but also to address the diversity in ages and experience in classrooms today. I chose to make the language style a conversation with the reader instead of a more formal text in the hope that students will feel less threatened and more open to participation. This text also is designed to offer enough

written information and enough thinking and application exercises so that at least half of the available class time may be spent with students actually engaged in some form of oral communication.

Actually, the ideas contained in this book are not unique; most of them are simply common sense. Think about it this way: the best way to learn to swim is not just by listening to lectures or reading books about how to do it and then having only a couple of chances to practice before being thrown into the deep end of the pool. The most effective way is to understand the concept and then learn to do it by applying the theory one lap at a time, building slowly on each new small skill, until one is a fine swimmer. The same principle can be applied to public speaking. So, come on over to the water, get your feet wet, and let's get started. Whether you wind up an Olympic competitor or a splasher in the wading pool, you're already successful because you're in there trying.

Sherry Crawford

## CHAPTER 1

### **Oral Communication and the Student: Learning About Speaking And Yourself**

“No way!” If that was the first thing that popped into your mind when you read through the college catalogue and saw Public Speaking listed, you’re not alone. That response is right up there with ““I don’t understand why I have to take bowling” or ““How come psychology is a requirement if I’m going to be an accountant?” It may not always be obvious immediately why a course is required in a curriculum, but in the case of a public speaking class, you might just be able to spot the benefits right away. These skills are something that you will be using right now as you move through your college career. And just as you are doing in every other class in college, in this one you are also going to practice and develop skills that are going to be very positive and essential tools in your professional, educational and personal life in the future.

Think about this: Is it possible for you to one day have a career in your chosen field without having strong communication skills? Is it likely that you will learn everything you will need to be a professional in that career area without strong communication skills? If you answered no to both questions, you’re right. Because this is a speech class, you probably already figured out what the answer would have to be anyway. But think about it just a bit more. Just how important is oral communication to you and why in the world should you have to study it?

Every day in each class you take, in the dorm, in a restaurant with friends or even when answering a stranger on the street who asks you for directions, you are engaged in oral communication. Most of the time, you probably don’t even think about some of your responses; you just give them and expect them to be fully understood. After all, you’ve been talking since you can remember, and you’ve always spoken well enough to get your point across, haven’t you? But are you really speaking effectively? If you are like just about everybody else in the world, there times when you are completely misunderstood and when you don’t know how to say what

you want to say. You've probably even envied someone who seems to speak eloquently and clearly and wondered why you couldn't speak that well. You may also be one of those people who is too shy to speak when you know that you have just the right information needed at the moment. If you can see yourself in all of these examples, then you might begin to understand why a speech class is going to be a very important learning experience for you. You can become a much more capable and confident communicator by practicing what this course will offer you and by keeping an open mind as you do.

The object of any public speaking course is not to have you give speeches about topics that may not interest you, although that probably has already crossed your mind. The point is to help you to be more aware of the importance of communication in the world today, as well as to help you to become more comfortable with it and more capable at it. In your life you are going to communicate in four ways: reading, writing, listening and speaking. And each is extremely important. But even if you are a writer, you are probably going to speak thousands of words for each word you write as you move through a typical day, so why not be prepared for it. Also, speaking and listening are the primary tools of communication in business, social and political fields, so it just makes sense to have those skills solidly in place. Otherwise you might feel like the actor whose ill-fitting pants fell down during a soliloquy on stage -- unprepared and at a loss for words.

### **Why Do I Need This Right Now?**

Oral communication skills are essential if you are going to be an active participant in the world today. At the moment we live in a technological/information society, just seconds away from access to anyone else in the world. Education and business are global, not regional, and verbal communication is the one of the most important ways to be a part of the global information pool. But even if you aren't exchanging information with people on the other side of the world, you still have to deal with communication situations in your own world continually. From one moment to the next, you may be called on to speak in almost any circumstance about almost anything to any kind of audience. Will you be ready, confident and successful? Or will you be like many who simply attempt to muddle through and hope for the best?

## **There Is Power Behind the Person**

You have power if you have oral communication skills. Think about people in the distant and recent past who changed the course of history through their spoken words. For example, because they could speak persuasively, some world figures have assumed leadership and because of the power of language, those they ruled either followed those leaders or removed them. How did former house painter Adolph Hitler transform the tattered and devastated Germany that existed at the end of World War I? Vile and deceitful though he was, Hitler still demonstrated how effective and persuasive strong speaking skills can be. There are others, however, who have used the same ability positively. Muhammad, Buddha and Jesus Christ altered the way the world had been before they spoke to their followers. John F. Kennedy convinced young people in the 1960s to leave college campuses to work in Third World countries in the Peace Corps instead of looking for a high-paying, prestigious job right away. Martin Luther King, Jr., organized a nation of angry and disenfranchised blacks into a determined but peaceful force for change. Elizabeth Glaser moved both private citizen and politician alike to fund and participate in her Pediatric AIDS Foundation when so many people feared and hated those with the disease. Boris Yeltsin helped convince Russians to choose democracy and capitalism over generations of communist rule. A once destitute and mute Maya Angelou, one of America's most respected authors and lecturers, became President Bill Clinton's speaker of choice at his inauguration. How did all of these people make such a significant impact on their world? The answer, though simple sounding, is not simple at all: through the mastery of oral communication.

There are millions of examples like these that prove the power of the spoken word, a power that develops cultures, creates laws, defines roles and allows people to share all of it with one another. Not all are as dramatic, of course, but each is important. Think about the C.E.O.s of major companies. Do you think that they got to these positions without being able to communicate solidly? Microsoft's Bill Gates is a man with a vision who has been able to share his ideas with others who understand and believe in them. Think about basketball superstar Michael Jordan. Someone had to instill in him the awareness of what self-discipline and teamwork could bring him. Too, Oprah Winfrey's speaking skills cannot be denied given that she is considered by both average citizens and business people alike to be one of the most influential people in America and a role model to millions -- all based on her ability to talk to others. And few could argue the

speaking ability of First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, a powerful and energetic force for change in her husband's administration.

Oral communication is central to our lives; we shouldn't take it lightly. Whether it is a minister helping the dispirited, a doctor helping to heal the sick, one friend simply offering a message of empathy to another, a teacher explaining a point to a student, or a newscaster reporting some important issue, oral communication is present everywhere. It is one of the primary tools with which we build and maintain our lives and our world.

Take all of this one step further. Place it squarely at the core of your life. Think about how you use oral communication. Better yet, can you name many situations in your personal, school, or professional life during which you don't use speaking as a primary means of making your point? Try to come up with any situation that would not be made easier or more successful if you were a better speaker than you might be right now. If you can't think of one, then you are on your way to being a willing participant in this course and one who stands to reap its many benefits.

### **So What Do I Get Out of This Besides a Grade?**

There is so much more that this class can offer you than just a grade at the end of the course. Here is a list of pluses from developing solid oral communication skills that includes a number of ways you can grow as a speaker and as a person.

- ⇒ Speaking skills help you to reduce shyness, to build your confidence and to become more assertive. You'll feel more at ease when you have to speak to someone.
- ⇒ Speaking skills show you how to develop a more positive self image. Whether you are dealing with a large group or just one person, you will feel more comfortable and more effective.
- ⇒ Speaking skills aid you in the ability to think clearly and express your thoughts concisely. Don't forget how uncomfortable you feel when you can't quite say what you want to say.
- ⇒ Speaking skills offer you a necessary tool to get the job or the career you want. Businesses consistently cite the ability to speak well as a plus when they are looking at potential employees.



- ⇒ Speaking skills allow you to be functional in an information-driven society. You can be a part of the world instead of just sitting on the sidelines watching what is going on.
- ⇒ Speaking skills enhance your ability to form and sustain meaningful relationships. At the very heart of any relationship is communication.
- ⇒ Speaking skills assist you in developing leadership capabilities. Any leader has to be able to explain his or her message and challenge and encourage others to follow it.
- ⇒ Speaking skills enable you to develop critical thinking skills. You will be an asset to any business or personal situation with this skill under your belt.
- ⇒ Speaking skills help you build a network of mentors to aid you in your life. Being able to share ideas and dreams with others will allow you to find others who can help you realize them.
- ⇒ Speaking skills give you the ability to solve problems more easily. Problem-solving skills are also some of the most sought after in the business community today.
- ⇒ Speaking skills help you improve your listening skills. If you don't listen, you can't communicate.

And if all of this isn't enough, learning to speak effectively will also make it possible for you to expand your knowledge in a number of areas of study. There is a great trade-off here as well. The more you know, the better communicator you can ultimately be.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of becoming a good speaker is that you will first have to become a good thinker. Thinking clearly and solidly before and while you speak is one of the most important elements of effective oral communication. But it is also the cornerstone of good writing. More than once as you move through this text the relationship between thinking, writing and speaking will be brought up, so consider that connection as you explore this material. Remember that each is an integral part of good communication.

## *Speaking Barriers*

You've been speaking in some form since almost infancy when a gurgle or a cry meant that you would get attention. So why aren't you an expert at oral communication by now? That's a tough question. There are numerous and complex reasons for our inability to communicate well with each other and with others outside the culture. Many of these have to do with the dynamics of families, the nature of society, and the attitude many of us have about oral communication in general. Let's take a look at just a few, but keep in mind that there are many more than can be mentioned here.

### **No More Sunday Dinners**

One of the first explanations for why many of us aren't expert speakers may well be the nucleus of our world: the family. While it can't be said of all, of course, most families today don't indulge in much verbal contact. Think for a moment. When was the last time you and the folks sat down to discuss your lives over a pot roast? Years ago Sunday dinners or evening meals were times to share conversations, to explore ideas and offer insights into problems and solutions, to express ideas and feelings verbally. But today, because the family is often busy, fragmented or in different locations, the opportunity to just sit down and talk has almost disappeared. Along with it went a strong sense of confidence in speaking freely on varied topics. Research at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research studied the amount of time that parents and children spend communicating. Studies by Goff-Timmer, Eccles and O'Brien revealed some startling statistics. The total time for conversation between parents and children in some families today is as few as 10 minutes in a day. That's not much time in which to develop and sharpen one's verbal communication skills.

That same spirit spills over into the classroom, where many teachers report that their current students are much less verbally communicative than those they had as few as 10 years ago. Some students simply are not comfortable speaking aloud to their teachers or peers in the formal setting of a classroom. Do you take the opportunity in a class to express your opinion or to ask a question? Or do you feel uncomfortable doing so and often let a chance to learn or to share go by? Businesses also confirm that far too few of their employees currently have the ability to

deal with oral communication-based situations. Repeatedly, workers and supervisors have to retrace their steps and waste valuable and expensive time to ask again what should have been understood the first time the topic was discussed or the instruction given. You may have experienced this yourself in the classroom or on the job.

### **I'm Not Sure I Trust You**

Another problem facing communicators today is that many people are not as willing to engage one another in conversation as they once were because of a diminishing sense of trust in one another. In the past, strangers on a plane, a train or a bus might start up a conversation that would last an entire trip across country; people in a crowded diner would share a table with someone they had never met and strike up an interesting conversation. But today many people are less trusting of those with whom they are not acquainted and are much less willing to begin a dialogue. That attitude can be seen in almost every public situation involving strangers. Some people claim they don't feel comfortable speaking to strangers because they are afraid of people they don't know; they believe they could be physically hurt or be misjudged based on what they say to strangers. Some say their reluctance is because they don't know what to say to someone they are unfamiliar with. Do you feel comfortable striking up a conversation with a stranger? If you don't, think about what reasons can you give for feeling uncomfortable with it. Try to recall a time when you've been the new person in a situation, perhaps the new kid at school or a new employee someplace where everyone else was acquainted. How did you deal with speaking to these new people? Did you initiate conversation or did you wait for someone else to do it? If you are like many today, you have some problems with situations like these.

### **TV and Radio: One-Way Talk**

Wait a minute before you reach for that remote control. Think about what happens when you turn on the tube for a few hours of entertainment. Does that have any bearing on how you speak with others? You bet. The presence of television and even radio in our lives is a tremendous source of information and entertainment, but it is also a negative influence on our ability to be effective oral communicators. Both TV and radio speak to us but do not usually allow a means of speaking back. As a result, many people who spend their lives glued to the tube or to the radio

often find it difficult to hold a conversation of any length or depth. And when some electronic media addicts do try to converse, much of the attempt seems to be nothing more than sound bites. This kind of communication does not allow for several exchanges; instead, a whole conversation may consist of one question and one response. It also doesn't require much thought. It's next to impossible to have any meaningful conversation with only this kind of short, static communication. If you have experienced trying to talk to someone who speaks only in sentence fragments, you already understand the communication problem and the level of frustration it can produce for people who want a conversation with others.

### **Isolation At The Keyboard**

The computer is arguably one of the greatest causes of silence in society at the moment. Do you find yourself more comfortable at the keyboard holding a silent conversation than sitting across a table talking to someone? You're not the only one. As the number of computer users grows, so does the number of people who have no direct spoken contact with others much of the time. They sit transfixed in front of a screen, having no verbal exchanges with others. These people do their communicating in sometimes short sentences on e-mail or in chat rooms and rarely indulge in face-to-face conversations. They may feel comfortable at their computers, but they may also be among many who have become culturally isolated. Many people even suggest that computer conversations are the safest way to talk to strangers, once again pointing out the fear many of us have of one-to-one contact.

### **I Don't Want To Read; I'll Wait For The Movie To Come Out**

Tell the truth. Have you ever had the urge to write a book report or review of a film adaptation instead of reading the book it was based on? If you did, you weren't the first, and sadly, you won't be the last. But the truth is, skipping the written text is creating another major hurdle for oral communicators. It is possible that one of the most damaging problems among non-communicators today is that they don't read. That doesn't mean that they can't read, but that they choose not to. While reading is an individual activity, its greatest asset is that it stimulates people to talk with other readers who are eager to share insights and interpretations. As reading in America diminishes, so does the amount of verbalization between readers. People who do not

read often simply have less information and smaller vocabularies resulting in fewer solid ideas to think and talk about. This situation also affects people's confidence in their ability to speak intelligently or in an informed manner. Think about the classes you have enjoyed most in school. Were they classes in which you were eager to discuss issues after you had read the text? Were they opportunities to get feedback from other students or the instructor? Have you ever just enjoyed discussing a book with friends over coffee? You can see what a communication problem that presents itself if you don't read much.

### **What Do You Mean? I Can So Talk!**

Stop thinking you already know everything there is to know about speaking. That idea sets you up for a major downfall in the world of oral communicators. While there are so many factors that hamper strong verbal skills, possibly the greatest is the attitude most people have about public speaking. There are two basic ways people display their negative outlooks about it. The first is arrogance -- far too many think that just because they can go through the drive-thru at a fast-food restaurant and get something close to what they ordered, they are solid communicators. These are people who believe that they are good speakers because they spoke and someone responded. Now that's communication, they seem to think. But speaking into a box and getting a paper bag shoved out a window at you isn't actually communication. It is often little more than self expression on the part of the one ordering with an outcome generally based in habit or coincidence on the part of the restaurant worker. How many times have you ordered carefully, often repeating the instructions, only to get the bag home and discover that everything there was the wrong item, the wrong size with the wrong ingredients?

Don't be one of those cheerfully optimistic folks who mistakenly thinks that language skills develop naturally over time and that by the time a person reaches adulthood, great speaking skills will be solidly in place. The process just doesn't work that way, no matter how much you hope it does. Oral communication is an **active** process that demands understanding and careful choices from you, the speaker, as well as from you, the listener. Being a good speaker also requires that you know that each communication situation is different from every other one. Actively participate in each one as if it were the first you ever encountered. Otherwise, instead of

being a solid communicator, you'll be the one in the college yearbook with the name "Most Confusing" under your picture.

### **"There's Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself" -- And a Few Hundred Other Things**

Picture this: you have sweating palms, a knot in your stomach and a need to hold onto something as you speak. If you can see this image clearly, you are just one of millions who experience the greatest deterrent to effective speaking people face: fear or speaker's anxiety. Actually, fright is a major part of oral communication for just about everyone. In David Wallachinsky's Book of Lists, several thousand people revealed in a survey the things that scared them the most in life. Many claimed fear of such things as death, heights, flying, water, loss of a loved one, having no money and being physically hurt. But the topping the list was public speaking. Are you one of those who is actually more comfortable with the idea of dying than of speaking to a group of strangers? Or do you see yourself dying while speaking to that group? If that's the case, you can see one more benefit of a speech class -- a longer life span.

### ***Dealing With Anxieties***

As you just learned, dread is a natural part of the experience when people are faced with speaking to others, especially when it is in a formal setting that requires a prepared text to be delivered. But it doesn't have to paralyze or even compromise. Instead, think about what you're afraid of and find a way to remove that obstacle. Easier said than done? Yes, but you can do it. Perhaps the best way to start dealing with this problem is to first look at some of the most common fears many people claim are what keep them from being comfortable with public speaking. If you recognize any of these fears as your own, cheer up. There are a number of ways you can not only overcome them, but actually turn some of the problems into pluses. And remember: If you help yourself remove the fear of formal situations, then informal speaking opportunities will probably be a breeze.

## *Identifying Common Fears*

### *I couldn't do it in high school, so I'm afraid I can't do it now.*

Just because you didn't do well in speech in high school doesn't mean you won't succeed now. There is no reason to think that because you didn't accomplish something at one point in your life that you won't do it at another. Think about the case of basketball star Scottie Pippen. He was cut from his high school team, yet he became a world-class player as a professional. Maybe he just didn't have enough skill at the time he was in high school to be successful, but that was certainly not the case later.

Where speaking is concerned, perhaps your situation is similar; maybe that one high school class was not all you needed to feel confident as an oral communicator. You probably haven't always succeeded at everything the first time you tried it. Have you lost weight on every diet you began? Did you play that sport at championship level when you first tried it? Give yourself time to learn and grow. And get out of your mind the idea that "Great speakers are born." Actually, great speakers learned to be effective just the way you are doing it now -- a step at a time. But they had one important advantage that you may not yet have: self-confidence. They believed in their ability to accomplish their goals, even if they fell short a couple of times along the way; obviously Scottie Pippen believed.

Pippen also had one more thing that communicators need: a goal. Ministers have to take classes in how to write and deliver sermons; they have a goal in mind, and they work toward it. The most successful motivational speakers of our time, those pitchmen on the TV shopping networks who entice you to buy things you don't need or really even want, are people who have spent years perfecting their spiel. They have an aim in mind, and they practice until they get it right. So must you. And when you do, you'll feel more confident and less frightened.

### *I'm scared I'll sound stupid.*

The argument about sounding "stupid" is one that daunts many a novice speaker, but it is one that can be handled very easily. What do you think makes you sound stupid? Using the wrong words? Not having enough to say? Not sounding organized? Could it be a lack of preparation?

Would doing a bit more homework help? Would more research and more time to make careful choices about words, support and organization be of value? Would some practice delivering the presentation aloud help? Of course. Don't overlook the benefit of practicing on someone you trust to tell you if you have effectively said what you wanted to say. The only person who sounds stupid while speaking is the one who did not anticipate the expectations of his audience and the amount of work he or she needed to put into a presentation. The Boy Scouts know the secret: Be prepared.

### ***I don't think I look good, and I know people will be staring at me.***

Those who fall back on their uncertainty about looking good are people who are also wrestling with low self-esteem. In your closet is an outfit that makes you feel just a bit taller, a little slimmer, a lot more confident. Wear it. Do everything you can to make yourself feel better about yourself, whether it is through clothing, makeup, or a hairdo. Wear those shoes that make you feel comfortable and ready for a challenge. It is a well-known fact that people who dress for success feel successful. Try it once. Wear dress clothes to deliver a speech in class, and you might just discover how much more confident you feel and how differently the audience responds to you.

But there is also another idea to consider here. Even a person wearing the most ragged clothes can captivate an audience if he or she is a powerful, energetic speaker, so don't let clothing or hair be the only things that you think will give you an edge. Look to your mind as well.

### ***I'm afraid I'll freeze and just stand there.***

When you know well what you are going to say, you are less likely to stand stranded in front of the audience like a deer paralyzed in a car's headlights might. Memorization may not be the key, however, as you will learn in a later chapter. One major preparation aid is notes of some kind that will keep you from losing your place completely. But the most important preparation tool you have to make you feel confident is the time you spend writing a good presentation. Nothing can take the place of researching, thinking and writing solidly before speaking.



Another helpful technique is using breathing as an aid to good speaking. A couple of deep breaths can clear the mind and restore calm so you can deal comfortably with your speaking. And read! Realistically, the more you know about a topic before speaking, the more likely you are to avoid freezing up. Even if you do get lost, you still have information to draw from until you can get back on track.

### ***I'm not sure what I want to say, and I don't know how to say it.***

Common sense again tells you how to deal with the problem of not knowing what to say or how to say it. Leave nothing to chance. Prepare well enough in advance that you have had the opportunity to pick just the right words to express what you want to say. This is the place that writing is most related to speaking. If you believe that you know enough to just get up and “wing it,” you may well be in for a big surprise. Without solid preparation, how can you expect to completely and clearly develop and explain your topic? If you have taken a writing course in college or high school, you need to know that the same kind of care that went into the organization and construction of a good essay is also what is necessary for a good speech. Before you speak, take the time to think and write, to write and think. Ample writing time also allows you to look at different avenues of thought and examples that will clearly explain your ideas. That kind of preparedness is a way to remove anxiety and feel confident about what you have to say.

Here is yet another place to mention reading. The more you read, the more likely you are to find not only solid information, but also words, phrases and quotes from experts who have the ability to explain themselves perfectly. Tell the audience where you got the information, then use some of those passages. Using quotes is not only helpful in building support, but it is also a wonderful way to learn to use the language from those who do it brilliantly.

And don't forget the benefit of trying things out on someone else who can tell you if you have clearly stated what you wanted to say. Talk your ideas over and ask for input from someone else. Another set of eyes and ears can only help when trying to decide if your presentation is understandable.

### *I can't think when I'm in front of people, so I stammer and stutter.*

You can also handle the worry about not being able to think on your feet by preparing early. With enough practice, you don't have to be concerned about being spontaneous, a situation that leads many people to have problems speaking. You can rely on your background work and feel confident that all your preparation has readied you for the experience, whether it be a speech, a report or simply a conversation. You may have experienced having a conversation with someone, leaving that person and a few minutes later stopping and moaning, "Man, I wish I had said that!" That never has to happen to you again. Afterthoughts can be avoided by solid preparation.

That same preparation can help you overcome any fear you might have of someone asking you a question you can't answer. Enough background information will make you confident, no matter what is asked of you. Answering a question with ease will also further strengthen your confidence.

Through all of this there is one major thing to remember: The audience is not the enemy. It is not some mysterious entity that plots to embarrass or trip you up. It is a body of people who really are interested in what you have to say. Remember that if people are going to give up their time, they want something in return, and that is to be **informed**, to be **persuaded**, or to be **entertained**. They will listen well to the person who is respectful and mindful that their time is precious and that their needs as listeners are met. However, if you not prepared to utilize the audience's time wisely and to bring to them what they need, you may expect to meet resistance if not downright hostility. No one wants his or her time wasted. It's all up to you. You can become a confident, strong, skilled communicator with just a little careful work on your part.

### **Confidence -- Really?**

Even if you have never had an ounce of confidence in your life, this course will help you acquire some. You will begin to develop a sense of accomplishment just by doing the required assignments during the semester, and you will deserve it. Granted, after each speaking experience you will feel relief, but you will also have a sense of satisfaction that will grow with each opportunity to speak. There are tales aplenty among speech teachers about students who were

terrified to the point of physical illness at the beginning of the term and who eagerly volunteered to speak first by semester's end.

It's a great feeling to be able to verbalize your ideas and your opinions. And you will be excited the next time you are asked to put your two cents' worth in and you hand over a dollar's worth of insight.

## *Developing Confidence*

Here are a few helpful hints to get you over the confidence hurdle.

1. *Be prepared; that can't be said enough.*
2. *Know your audience and anticipate their needs and expectations.* A successful speaker is the one who knows how much the audience knows ahead of time, what it wants to hear, what its attitude is beforehand and what it expects to hear.
3. *Pick a familiar or comfortable topic that will add to your ease with and interest in the presentation.* You will feel more confident speaking about something you know than if you choose a topic that you have no experience with.
4. *Rehearse; leave nothing to chance.*
5. *Memorize the introduction and conclusion so you can keep your eyes on the audience at both times.* However, keep notes on hand for the body of the speech so you can move around and not get lost or forget a major point.
6. *Be organized; that will make you feel more comfortable.* Plan ahead for what order points are to be made in so you don't have to worry about whether or not your presentation is understandable.
7. *Practice breathing exercises that will fuel your thinking and reduce your stress.* This will be discussed later and will include some specific exercises that will help.
8. *Concentrate on the message you want to impart, not on your fear.* Don't give fear that much attention; keep your energy channeled toward your audience.
9. *Find as many opportunities to speak as you can --- practice, practice, practice!*
10. *Visualize being successful.*

This last key is a fascinating one. Psychologist Viktor Frankl developed a treatment for psychological problems called logotherapy, a theory based on what he witnessed as a Holocaust concentration camp survivor. Frankl was curious about why some camp internees survived while others gave up the will to live. Through observation he was able to come to the conclusion that those who died were people who could not visualize themselves past the camps, who could not picture themselves having a life beyond the moment they were in. However, those who did survive were people who could imagine themselves later in life in careers and in relationships.

The same may be said for a speaker. If you can imagine yourself as being a solid, skillful speaker who walks and talks with confidence, that is likely what you will be.

## *Understanding The Process*

All right, so communication is a tremendously powerful tool. On that we can all probably agree by now. And we can likely also agree that for some, it is a terribly frightening thing and that the fear can be overcome in a number of ways. But there is one thing that has yet to be discussed. Exactly what is public speaking? When that question is asked, most people think only of a formal situation in which a well-trained speaker presents a commanding, dynamic oration that captivates and persuades an audience. Can you picture yourself as being that kind of speaker? If your answer is no, you need to stop and think further for a moment; you need to realize that you already are a public speaker.

Public speaking is not just towering above a crowd in a huge arena, as would a keynote speaker at a political convention. Every time you give directions to someone, each time you demonstrate how something works or how to perform a task, whenever you offer insight into a problem or discuss your point of view on an issue, you are being a public speaker. You're a public speaker when you attempt to persuade friends, classmates, instructors, or co-workers that your idea is the best one to be considered in a given situation. When you are successful at one or all of these, when the person or persons you are speaking to understand and respond to you, you are an oral communicator who is speaking publicly.

Realistically, not everyone is going to be a professional motivational speaker, but just about everyone is going to have to report to the boss about a project or give instructions to a new

employee. You might have to present a report at a meeting or offer input to a quality circle. You might even find yourself in management, training new employees, handling problems, giving instructions, fielding complaints from the public or any other task that involves speaking with and to human beings. And what about school? There are numerous occasions that will call for speaking one-to-one or to a group. You may belong to groups or organizations that require reports or meetings during which you will be asked to speak. And there will surely be times in a relationship that you will have to offer opinions while being mindful of the other person's feelings and beliefs. All of these examples follow basically the same strategies, whether it be speaking to one or to thousands. So it seems reasonable that the more prepared you to do this, the better your chances of being successful as a communicator, as a public speaker, as a valuable member of the work force and as a functioning citizen of the world.

## LEVELS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION

Public speaking is actually just one part of the full spectrum of oral communication. Each of the parts is in itself important, and all of them collectively make up the wide range of oral communication possibilities you will have to deal with in your life. The five primary levels are:

1. intrapersonal communication
2. interpersonal communication
3. group communication
4. public communication
5. mass communication

**Intrapersonal communication** is the form that you have with yourself. That doesn't mean that you walk around talking to yourself, though certainly many people do. An outburst of "I can't believe I did that!" or "Where did I leave my stupid keys?" is commonplace, but normally an intrapersonal exchange is silent. No one hears the **feedback** but you. The presence of feedback, offering a response to a statement, thought or question posed by you or an unspoken cue that still carries a message, presumes another extremely important concern of communication: **listening**. You have to listen before you can offer feedback, no matter at what level you are communicating. And as the speaker, you will also have to listen so you may receive feedback.

Intrapersonal is the level of communication involved when you fret about doing well on a test or when you are trying to decide what to do about buying a car or taking a trip. You can even communicate intrapersonally while being involved in another of the levels. For example, if you are having a conversation with someone, you might reflect for just a moment that you are happy with the way you just made a point or take issue with yourself for having said something insensitive or incorrect. The whole point of intrapersonal communication is rooted in evaluating what is going on in the mind at the moment, whether it be solving a problem, making plans or rethinking a decision that you made in the past. You are communicating intrapersonally when you evaluate a speaker, as well. Do you remember what was going on in your mind the last time you heard a political candidate speak or when you listened to a celebrity give an interview? At that moment you were having a conversation with yourself.

**Interpersonal communication** is that level that involves you and another person. This form is often called **dyadic communication**, which means that it takes place between a pair of people and that feedback is easily accomplished. Interpersonal exchanges are not exclusive to friends or family; any two people can be involved in them. An instructor being questioned by a student and giving an answer, a social worker giving advice to a client, a policeman giving a ticket to a driver who wants to explain the situation, and a telephone operator giving long-distance assistance to a caller who has lost a phone number are all illustrations of interpersonal communication.

Imagine a job interview. Both intra- and interpersonal communication are going on there. It is a situation that is often difficult because the two people involved don't know each other well and may have trouble understanding, or "reading," one another. Of course, when two people have a close personal connection, such as those in a relationship or good friends, the level of communication is enhanced because the dialogue between them doesn't have to be complete; incomplete sentences, unfinished words or even sighs can successfully communicate thoughts for those on the same "wave length."

**Group communication** involves the interaction of three or more people who are engaged in working toward a common goal. That might be a study group in school, a committee ironing out the plans for a function, a boss exchanging ideas with his staff in a meeting, or even a question and answer period after one of your speeches in class. It is important to understand that the individuals in the group see themselves as group members who have something in common, whether it be solving a problem, working toward a goal or simply expressing interest in a collective experience or topic. Do you belong to a sorority or fraternity? To a sports team? To a language club? To a church group? All of these qualify as group communication arenas. Quality circles and matrix groups, made up of workers from a company who come together to investigate problems or to offer ideas for new procedures or products, also fall into this category.

**Public communication** is the form most generally dealt with in public speaking courses, when one person speaks directly to a group of others. This might be something as small as your speech class or as large as a public forum in your community. One important factor to remember about public communication is that the larger the group, the less chance there is for real communication, which involves the opportunity to speak directly or offer silent feedback to one another. It is in this situation that the idea of immediate feedback is sometimes compromised by the presence of large numbers of people. The flow of communication is generally more one-directional in public communication than in the other levels, where the flow is on-going and instantaneous.

Don't forget, however, that the entire audience is offering feedback at all times, even though it is not verbalized. **Body language** -- eye contact, posture, facial expressions and even gestures -- is a message of reply being sent to you as the speaker about your effectiveness or lack of it. Don't overlook those clues when thinking about feedback when you speak. To understand what body language is, just think of a verbally unresponsive teenager being asked a question that he or she doesn't want to answer. The teen slumps in a seat, stares at the floor, sighs and wears a slight smirk. Those are all clues that the question is falling on deaf ears; it doesn't take much imagination to understand what the teen is saying without his or her actually verbalizing it.

**Mass communication** is the last level dealt with when understanding public discourse. This is the form that involves TV, radio, computer on-line services, newspapers, magazines or any other form of communication that involves feedback that is not immediate. This level of communication is actually one that helps to relieve the discomfort that many have with direct and instant feedback because all feedback here is delayed. Whether it be in the form of a letter to the editor or a computer e-mail message, feedback takes time and as a result, sometimes it is ineffective or even ignored.

### **You Have Options**

It is important that you understand that these levels exist and are part of a larger field for the same reason that it is useful to recognize when you have options in solving a problem. It is possible that one level may suit your communication needs more than another. Think about what you want to accomplish and then choose how best to do it. Remember also that while each level of communication is separate and calls for different approaches from a speaker, they are all interconnected and have impact on one another. For instance, if you're dealing with public speaking, you're also involved in intra- and interpersonal communication.

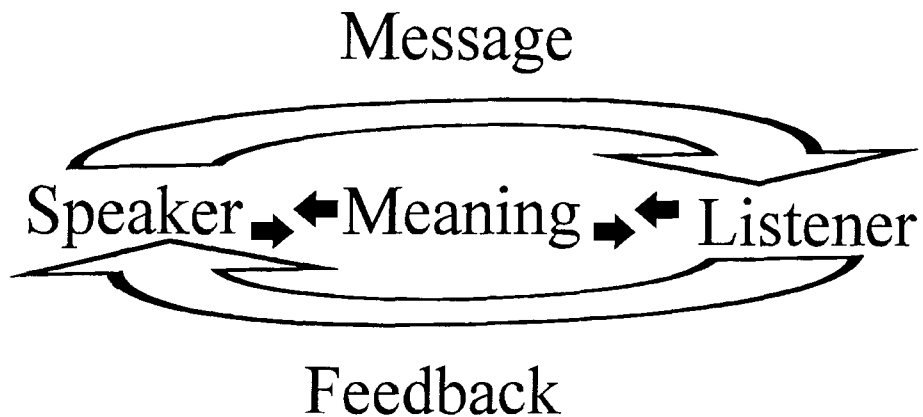
Remember that no matter which approach you use, your understanding of its relationship to interpersonal communication is imperative for you to best utilize the strategy. You can't give a speech or go on an interview without understanding the nature of interpersonal communication. You shouldn't have a conversation with someone without knowing that intrapersonal communication can have a bearing on what you say, how you say it and how the listener interprets and reacts to your conversation.

## **COMPONENTS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION**

So with all of this in mind, what in the world is oral communication? To say that it can be boiled down to one sentence is to mislead you. But the foundation, the platform on which the entire procedure is built, might be defined simply as **the process of sending and receiving information that is mutually understood**. That seems simple enough, but it is much more complex ultimately. You might have begun to understand that the last time you said something



innocently to a friend who misinterpreted your meaning and ended up angry with you. Although any model fails to completely demonstrate the workings of the process, a simple one will at least offer an overview of what you are dealing with each time you speak to someone else, whether it be an individual or a group. Understand that this definition also explains all of the components of communication discussed earlier.



The idea is simple: A speaker sends a message to a receiver (listener), and through the process of **feedback**, often in the form of questions and answers, the sender and the receiver come to a mutually agreed upon understanding and interpretation of the message. Through feedback they both discover if they have understood or misunderstood the other's message. So not only speaking, but also listening, the mutual interpretation of language, and the context in which it is spoken are all integral parts of making meaning for a message. **Context** deals with the particular situation involved in which the message is sent. Meanings can change according to context. For example, if you were to discuss freedom with a group of Bosnian immigrants, the meaning of the word would certainly be interpreted differently than if you were having the same conversation with Americans who have lived here all of their lives. It also changes when you discuss freedom with people from upper-middle class incomes or with those who are below the poverty level in this country. And do you find differences in interpreting freedom between men and women? Between African-Americans and Caucasians?

What adds to the complexity of communication is the fact that the process is cyclical, or on-going, and not linear, or in a straight line. That means that as someone speaks to you, you are not only busy trying to interpret what is being said, but you are also planning to offer your

response, all at the same time the speaker is planning his or her next statement while he or she is waiting for your response. And if that weren't dilemma enough, add to that lots of problems that block messages, such as biases, narrow- or closed-mindedness, environmental barriers, ethnic differences, cultural differences, language differences, ego and so many more, and now you might begin to understand why some messages get misinterpreted and why some people are never able to communicate effectively with others.

### **It's Not a Secret**

Remember that while the process is complicated, there really is nothing mysterious or mystical about oral communication. The whole process is really a matter of applying a great deal of what you already know. Oral communication can be broken down into user-friendly steps that can be accomplished by anyone who is willing to remember that language and thought are inseparable, that anxiety is a natural part of learning to speak effectively and that the ability to communicate is essential if you are to be successful in college, in business, in relationships, and in life. It is a tool to learn with and from, one that can lead you literally anywhere you want to go.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Make a list of three names that includes people you consider to be great speakers and three that you consider to be poor speakers. They may be local, state, national or international personalities, living or dead. Discuss with the class why you picked the people and what you respond to in their speaking.

For example, Abraham Lincoln must have been a great speaker because he helped unite a country and restore peace to a war-torn country through the spoken word. What about Lincoln got people to listen to him? First Lady Hillary Clinton impressed many as a strong, gifted speaker when she and her husband, Bill, were on the campaign trail. What about her caught the public's attention when she spoke? On the other hand, a voice that is high-pitched and thin, like that of celebrity chef Julia Child, annoys some listeners and keeps them from listening.. Others, however, are caught up in her message and overlook her voice. Can you think of other examples and other reasons for not listening? Be prepared to keep this list and discuss numerous aspects of it throughout the semester.

2. List examples of how you have felt inferior in a situation without strong communication skills. Discuss with the class what you might have done to strengthen your situation.
3. Listen to all of your instructors the first weeks of class to decide which ones you think will hold your interest more. Think about why and make a list of what you responded to, whether it be mannerisms, voice, approach, attitude, character or subject matter.
4. Make a list of situations in which you have felt uncomfortable or unprepared to speak. How successful were you and how did your audience respond to you? What did hope to accomplish? Did you?
5. Make a list of the specific benefits you want from this class. Explain how each will help you in the present and in the future. How could training in public speaking help you in your chosen profession?
6. Have you ever started to express yourself and then stopped? Why?
7. Do you feel more confident speaking to one person or a group? Why?

8. If you are afraid of speaking in public, make a list of experiences in your life that you dreaded ahead of time but that turned out better than you expected. What did they have in common with your fear of public speaking? What were you afraid of then that did not turn out to be a reality? Can you relate any of those elements to this experience?
9. Think about the specific things that frighten you about speaking to an audience. List them in order of importance. Discuss each with a group of three or four fellow students. What do you all have in common? How do they deal with their fears? What advice could you give them when thinking about speaking to an audience?
10. Think about the past month. What situations have you found yourself in that have asked you to speak publicly. Make a list of them and discuss them with the class. What did each require? What were the circumstances? Can you list an example of each of the different levels of oral communication? How did you deal with it? Successfully or unsuccessfully? Why?
11. How did you respond the last time you saw a speaker who was uncomfortable or afraid in front of an audience? What impression did you have of him or her and how well did you listen to what he or she said? Why?
12. Without looking back at the text, how many Keys to Confidence can you list? Make a list and then check to see if you were right and how many you might have forgotten. Keep these Keys firmly in mind whenever you speak to anyone.

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Try a first impression ice-breaking exercise. Seat yourselves in a circle so each person can clearly see the others. One at a time, each person will tell his or her name. As soon as a person is finished, all the other members of the class will then quickly write down their three first impressions of that person on an unsigned piece of paper while keeping direct eye contact with the new person as much as possible. Take only about one minute for each person's impressions. After each new person's impressions are written, the class will repeat the name of each person who has already been introduced. Then the class will

continue around the circle until everyone has introduced himself or herself and has had his or her name repeated by the entire class. By the end of this exercise, everyone will know each other's name and face.

When the exercise is finished, the instructor will collect the papers and put them away until later in the semester when you all know each other better. This is a solid way to get to know one another by name the first day, get over the jitters of having to have direct eye contact with strangers and learn that first impressions are not always reliable tools. It will also be a first-day means of removing stress; the class will never be harder than this first few minutes, so any speech you give later will actually be easier than you might have thought.

2. Give a speech of introduction. Interview a classmate for 15 minutes, and then prepare a 4-minute speech introducing that student to the class. Concentrate on more than just the background of the person, which is definitely important and must be included. Also pay attention to the things that you find unique and interesting about him or her and share those with the class. Ask insightful questions such as:
  - If you had but one book you could read the rest of your life and never tire of, what would it be? Why?
  - If you could invite one person, living or dead, to dinner, who would it be? Why?
  - If a movie were made of your life, who would star in it, and what would be the story line?
  - If you had the choice between laughing or crying in a movie, which would you choose?
  - If you won the lottery, what would you do the rest of your life?
  - What piece of music best sums up the way you feel about life?

Have fun with this assignment, and you could make a new friend in the bargain.

3. Read several newspaper or magazine articles that deal with current controversial issues. Take 20 minutes at the beginning of class to discuss what members of the class think about the issue. Don't let anyone dominate the conversation and encourage those who don't seem to want to participate to add their input. At the end of the designated time, think about how each person responded. Were some quick to respond? Why? Were others unwilling? Why? Did you become aware of different perspectives of the issue? Did everyone agree? Disagree?

4. In a group of three or four classmates, explain your course of study and your plans for a career. Then ask the group what they specifically heard in your delivery. Was it the information? The style of language? The sound of your voice? What first impression did they have of your level of confidence? Did you seem more confident than you actually were? If so, why do you think that happened? If not, why do think that happened?
5. Imagine yourself as a camp counselor in a summer camp for children under 10. On the first day each of the children is asked to stand, identify herself or himself and give a brief description of plans for the summer. One child in your group starts to cry. What advice could you give the child so that he or she could finish speaking to the campers? How could that advice relate to your situation in this class?
6. Do some positive visualization. Imagine yourself in a conversation with a good friend who is frightened of going on a job interview that could get your friend the best career move he or she has ever made. What do you picture yourself telling your friend that would help him or her be more comfortable and confident in the interview? What specific suggestions would you make? Make a list of positive suggestions and use them for yourself before you do the next exercise.
7. Before the next class meeting, approach three people on campus that you have never met before and begin a conversation. You might ask for directions to some location on campus, ask if the person has ever taken a specific class or ask about some upcoming event on campus. The object is to overcome any anxiety you might have about talking to a stranger. Try to make the exchange more than just one question and one response. How did you feel after the encounters? What were the other people's reactions? Were your fears founded or unfounded?

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LANGUAGE CONNECTION: CHOOSING YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

Before you can begin to become an experienced, confident speaker, you need to first gather some of the tools you will need to build your skills. The first is language, the base on which everything else is built. Through words we think and express ourselves, and without them, we have little to no chance of being understood clearly or completely. So let's look at the first step you need to take toward becoming a good speaker.

#### **I Don't Know How to Say What I Want to Say**

The English language now has more than a million words in it, with nearly a thousand more added each year. That's staggering when you consider that the average high school graduate generally understands between twenty-five and fifty thousand of them, but he or she uses only about five to six thousand consistently in day-to-day conversation and slightly more in a business setting that involves language that is related to his or her area of work.

How do we communicate with one another with such small vocabularies? Not as well as we could if we spent more time expanding our word base and learning more about how others interpret words. What is important to remember is that in informal conversation, people are given to slang, clichés, poor grammar, catch or fad phrases and vocal fillers. In casual settings, these departures from standard English are understandable and acceptable because Americans are generally quite relaxed about language. However, when speaking in a more formal situation, using a "You know" or a "Cool" is not a good idea. These kinds of expressions can be misinterpreted and can call to mind the issues of speaker credibility, intelligence and awareness of responsibility to the audience.

## *Identifying Some Problems*

There are many reasons why people have difficulty understanding what a speaker is saying, especially where language choices are concerned. The greatest problem is that most people don't understand exactly what they are asking words to do. Most people probably believe that once they utter a word, the listener will automatically understand what they mean. That's not the case. Let's take a look at how language can actually work against you.

### **What Do You Mean?**

Words don't have inherent meanings. If that statement sounds silly to you, think a bit more. Words are symbols for ideas, concepts, and feelings. When you have felt something strongly, perhaps pain, depression, happiness or anxiety, could you always express **exactly** how you felt so that someone else could understand it the way you did? Probably not. Words don't actually have built-in meanings; they have accepted usage that grammarians have agreed upon, which is what you look up in the dictionary.

What a word means, then, is a combination of what it means to you and what the dictionary offers as a meaning. Few people have ever had the same experience with that word, so it will likely take on a slightly different meaning for everyone. Here's an example: How many is a *few*? It sounds simple enough, but think of a specific number that you would assign to the word. Five? Seven? Ten? Thirteen? How about *several*? *Many*? *A bunch*? *A lot*? *A group*? It is possible that when you were a child someone might have told you to get a few crayons from the table and color until time for dinner. When you reached the table, you found four crayons. As a result, a few became four to you from then on, even though you may never have been aware of it. It is not possible that everyone will have had the same experience with the word.

One more example might help: If you received a request for several items to be sent to someone in a few days, you might send five items in four days when the request in the other person's mind was for six items in three days. If that doesn't sound like much of a problem to you, imagine how big it becomes when it involves a business waiting for an important shipment or a high school student waiting for college application forms that are near deadline already.



Remember when choosing your language, make sure what you have chosen cannot be misinterpreted.

### **Saying It and Implying It**

Words actually have two levels of meaning: **denotative** and **connotative**. The first deals with what you would find in the dictionary, how etymologists and grammarians have mutually agreed to use the word. The second deals with what the word implies or what meaning it carries for you as you have learned to use it in your own life.

Here's an example of denotative meaning: When you look up the word *power* in the dictionary, one meaning is "a great or marked power to do or act." That simply explains that power involves the ability to act with some control in a given situation. However, a connotative meaning could be altogether different. When people at a high socio-economic level think about power, they might feel they have the power to deal with problems that arise in their lives, that they have options such as the power to seek a lawyer's help or the power to fight injustices in their lives. On the other hand, those of a lower socio-economic status might look at power as something they don't have and that is often used against them. Context and personal experience play a great role in connotative meanings. Think about that when you are choosing your language. Make sure what you say is understandable and acceptable to the audience in the context in which you are speaking.

### **I Use That Word All The Time**

Another difficulty related to interpretation is overuse. How many times have you heard, "I love pizza"? The same person might also say, "I love my new shoes," "I love my best friend," "I love long walks in the rain," "I love this country" and "I love you." After a while, what does *love* mean? Children are given to this kind of over use often because they have yet to develop large enough vocabulary to clearly explain the degrees of difference in these examples. For adults, that should not be as big a dilemma as personal vocabulary increases. Can you think of a time when you could have chosen a better word to express your meaning? If so, you understand the opportunity you have to make your message as clear as possible.

## **I'm Impressed**

Don't be of those people who thinks that by using what you consider to be intelligent sounding words and sentences, you will come across as more impressive to others. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. Think about how you react when you hear a politician say something like this.

It is clear that there is a problem and that there is need to look into the situation so that this perplexity can be eradicated through careful analysis of the quandary and so that any residual confusion may be eliminated.

Does that kind of language conjure up the image of a child's train going around a circular track? You probably wouldn't have any idea what the statement meant. Nor are you likely to understand a letter from your university that states that the administration is "instituting a positive initiative aimed at revenue enhancement and growth potential." Would you recognize that as an increase in tuition? The only confusion that needs elimination here is in the words of the speaker. This kind of doublespeak is not only frustrating, it is completely without meaning for the listener. It might as well be a foreign language.

## **Jargon Is Just Another Word For Confusion**

Nearly everyone has CDs these days. What was your first interpretation of CD when you read the word? Was it compact disc or certificate of deposit? Or maybe CD ROM? Depending upon your personal experience, either with music, banking or computers, you would have made a choice. What you have just dealt with is called **jargon**, a kind of language shortcut that is used in businesses, in fields of study and among groups of people. Medicine, law, real estate, sports and many more areas all use this stylistic language to allow their members to speak quickly to one another, but anyone outside these areas is often lost when hearing terms such as *CT scan*, *probate*, *escrow*, and *I formation*. Unless you are absolutely certain that everyone in your audience understands a particular piece of jargon, avoid it completely because it will simply serve to disturb. If you absolutely must use it in order to make your point, the only other option is to

explain it thoroughly. At times, though, an explanation may be more problematic and time-consuming than helpful. Think carefully before including jargon in your speech.

### **That's About As Dumb As A Box Of Rocks**

There are groups of words in the English language that have been used so often and for so long that they have outlived their original meaning and now have no real value for speakers or listeners. These are called **clichés**, and they should be avoided because they are just one more source of unnecessary words. Do you really know what you are saying when you utter phrases such as “blind as a bat” and “It’s not worth a tinker’s dam”? Bats are not blind, so that really makes little sense. And what about the value of a tinker’s dam? Do you have any idea what that is? In the 19th century, tinkers traveled the country by wagon or horseback and made their living by repairing broken household objects or farm or ranch equipment. In the case of a tinker’s dam, the repairman would melt lead and repair pots or pans with it. So the liquid lead wouldn’t run, the tinker had to build a small dam of metal or stone that held the liquid in place until it cooled. When the liquid hardened and the pan was repaired, the dam was simply tossed away because it would not fit another. Therefore, the dams were quite valueless after the repair. Since there are no more tinkers, what could this cliché mean today to anyone under 75? Probably not much.

Another prime example of how clichés can be problematic is *snake in the grass*. Today people use it to mean that someone is sneaky or untrustworthy. Its original meaning came from Native American tribes who lived on the High Plains. According to American Indian Movement leader Vernon Blackhorse, to the Lakota Sioux, a snake in the grass was something to respect and admire; these snakes were survivors, escaping predators when there was little or no opportunity to hide themselves. To Native Americans, then, to be given this name was to be given a badge of honor, certainly not how the phrase is currently interpreted. You can imagine what a problem meaning could be if listeners and the speaker had different interpretations of a word or phrase.

**A Reminder:** Clichés mean little to anyone, so stay away from them, or your message will be as dead as a door nail.

## Where Ya From, Stranger?

If you heard the word *boress*, would you know what part of the country the person speaking was from? Would you know that *boress* is a word indigenous only to the campus of Indiana University and that it means to play a prank on someone? In this instance, words are like people; they exist in different places. It's fun to try to spot people from the South or from the Northwest by words that are only used in that part of the country. These are called **regional words**, and while they are colorful and add richness to the language of certain areas of the country, they also can add some confusion for audiences who are not familiar with them. For example, when you go to a restaurant and order a carbonated cola beverage, according to where you are, you will say *soda*, *soda pop*, *pop*, *cold drink*, *cola*, *seltzer* or even *Coke*, which in some parts of the country stands for every kind of cola drink. On the East and West coasts of the country, people stand *on line* to get a ticket, while in the Midwest, they stand *in line*. There are parts of the North East in which clothes are not sent to the *cleaners*, but to the *cleansers*.

There are some words and usage that are found in only one small region of the country, and as a result, many who travel or move into those regions have a problem understanding some words at first. For instance, in a very small portion of the Midwest, *green peppers* are called *mango peppers*, even though a pepper is a vegetable and a mango is a tropical fruit. Also in the same area the word *tote* is used differently than the standard usage, which is to carry. There it is considered to mean putting someone on the handlebars of a bicycle and taking the person for a ride. One of the more interesting regional words is one that deals with a piece of playground equipment. While it is generally called a *slide*, one region has named it a *slickey slide*. These regional words can most often be traced to the ethnic heritage of the area, so it is clear how confusing it would be to use these words outside the regions in which they are commonly known. At the right time, they are excellent reflections of the culture of a specific area, so once again, be aware of the purpose, the audience and the context that you will be dealing with when you speak.

## **The Last Word**

So what happens when language problems like this are thrust upon an audience or even just one listener? Nothing. The audience or the lone listener stops listening, and the speaker is left wondering what happened. The speaker talked himself or herself right out of an audience. There isn't really a way to express that situation any more clearly.

## ***Discovering The Solutions***

There are a number of things you can do with your use of language to side-step verbal barriers and ensure that you are understood by your listeners. Each of the following areas will add not only clarity to your speaking, but also confidence to you as a speaker because you will feel that your audience is getting the ideas you want to express.

### **KISS**

If someone told you to eschew obfuscation, would you scratch your head or get mad at him or her? Not that many people would have any idea what those words mean. Would it be clearer if the sentence suggested that you need to kiss? It would if you understood that KISS is an anagram for Keep It Short and Simple, which is actually what the earlier sentence means too. Eschew obfuscation means avoid confusion. The best place to start when thinking about the language you need to use when speaking to an audience, in class, in a business setting, in an interview or just about anywhere is to choose simple, clear words.

When choosing between pretentious and often unfamiliar words, think again about what your purpose for speaking is. Imagine for a moment that you are about to deliver your first speech to your class. When you are writing your presentation, should you use *erudite* or *sophisticated*? *Curmudgeon* or *cranky old man*? *Conflagration* or *fire*? *Whimsical* or *light-hearted*? You can't be sure that everyone in the class will know the meanings of these words, so don't take the chance that these choices will not confuse, annoy and frustrate many in the audience. If your aim is to have everyone understand what you are trying to convey, then stick with words that will be clear, concise and understandable to the entire audience. Winston Churchill once dealt with this idea of

clarity quite eloquently, saying speakers should use “short, homely words of common usage.” As history proves, the approach worked for him brilliantly.

**Delivery Hint:** If you must use a word you know some might not understand, offer an explanation. Simply say, “By that I mean...” and go on, watching the audience’s body language carefully to see if your meaning has been understood. If it hasn’t, be ready with a second explanation or example.

### **Make It Concrete**

Choose words that leave little or no room for interpretation on the part of the listener. That is, include words that describe things that listeners can understand completely, words that don’t have to be interpreted. These are called **concrete** words and differ from **abstract** words in that they offer little opportunity for misunderstanding. For example, if you are discussing medical insurance reform with an audience, avoid saying something like “The amount of money paid out in claims each year is astronomical.” What does that mean to the audience? Is it more than a million dollars? A billion? A trillion? Be specific. Name a concrete, absolute figure that clearly explains what the outlay is and that leaves no margin for error on the part of the listeners.

Another example might offer even more insight. If you were to say, “It was a hot day,” what does that mean to listeners? Is your concept of hot 90 degrees, or is it 120 degrees? Without specific information, your meaning would be lost.

One final explanation may well be the best. Here are two different approaches to the issue of clarity.

### **Abstract**

When asked by reporters in 1973 what America had offered the Vietnamese government in exchange for the American prisoners it had held during the war, then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger replied, “Some concessions have been made.” What did he mean by *some*? By *concessions*? Not only was the entire statement vague, so were the individual words in the response.

## Concrete

Mary Fisher, an AIDS victim who contracted the disease through marriage, spoke to the Republican National Convention in 1992, expressing her feelings about the disease.

The reality of AIDS is brutally clear. Two hundred thousand Americans are dead or dying; a million more are infected. Worldwide, forty million, sixty million, a hundred million infections will be counted in the coming few years. But despite science and research, White House meetings and congressional hearings; despite good intentions and bold initiatives, campaign slogans and hopeful promises -- it is, despite it all, it's the epidemic which is winning tonight.

Can the idea of how pervasive the disease is be missed here? Is there any question about how this speaker feels about the situation? When you are faced with a decision about whether or not to use an abstract or a concrete term, always choose the concrete. That way you can help ensure that your message will not be lost on the listener.

## Stop The Noise

Speakers can be guilty of creating **noise**. That does not mean that they make strange noises while they speak; it means that they include extra words, padding, that simply doesn't need to be there. These words take attention away from the primary message and ask the listener to do more than he or she should have to in order to understand a speaker. Think of the last time you heard your favorite song on the radio while you were driving. If you are like most, you probably reached for the volume knob when the song came on and turned the sound up so you could enjoy it more; you wanted to be able to focus on the song without other distractions. Now imagine that you were at the edge of a radio station's transmission area and that the signal to your radio was filled with static. You could still hear the song, but now it was not as clear and pleasant because of the distracting noise. The same may be said for cluttered word messages. The message is still in there, but now it's harder to get at. Here's an example:

In this day and age people who do not take on the challenge of spending time with the written word and luxuriating in the throes of discovery of an area of higher learning that they had never been privy to before are guilty of excluding much of the world from their lives. Each and every book holds untold opportunities to expand knowledge and to come away with lasting impressions.

Does some of the language here strike you as unnecessary? You're right. Try to avoid this kind of clutter as much as you can. A better way to express this idea to listeners might be this:

Today non-readers lose the pleasures of discovering new ideas and having new adventures.

Here are some other examples of ways you can remove some of the noise from your sentences.

<b>Don't Use</b>	<b>Use</b>
the reason for this is	because
it is my considered opinion that	I think
under no circumstances	never
in the event that	when
the city of Boston	Boston
in addition to	also
for the sum of \$200	for \$200
on the off chance that	if

It would take an entire book to give you every example you might encounter when trying to remove noise from your language. The point of including this short list of illustrations is to get you to think about how you speak. Find ways you can streamline your language by leaving out some extra words. Extra words are fluff, and you know how satisfying fluff is when you're hungry for something substantial.



**A Reminder:** Remember that your audience has only one chance to understand your language and that they have no manuscript in front of them to look at to confirm what they heard. Say what you want to say precisely.

**Delivery Hint:** Practice your speeches in front of a friend or a classmate. Ask him or her to listen for noisy language and point out what he or she considers to be clutter. Then ask your partner to read your speech to you and listen for the same things. Was he or she right? Are there things you can and should leave out?

### **Describe It, Please**

One of the most powerful tools a good speaker can have is the use of vivid, detailed and expressive language, or what is called **word pictures**. You can build in clarity and conciseness with vivid, descriptive language. Don't be confused by the last section that told you to keep language uncluttered. You can do that and still be expressive and detailed in your word choices. One excellent example of that is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, well-known 1963 speech, "I Have A Dream." There is a reason why students of rhetoric and speech continue to study this address today: it contains some of the most descriptive language ever demonstrated by a speaker, and it is a perfect example of how to best utilize both moderation and description when writing a presentation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves, who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

By painting these kinds of pictures for the audience, Dr. King, Jr., was able to make the plight of the African-American more understandable and vivid to all who listened.

### **More On Descriptive Language**

Read this sentence: *The sports car pulled into the parking lot.* What happens in your mind? What kind of car is it? What color? How was it driving, slowly or quickly? What did the parking lot look like? When you use vague references like those in the earlier sentence, you once again run the risk of leaving the listener out of what is going on in your mind. When describing and offering details about something, don't just choose words that paint mental pictures; also consider the pillars on which journalists build their writing: who, what, where, when, why and how. With that in mind, you might rethink the earlier sentence this way: *The yellow Porsche slid effortlessly into the gravel parking lot, seeming not to disturb a rock as it eased slowly toward the young woman standing at the curb in the glare of the afternoon sun.* Of course, that is a bit much for a speech, but you get the idea of how much information is necessary for a listener to understand your point completely. Also, make sure the occasion calls for such rich, expressive detail. In the case of making a plea to your university for a new parking lot, you will certainly not use this kind of description.

**A Reminder:** Remember that unless you provide the complete description to your listener, he will use his own mental image that will not match yours. Ask your classmates what images popped into their minds when they first read the sentence; see if their responses are similar to yours.

### **Don't Load The Language**

There are some words that simply inflame a listener. They are referred to as **loaded words** because they are often interpreted by society as negative. References to race, religion, economic status, physical qualities, sexual orientation and political affiliations can cause some reactions that you might not be ready for. For instance, some people such as TV personality and political commentator Rush Limbaugh spits out the label *bleeding-heart liberal* as if it means *despoiler of all that is American*. His use of the term is extremely offensive to some. Others like Senator

Edward Kennedy speak of *conservatives* as if they were *people who want to stifle the progress of America*, making some listeners quite angry. Limbaugh found out how easy it is to arouse listeners when he referred to feminists as *femi-nazis*. You can see how that might not make him the most popular guy on the block to members of the National Organization of Women.

Words that refer to race such as *Spic*, *Wop* or *Jap* will not serve you well, even in jest, because they are demeaning and mean-spirited. Calling a Hispanic *Wet Back* is not generally going to endear you to a listener. Here the Golden Rule might be in order. Speak to and about others as you would have them speak to and about you, and you can be confident that you won't ruffle any feathers when you shouldn't.

There is a new language arena today called **political correctness**, or **p.c.** Examples are calling a housewife a *domestic engineer* or a short person one who is *vertically challenged*. Many think of p.c. as taking the awareness of inflammatory language too far, but keep in mind that offending a listener or an audience because of an inappropriate reference is probably not going to be what your purpose is for speaking. If it is, you can probably plan on few people listening who don't already share your view.

### **That's Dope, Man**

What you speak in the confines of your room, with friends in public or in private is called **slang**. It is one more way of taking a language short cut. Once again you need to be aware of your purpose and of your audience. Slang has no place in a formal presentations or when speaking to people with whom you have no close relationship, so don't be tempted to use it where it isn't appropriate

### **Don't Lump Everything Together**

Have you ever made a statement like this? "Everyone knows the gorgeous girls date all the time and that ugly ones never get married." It's not a good idea to classify groups of people under one heading based on gender, age, job, physical characteristics or any other **stereotype** you might think up. Many people find hearing such things as "all men are" or "all women are" not only offensive, but also incorrect. You can damage your credibility by indulging in such narrow-minded

naming as this. Frankly, it shows a lack of sophistication on your part if you suggest that everyone is alike in any group by any standard.

**A Reminder:** False assumptions also fall into the category of stereotyping. Once again you are guilty of clumping whole groups of people together under a banner that you design. Never assume the audience agrees with you when you say, “I’m sure you all agree” or “I know everybody feels the same way.” You don’t know for sure, so don’t suggest that you do.

### **Don’t Be A Sexist**

Another way to stereotype is by presuming a gender when you are speaking. Do you ever say something like this? “A nurse is a good person because *she* is helpful and kind to patients who need care.” Or what about, “Any mechanic should know everything about a car before *he* takes it apart.” You’ve just engaged in stereotyping according to gender, and you’ve likely offended some of your audience in the doing.

Today we are more sensitive than we have ever been to **sexist language**. There is a change in what was once the traditional view of who holds what position in business and in the world today, and as result, it is impossible to presume what was once a given. Once only men held jobs such as soldier, policeman, fireman, construction worker and doctor, and women held jobs such as teacher, secretary, nurse, flight attendant, homemaker and interior designer. That is no longer the case, and our language needs to reflect that shift in roles. It also needs to change to help us redefine ourselves.

**A Reminder:** There are simple ways to deal with gender issues in language. For example, instead of saying, “A surgeon takes his job seriously,” you would say, “A surgeon takes his or her job seriously” or “Surgeons take their job seriously.” You also have the option of calling a *businessman* a *businessperson*. Too, don’t qualify gender assignments with statements such as, “For a woman, she’s a fine lawyer” or “She does a good job for a lady plumber.” “He’s very sensitive for a man” isn’t any more acceptable, either.

## **Don't Judge Lest Ye Be...**

The last time you called someone a waitress, were you referring to someone in a coffee shop or a truck stop? Or were you describing a person in an expensive, elegant restaurant? More than likely, it was the first location. We tend to attach judgmental meanings to words according to the context in which we use them. And many times, such words and their interpretations are disturbing to some people. For instance, if you were to say that a woman is *thin*, she would probably smile and thank you. But if you called her *skinny*, she might not be as quick to offer her thanks. Another example is the difference between *old* and *mature*; the first seems less respectful and harsher than the second.

Think of the difference between *inexpensive* and *cheap*. Although they are often used interchangeably, they carry subtle differences in meaning. *Inexpensive* means to most people something that is not costly, perhaps a bargain; *cheap* means something that is of poor quality. Another example is *eccentric*. A woman who is wealthy and who displays erratic behavior is considered to be *eccentric*; however, her poverty-stricken counterpart is often called *crazy*. What about *discipline* and *abuse*? *Thrifty* and *stingy*? You can see this can be a problem if you choose a word that others don't share your interpretation of.

## **Don't Be So Negative**

Stay away from words such as *crisis*, *argument*, *dysfunctional*, *abuse*, *racist*, *bigot*, *mean*, *unfair* and *stupid* unless they are the only way you can make your point. All of them conjure up bad images that some people simply do not want to hear. They create a mind set that often leads to confrontation with the listeners or listeners if they feel you are unfairly harsh or judgmental. In short, negative words can force you to be on the defensive, so rethink when you should use them.

## **Make Up Your Mind, Already**

**Indecisive language** leads to sentences filled with "it might have been," "I'm not sure," "it was something like this" and "maybe." These are all signs that you are uncertain of yourself and that what you have to say is unreliable. That is one more way to lose credibility and the audience's attention at the same time. You can imagine how frustrated you would be listening to a speaker who spent most of a presentation assuring you that he or she was unsure of most of what

was being said. You probably would feel little confidence in both the information and the speaker. Think about your reaction if your doctor told you during an examination, “I think what you had might have been a slight case of pneumonia, but I’m not sure. Maybe it could come back, but I don’t know for certain.” Now there’s a diagnosis you can feel confident about. Avoid such word choices when you are speaking to others.

### **Don’t Compromise Your Message**

It’s annoying hearing someone say, “I know this might sound stupid, but...” Basically what the person does is announce that he or she thinks what is being said is stupid, so if the speaker doesn’t trust the information, why should you? Unnecessary explanations get in the way of making a point. It’s not useful to include “You might not agree with me, but...” and “This might sound funny, but...” All you are doing is putting those notions into the listeners’ minds. Don’t lead the listener to believe that you are not certain of what you are saying. Be confident, and your audience will pay more attention and accept the information more willingly.

### **Get Straight To The Point**

Do you remember the notion of KISS? Keeping your message simple is not just done through word choice; it is also helped by using manageable sentence lengths. Though it is generally not as necessary in writing, it is better to shorten sentences a bit for a listening audience. Try to keep sentences between 5 and 20 words in length. Of course, there is no map for sentence length, but make sure that they are not so long that your listeners can nod off before you get to the end of the first one in your presentation. And by all means, vary the length of your sentences. There is little that is more irritating to a listener than to have the subject-verb-object structure used over and over. It’s not much different than listening for hours to “See spot run. See Spot see Jane. See Jan run.” You won’t be asked to join the school’s debate team if you do.

There are a couple of clever examples that speak about the idea of sentence length nicely. While most politicians tend to be what you might consider to be long winded, there have been a few cases in history that short, conversational sentences have served the speakers well. When then Governor Jimmy Carter was running for President in 1976, he got right to the point by saying, “Hi, I’m Jimmy Carter and I’m running for President. I am not a lawyer. And I am not from

Washington.” In a time when most of America was disenchanted with both lawyers and Washington after the Watergate scandal, one of the worst in modern political history, Mr. Carter spoke succinctly to his audience. They listened and elected him to the Presidency.

Perhaps the best example of short, direct language is part of what helped President Ronald Reagan become The Great Communicator and a second term president. During a televised debate with the younger Walter Mondale, the then over 70-year-old Reagan was asked a sensitive question about his age and his ability to keep up with the rigorous schedule the office demanded. President Reagan said simply, “And I want you to know that I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent’s youth and inexperience.” It worked; he got the job.

### **Go Ahead; Repeat Yourself**

Even when your sentences are short and to the point, it is easy for the audience to miss what you say. They might be busy taking notes or shifting in their seats. For whatever reason, they may not have heard something you think is essential in your speech. The best way to avoid this kind of problem is the repeat key words or phrases occasionally. That way the audience has another chance to get the information if they missed it the first time. Repeating key words also keeps the point you are trying to make fresh in the audience’s mind as you are moving through your presentation.

**A Reminder:** The way you use language leaves a lasting impression on others. Think about this: Have you ever laughed at someone who sounded like the kind of people comedian Jeff Foxworthy talks about in his act, people who seem less than bright and well educated? If you hear someone say, “He done a bad thing, but he don’t know no better,” do you form an opinion of the person’s intelligence, level of education, economic and social status, and even character? If you do, you are just like most other people. We tend to look at language as a measuring stick for status in this country. Even if someone is very intelligent, others might just write him or her off if that person’s grammar is poor.

**Delivery Hint:** Make a deal with someone in your class. If he or she hears you using improper grammar, ask the person to tell you. Do the same for him or her.

### **So What Is Left That I Can Use?**

After removing all of these problems from your language, what is left are clear, accurate, concrete words -- more than a million of them -- that explain in detail exactly what you want to say without confusing, distracting or annoying the listener. And never discount the idea that command of the language is not significant in this culture. You only have to think about what happened to former Vice-Presidential candidate Admiral James Stockdale, Ross Perot's running mate, to understand the importance we place on speaking skills. Admiral Stockdale, who had up to that point in 1992 spent his entire adult life in the military and who had attained one of the highest ranks possible in the Navy, took part in a televised debate with other vice-presidential candidates. Some have come to think of his performance as the worst military defeat in American history. Stockdale stuttered, stammered, mispronounced words, left answers unfinished and seemed completely lost in his attempt to explain his and Perot's political platform. As a result, many political analysts believed that Stockdale's inability to communicate was one of the determining factors in Perot's failure to become President. Even though he was an admiral, Stockdale was perceived as unintelligent and untrustworthy based on his performance that ill-fated night.



## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Write a paragraph discussing what you think about a current issue in the news. From that paragraph, take 10 words and look up synonyms for them in a dictionary or a thesaurus. What did you find? Were you able to discover some word choices that would help you better express yourself? Now rewrite the paragraph using some of the new words you have found. How does it sound? Does it better reflect what you mean?
2. Listen to what is going on in other classes. When you hear a student or an instructor misuse a word or struggle to express himself or herself, write that example down and share it with the class. How could that person have helped himself or herself better express his or her intended message?
3. Tape a political figure, a writer, a scholar or a university-level teacher. What kinds of word choices does this person make? Is he or she understandable at all times, or are there some language that is unclear or inappropriate? Did the person take his or her audience into consideration? What was the context of the speaking occasion? Who was the intended audience? How did you feel about the person? What did you react to?
4. From this list, pick two words and look up their denotative meanings and share them with the class. Then discuss the connotative meanings both to you and to society in general. Are they the same? Do others in the class interpret them differently? Would people from other cultures and generations interpret them differently or the same as you?

freedom	feminist	immigrant	unfair
wisdom	chauvinist	rights	politician
intelligence	liberal	justice	government
equality	conservative	fair	judge

5. Prepare a list of words that could be interpreted two different ways, one that is complimentary and one that is not. An example might be *personal assistant* and *secretary*. What else could you include?

6. Share with the class impressions you have had of speakers who displayed some of the negative characteristics discussed in this chapter. What was your reaction? What were the circumstances? How did the audience react in general? What were comments made by the audience later?

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Go to the library and find a text of a speech from a well-known speaker, particularly a politician, diplomat or business leader. Read the text and then rewrite it so that the language is clear, concise and understandable to a wide variety of audience members. Read your speech to the class and have them discuss the language before and after your adjustments. Was there an improvement? How did you decide on which words to replace? Which words to use?
2. Offer at least one denotative and one connotative meaning for each of the following sentences. For example, "he is really smart" could mean either that he is extremely intelligent or that he is not very bright.
  - A. He was not at his desk.
  - B. Go jump in a lake!
  - C. She's changed directions many times.
  - D. He's not what he seems to be.
  - E. She certainly is a wealth of information!
  - F. You were late again tonight.
  - G. The movie is not at all like the book.
  - H. You reap what you sow.
  - I. What a great friend you are.

Discuss with the class what interpretations you came up with. Did anyone in the class have different ones?

3. Rewrite the following sentences to make them clearer. Check a dictionary if you are not familiar with some of these words.

- A. The geriatose distaff homosapiens abdicated the seat on the public motor conveyance.
- B. It is imperative to monitor the development of an ergonomically responsible co-unit.
- C. Were you cognizant that the instructor modified the primary directive subsequent to the examination?

If you can figure these out, now try to come up with one of your own that you can share with the class.

- 4. Write a paragraph on any topic that includes abstract words and deliver it to the class. Then ask the class to explain what they heard and what your meaning was. Are there discrepancies from your intended meaning? If so, what could they be replaced with?
- 5. Speak informally and without preparation on an issue or controversy that is in the news currently about which you are informed and have strong feelings. Explain all of the elements of the issue using concrete, descriptive, clear language. Is that a problem? Why? Why not?
- 6. Listen to a speaker on audio or video tape. Identify the areas of language that you found most and least understandable according to the elements discussed in this unit. Imagine that you are an instructor of speech; give the speaker a grade on these elements and explain why you gave it to him or her.

## CHAPTER 3

### LISTEN UP: GETTING THE MESSAGE

The previous unit dealt with language and how to choose it carefully for listeners, but all of the careful choices you make are not of any value if you don't first understand what listening is all about. Communicators have likely been pondering the importance of listening since language was developed. The question about whether a tree falling in the woods makes a noise if no one is there to hear it is just one example of the queries posed. Listening is only one part of communication, but it is imperative that you do it well to be an effective oral communicator; otherwise, you won't be receiving or interpreting the messages sent by others. Oral communication can't take place unless someone is listening, so don't forget that wonderful old saying: You have two ears and one mouth; use them accordingly. Think about that. And also think about the fact that listening is both as important and as difficult as speaking. It's not something you can just do because you have ears; you have to work at it because there is so much that can and does keep you from listening. This unit is not just about your learning to listen effectively; you also need to understand what your audience is going through so you can be a better speaker as well.

### *Understanding Situations In Listening*

Do you recall the four primary ways in which people communicate? They are **reading, writing, speaking** and **listening**, and each is related to the others. In this class you will certainly be involved in all four, but the primary focus will be on two: speaking and listening. Which one do you suppose the average person does the most of in a day? Most people would likely answer that we speak more often than the other options, and if you've ever had a friend who never seems to shut up or even take a breath between sentences, you would probably agree. Actually, though,

people listen nearly 45 percent of the time. And interestingly enough, it is also listening that is the weakest skill we have.

The reason for discussing listening this early in the course is because it is the tool that you will use to get new information and the one you need most if you are to understand the spoken word. Common sense again? Yes, indeed. But how to develop listening skills still has to be offered in a class because so few people do it well or even realize its importance. Listening gives you the ability to enter into a complete communication transaction between you and a speaker or between you and a listener. Put simply, it's the only way you are going to understand what you or anyone else has to say. Sadly, many people take it for granted because they hear something and think they understand it. But as you will see, listening is a great deal more complicated and difficult than that. Don't be alarmed, though; there are many things you can do to make yourself a better listener. But first you need to understand the problems that plague good listening.

There is an amusing but telling story that involves a husband who arrives home from work early one afternoon to find his wife entertaining her bridge club. The women are arranged around several tables, and each woman is deeply engaged in making a point to the others at her table; as a result, everyone is talking at once. The husband is amazed at the din of noise coming from the gathering, and later, when the last guest has left, he approaches his wife and, with a look of complete confusion, asks, "Who listens?" Good question.

### **I'm Listening, Or Maybe I'm Not**

Another scenario is common to comedians who for years have played on the reality that men and women don't listen well to one another. Can you recall the last time you saw a comedy sketch involving a husband and wife at breakfast time? He is reading his newspaper, and she is busily engaged in cooking.



She says, "Dear, I wrecked the car yesterday."

"That's nice, darling," he replies, checking out the baseball standings.

"Dear, I wrecked the car when I ran over your new golf clubs in the driveway," she confesses.

"Uh huh," he says, turning the page.

"Dear, then I ran the car into the garage and broke the lawnmower and killed the cat," she reports, now getting angry.

"Good for you, honey," he says, leisurely reading the comics.

"I'm leaving you. I'm tired of talking to myself," she snaps.

"I couldn't be happier for you, love," he says, as she runs out of the kitchen. He turns to the business section and reaches for his coffee.

If no one is listening, what is the point of talking? That too is a great question. There really is no point without an audience. In a situation such as this, if you do speak with no audience, then you are indulging in **self expression** and actually just thinking out loud. That's great if you just want to talk to yourself, but if you want another listener or listeners to understand you, self expression won't work; the communication process is incomplete. But what about the opposite of the earlier situation? Can a listener have a function unless there is something to listen to? No. Imagine the same scenario with a different slant.

"Mary, there's a dent in the car. Do you know how it got there?" he asks.

"I dunno," she mumbles.

"But it's a big dent, and the garage door has been hit. What happened?" he questions.

"It, uh - you know, it...well, it sorta went 'bam,' and then it went 'crunch,'" she says.

"Fine, but how did it happen?" he continues, getting more frustrated by the second.

"And there was this whistling sound that scared me," she says, picking up speed. "And the neighbors all came out and stared, and I was embarrassed."

"How in the world did it happen?" he asks, almost spitting the words out now.

"And that stupid Mr. Smith laughed at me," she says indignantly.

"Will you listen to me?" he shouts.

You've just witnessed one major problem area of communication: For effective communication to take place, the speaker and listener each need to share in the process. If the

speaker has to do 80 percent of the work by, overcompensating for an audience that is distracted, bored or hostile, communication is ineffective. And if the listener only does 20 percent, the message will not be clearly understood either.

Conversely, if the listener has to make up for a poor speaker who is unprepared or bogged down with problems such as poor organization, logic, support or delivery, then once again the process is unbalanced and ineffective. That does not mean that each side should not try to be tolerant of some very real problems that could compromise the exchange, but that the speaker and the listener have an equal responsibility in the process. Ultimately, oral communication needs to be a 50/50 transaction between speaker and listener.

### **Taking Stock**

Let's do a little inventory here. Are you a good listener? Ask yourself if the following statements are part of your listening behavior. Answer *true* or *false* to each.

1. I'm interested in what someone is saying, even if I don't like that person.
2. Problems of the day don't get in the way of listening.
3. I respect the opinion of another person and listen carefully to his or her ideas, no matter who he or she is.
4. I don't stop listening if the speaker makes a mistake in information or has a poor delivery.
5. I don't let my ego get in the way of listening if the speaker disagrees with my point of view.
6. I don't let someone's appearance or attitude keep me from listening to him or her.
7. I don't let anger or frustration get in the way of listening if the speaker says something that upsets me.
8. I don't let outside interference such as noise or interruptions stop me from listening.
9. I don't pretend to be listening when I am actually daydreaming or focused on something else.
10. I don't tune out when I hear difficult concepts or words I don't understand.
11. I don't stop listening if the topic is not one I'm interested in.

If you answered even one of these statements with anything other than *true*, you are not an entirely capable listener. And if it sounds impossible that anyone could completely overcome listening barriers like these, you're right. The best you can hope for is to get better; you're not going to be perfect because you can't always control all of the variables involved. But if you can identify those practices or habits that keep you from being the best listener you can be, then you can at least become more efficient.

## *Learning Useful Definitions*

"I heard you, but I wasn't listening." If that sounds strange, think about it again; it's actually quite correct. When was the last time you asked, "Did you hear me?" You probably were trying to ask, "Did you listen to and understand what I said?" Hearing and listening are not synonymous. In fact, they are two very different things. **Hearing** is the physiological function involved when sound waves move past the auditory receptors, the ears and the apparatuses inside. When the ear detects the presence of noise vibrations, a signal is sent to the brain, acknowledging the sound. At this point a person must make a conscious, **active** decision to process information about and from that sound. **Listening** actually involves a decision made by the listener to take in information, process it, and assign it a meaning.

Fine, now you might think that if you just be quiet and listen to someone or something for a moment that you will get all of the information you need. That's not quite true, however. Not all listening is alike. Different behaviors are required of the listener depending on what kind of listening is being done. You don't listen to a professor the way you listen to a friend's problems, and you don't listen to a piece of music the way you do an ambulance siren. Listening can be broken down into five primary categories according to purpose: **discriminative, comprehensive, therapeutic, critical, and appreciative**.

### **Building A Vocabulary**

**Discriminative** listening is probably the most important of these purposes because it is this tool that helps you to develop reading, writing and speaking vocabularies. You will never be a complete listener without the ability to discriminate between sounds. From infancy to maturity,



you identify and categorize sounds according to their importance in your development, whether it is recognizing and factoring a new word into your own personal vocabulary, the squeal of brakes from an approaching car, the sound of an alarm clock going off or the sound of another person's voice as he or she implies disapproval, something called a **vocal cue**. An example of this is deciding if the edge to a person's voice is because of that person's not feeling well or the person's being annoyed with you. These and many more signals like them are processed through discriminative listening, and they base upon which all other listening rests.

### **I'm Trying to Understand**

**Comprehensive** listening involves listening to understand. Once you decide what a sound is and on its relevance to you, the next step is to make sense out of it, but not to judge it. That is, the point is to understand, not to critically evaluate the message. It is this area of listening in which memory is developed. One example of this is listening to a lecture in class and deciding what is important to commit to memory. You would not, however, attempt to judge whether the information is something you agree or disagree with.

To be a good comprehensive listener, you must be aware of listening for the main points in messages, and once those are in place, only then would you listen for specific details. The details are of no importance if you don't first have an understanding of the primary points they support. Generally, comprehensive listeners seem to do the best in classes, seem to score the highest on tests, and seem to be the most effective thinkers because they are the most efficient note takers and conceptual learners.

There is another factor involved in why some people are successful listeners. There are discrepancies between speaking rates and thinking rates. The average person speaks at a rate between 125 and 150 words per minute; however, the human mind generally processes from 400 to 800 words per minute, leaving a great deal more in thinking than in speaking time. What this means is that unless the listener is able to key on the primary points and stick with them, his mind will wander while waiting for the speaker to catch up.

If you have ever known in advance where a speaker was headed with a thought and reached the end of his sentence before him, at that point you had some options. You could have summarized the ideas in your own words until he moved on, or you could have wandered off

mentally, plugging back in sometime later and hoping you hadn't missed anything. Which did you choose? If you took the first, you are a good comprehensive listener; if not, you likely missed a question or two on a test that you might have avoided had you stayed focused.

### **Tell Me How You Feel**

Have you ever felt as though you needed a “sounding board,” a person who would just listen while you unburdened yourself? That is what a therapeutic listener does. **Therapeutic** listening is the area in which people offer others the opportunity to talk through a problem. The object of this listening pattern is to let the speaker discover his or her own thoughts about a problem without the listener's necessarily offering advice. He or she does not listen for specific information to commit to memory or form evaluative interpretations; the person simply listens.

**Empathetic** listening lies in this realm. Most of the time people only want to know someone else understands how they feel, that someone else can say, “I have walked a mile in your shoes.” Teachers use type of listening when listening to the concerns or questions of their students who are in the throes of making decisions that will affect their personal growth, or when a friend needs to talk out the frustration of a relationship. That friend is not asking you to say, “You're right; he or she is an idiot, and you should have left years ago.” That person also does not want to hear you say, “I told you so; you are stupid for staying this long.” Instead, the friend is asking for you to say, “I understand how you feel; you're confused and hurt.”

A deeper form of therapeutic listening is found among those who need to completely understand another's position. This form is used by doctors listening to patients' symptoms, therapists listening to uncover buried concerns that need to be treated or ministers listening to understand and counsel those who are deeply pained or confused.

Both therapeutic areas call for emotional connections. The building of trust, patience and tolerance is required here, unlike other areas that deal with pure, unjudged information. Therapeutic listeners are also called upon to display a quality that is essential to becoming an effective listener in all areas: open-mindedness. They must be able to listen to, understand and respect perspectives other than their own.

## **I May Need This Later**

The fourth area of listening is the **critical**, which involves making a decision to accept all of a message, part of it or reject it altogether based on a set of criteria that you trust. Generally these criteria are based on a clear understanding of the elements included in discriminative, comprehensive and therapeutic listening. Critical listening is the region that has the greatest impact on persuasive messages, the point at you would decide whether or not to be persuaded by someone's message. It is critical listening that you use when you are listening to a salesperson make a pitch, to a political candidate asking for your support, to a friend asking to borrow money. It is also critical listening that is part of any problem-solving situation. This is the area that demands your utmost concentration, as well as reasoning and language skills.

So what criteria for listening might be included here? An even better question would be: What makes you respond to a speaker? It is more than voice, it is more than the language, is it more than the message, it is more than the person's character, it is more than the situation that person is speaking in. It is a combination of all of these and more, including motivators, which will be discussed later.

## **It Feels Good**

The final range of listening is **appreciative**. This is the domain of all of those wonderful things that we listen to for enjoyment, relaxation and pleasure. They include music, poetry, film, TV, radio, the ocean crashing against the shore, rain pelting the roof, wind in the trees and anything else that will evoke an emotional response solely from the presence of sound. This form of listening does not require the processing of meaning from information; instead, it demands that you relax and let the pleasure of the experience wash over you. For example, when listening to a favorite song, the appreciative listener will likely get lost in melody and the quality and texture of the singer's voice.

## *Knowing The Purpose*

What is the purpose of understanding the different areas of listening? The answer to that is simple: so you may understand that each thing you listen to requires a different skill from you. You will not listen to the ocean crashing against rocks the same way you will listen to a professor lecturing on quantum physics. While that may sound obvious at first, give it another moment of reflection. Most of us tune in when we think there is something of value, whether it is for information or a feeling. But if we are not aware of the different areas of listening, we might mistakenly think that just because we plugged in for a moment that we will automatically get what we want.

Let's consider the idea of music again for a minute. If we take that same piece of music and listen to it from each of the different areas of listening, it changes completely. A discriminative listener will likely focus on which instruments are used in each section, when the vocalist performs and how changes in tempo work in the song. A comprehensive listener might begin to commit parts of the song to memory, being able later to not only recall how the melody goes, but also some of the lyrics of the song. A therapeutic listener might listen for how the vocalist and the musicians interpret the song. A critical thinker will likely evaluate how well the singer and musicians performed the song and how the song compared to others by the same artist. Finally, the appreciative listener will probably be dealing with an emotional response to the feelings created by the music. Each of these strategies allows a listener a different result from the process and a more thorough understanding than any one by itself could provide. You might have a clearer understanding if you think for a moment about songs you like a great deal. Is there one that you can't remember the words to but that you can hum the melody and maybe the guitar lead to easily? Is there a song that you can remember the chorus to but not the verses? Is there a singer whose voice pops into your mind clearly but whose song is just out of reach of your memory? Then you are a listener who is listening in different areas for different things.

A listener has to have a purpose for listening just as a writer and a speaker have to have a purpose for what they do. And once you establish that, you can then decide how and for what you will be listening. What makes you want to listen? Think of that list of names of good and poor speakers that you assembled as an exercise for the first unit. What qualities were evident to you

that persuaded you to listen to a speaker or to ignore him or her? Did such characteristics as honesty, decency, respect, honor, intelligence, kindness, responsibility or others like them come to mind? Did such words as *crook*, *liar*, *manipulator* or *cheat* enter your thoughts? Or did you think just the opposite? These are qualities that affect everyone's choice to listen.

These and other questions like them are the kinds of queries you should make of yourself each time you are called upon to listen. Understand what you respond to so it is your tool to use for your own best interests, not one that can be used to manipulate you by someone else.

### **OK, I'm Listening -- So What's Your Point?**

Why should you listen in the first place? After all, not everything is worth listening to. That's true, but how will you be able to decide which information is and which is not of value if you don't listen in the first place? Today you are being bombarded by more information than at any time in history. From TV and radio to billboards along the highway; from books, newspapers and magazines to CD ROM programs and databases on the home computer; from fliers placed under the windshield wipers of your car to letters in the mailbox, information is everywhere. The urge to just turn it all off sometimes is enticing. If you face every fourth year with your head down and your ears turned off, you won't have enough information to decide who should be in the White House. You won't know if a major tax increase that you could help stop if you don't listen to what is being said. You won't be aware of a major job opportunity that could affect your whole life if you don't "keep an ear to the ground." You won't realize that salesman is conning you if you're not listening. You won't be able to recognize a change in cultural attitude that could affect you and your family if you don't listen to what is being said around you.

### **Choose Your Information Carefully**

What it comes down to is that while information is all around us, we have to be able to pick and choose what is important to us and what is not. But we first have to listen in order to be able to make that distinction. Listening, despite what you may think, is not something to be taken lightly or for granted. Poor listening skills can lead to life-threatening situations. Were you aware that the number of people who died as a result of the sinking of the Titanic can be attributed in part to a listening error? When the SOS went out for help that fateful night, several ships heard

the cry for help. However, no one listened because all who heard the distress signal had accepted the notion sold to the public by the ship's owners and builders -- the Titanic is unsinkable. When the signal was received, then, it was ignored because it was considered to be a hoax or a mistake.

No one listened when a number of scientists argued that there were potentially deadly problems that should have kept the space shuttle Challenger from being launched. No one listened when more than a year in advance of the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City two federal agents were warned by a militia member that it was going to take place. You can easily see what might have been different if someone who could have changed both situations had been listening.

### **High-Stakes Listening**

Think about some of the places that poor listening skills could affect your life. Hope that the doctor in the emergency room attending to your labored breathing is listening when you whisper to him that you are allergic to the medication he is about to administer. Trust that the pilot of the airliner you are on is listening carefully to the air traffic controller when he is being given instructions for landing in bad weather. Of course, these are dramatic examples, and throughout history, there have been innumerable occasions when listening errors cost people more than you might imagine. But everyday occurrences can lead to problems too if you choose not to listen to what is going on around you. Businesses lose billions of dollars yearly by paying employees who don't listen the first time and who then have to backtrack to retype a letter, to call back a client whose order was not understood, to reschedule meetings because people did not know when to attend. Students miss information every minute that could have a bearing on how successful they are in college and later in life.

Even on a lighter side, you stand to have some rough moments if you don't pay attention. Let's say your car develops a noise and you ignore it. What are the chances that the car will run on the very day that you need to get to the most important appointment you have ever had in your life? If your fiancée announces that the time of the wedding rehearsal has had to be changed and if you are not listening, show up at the wrong time and miss it, the probability that you will still be hearing about it on your fiftieth anniversary is high.

Just remember one thing the next time you entertain the thought of turning off your listening skills for a while: sociologists, psychologists and marriage counselors have long cited a lack of listening in a relationship to be the key reason it is ultimately destroyed. When one or both partners stop listening, the connection and the relationship are irrevocably broken. That is true whether the relationship be between couples or cultures, friends or foes. Are you listening?

## *Identifying The Obstacles*

Now that you know basically how listening works, don't let overconfidence lull you into thinking that it will be easy to do. There are many distractions that get in the way of good listening. Being aware of them at least takes you one step further toward being able to be an effective listener. Becoming a good listener takes just as much practice and discipline as becoming a good speaker.

### **Understand Listening Barriers**

There are a number of barriers to listening that could keep you from being an effective listener. Many of them are environmental; others are cultural or even physical, but each is equally as problematic. If you are aware of them, you might be able to keep them from costing you a speaker's message. And you might also better understand what you need to do as a speaker so some of these problems are not part of what you are creating for the audience.

### **Physical Distractions**

Sound levels -- if a speaker is too loud or too soft, you might tune out. Think about a time when you've been around a crying or screaming child. You probably didn't listen carefully to what the child wanted or focus on the volume and the irritation that it caused you. The only thing you likely remember is the volume. The same can be said for those attempting to listen to anyone who speaks too loudly. You will key only on the voice level and not on the message itself. And someone who speaks too softly is just as difficult to stay focused on.

Temperature -- a room that is too cold or too hot can keep you concentrating on the wrong thing. When you are uncomfortable, whether from hot or cold temperatures, you will probably think only about that. Temperature can also do more than just take your attention away. A hot room can make you sick or sleepy; a cold room can make you stiff and sore, so both will take your attention away from a speaker.

- Noise -- if an air conditioner is grinding, a light fixture is humming or someone is whistling down the hallway outside your location, this could be bothersome. Think about the last time you were studying for a test and a noise either from your own room or from one nearby interrupted you. How much studying could you do? Probably just about as much as you finished the last time you tried to concentrate when someone nearby was talking on the phone. Don't think it is just voices that will distract, however; the simplest sound can pull you away, especially if it is continuous for any length of time. What about the person seated next to you who taps a pencil or a piece of jewelry on his or her desk while you are trying to concentrate on a lecture? Is your attention drawn to it? Count on it.
- Odors -- whether it is perfumes or colognes from others, cleaning solutions, tobacco smoke or even body odor, offensive smells can keep you from concentrating. Have you ever sat in a classroom, in church or anywhere in which the scent of someone perfume or cologne was so overwhelming that it made you a bit sick or faint? How much attention could you pay the instructor or minister? What about paint fumes? The message that day was likely missed because you were caught up in thinking about how to escape.
- Appearance -- if the speaker isn't wearing clothing that fits the occasion, if he or she is wearing enough makeup to qualify for clown school or enough jewelry to blind you with its reflection, it is often hard to stay focused. It's not likely that you could concentrate on the message if the speaker were dressed in torn jeans and a T-shirt while addressing a group of foreign dignitaries.



- Delivery -- when the speaker has problems speaking, such as mispronunciations, a monotonal voice, a fast or extremely slow rate of speech, fillers such as “uh” and “ah,” or nasality, you might get distracted. Have you even had an instructor from another country whose accent is so thick that you find it hard to understand? What about one who pauses so long between words that you could have lunch before he or she moved on to the next thought? These kinds of delivery situations probably not only distract, but also irritate if you are trying hard to get the message.
- Seating -- if you are seated on an uncomfortable chair or bench, your mind will likely wander. Think about the last time you had to sit on bleachers for a sporting event. You probably had to get up now and then and walk around to restore feeling in your body. Did you miss a great play as a result? The same can happen when you are seated uncomfortably and listening to a speaker.
- Sight lines or dim light -- when you can't see a speaker, you probably won't listen to him. Sight keeps us plugged in when we are listening. If a speaker moves, uses gestures or visual aids when he is addressing an audience, you are more likely to listen attentively. If, however, you can't see the speaker or the visual aids, you will wander off mentally, trying to find something else to look at.

### **Physiological Distractions**

- Illness -- if you are not well, you will have a hard time staying with the speaker. Think about the last time you had to listen to a lecture on a day when you had a headache, a bad cold or the flu. It's hard to take great notes when the only thing you are thinking about is going home and going back to bed.
- Fatigue -- when you are tired, you have difficulty listening to anything. The only thing you can think about is how slowly the clock is moving and how boring the speaker is. Fatigue is not just physical, however; you can be mentally fatigued as well, which can keep you from

wanting to process any more information. You feel as if you just can't think any more, and as a result, you don't.

- Stress -- too much physical stress can result in an unwillingness to key on a message. Your attention will be focused on whatever is worrying you and not the speaker. Your muscles will be tight and stiff, so you may well be thinking about that. You might also get caught up in listening for bits information that you relate to whatever is causing your stress. For instance, have you noticed at the end of a relationship that every song on the radio is one that deals with the pain you are going through? Feeling stress over anything can keep you distracted.

### **Psychological Distractions**

- Attitude -- if you don't like the speaker, you will likely wander off mentally. Whether based on the person's delivery, appearance, opinion, credentials or his or her own attitude about the audience, you make judgments about listening. You can cut off a speaker mentally if he or she holds a different view on such important issues as which baseball team was the best in 1995 or which university offers the best value for your tuition dollar. Your attitude is a major contributing factor to listening.
- Topic -- you won't listen when you don't care about the topic. Think back to the last time that you had to take a class in a subject that bored you tears. How much attention did you pay to the daily lectures? To the discussions? Were you more likely to be thinking about where you were going that weekend or what you were planning to have for lunch than paying attention to the subject matter? No doubt.
- Antagonism -- if you don't agree with the speaker, you ignore his or her opinion and concentrate only on what you think is right. How many times have you completely discounted something your parents said when they were saying something you didn't want to hear? Can you recite it exactly, or did their message just "go in one ear and out the other?" It is likely the latter. The same goes for people who hold differing views on any subject; most who don't agree with someone won't listen to him or her.

- Coercion -- if you are not there by choice but by requirement, you might not listen. How many of you loved reading the classic literature you were assigned in high school? Have you heard someone say that he or she hated the reading then, but loved the book later when it wasn't assigned? The same can be said for forcing you to listen to something you might not see value in at the time. You won't want to bother with it.
- Personal agenda -- if you are worried or involved in thinking about something else, you won't be attentive to the speaker. You won't pay much attention to a speaker if you are angry over an argument with someone. Did you listen in class when you were worried about how much the repairs to your car were going to cost after the accident that you couldn't report to the insurance company because your policy would be canceled. Your listening level might not even have been measurable the first time you spotted the person you were immediately attracted to.

### **Factual Distractions**

- Amount of information -- when you are taking notes in class and flooded with too much detail at once, the urge to shut down is strong. Imagine a science course the week before finals. You can't possibly catch everything you need in the lectures in order to get an A in the class. Some of you may already have experienced what it is like to attempt to get as much information as you can in one small class period, and it's a bit frustrating when part of what you are listening for is the most minute details about a subject. You can wind up shutting down completely.
- Main points -- if you miss the main points while trying to get every detail, you'll feel disconnected and confused. This distraction is a continuation of the preceding one. You can simply try to get too much detail and lost track of what the details are there to explain. As a result, you once again lose patience and turn off your listening.
- Listening too hard -- listening only for details and not the entire concept will bog you down and discourage you ultimately. This is the final section of a three-part problem. Details only

will leave you mentally drained and confused about what point went with which concept. You can imagine how much more you will listen to when you realize you are already lost.

### **Semantic Distractions**

- Language -- if you are overwhelmed with words you don't understand, you'll get annoyed and quit listening. You've already had a sample or two of the kind of unclear and noisy language that is the cause of this particular distraction. You have only to attempt to listen to a professor who uses only grandiose words to explain himself to understand what it means to be overloaded by language that means nothing to you.
- Jargon -- if the speaker is using words inherent to a particular field that are unfamiliar to you, he stands little chance of holding your attention. It is not likely that you will understand any medical jargon if you have never taken a science or any class related to the medical field. Basically, you would be listening to a foreign language even though it sounded slightly familiar in places. You know what would happen to how carefully you listen if you understood little of what was being said.
- Pronunciation -- words that are mispronounced often cost the listener part of the message. While you are busy trying to figure out what was just said, the speaker moves on to the next point. You miss not only what was mispronounced, but also what follows. If this happens several times, you might just ultimately decide that all of this is too much effort for too much confusion.

### **Cultural Distractions**

- Time -- this offers various complications, including time of day the listening takes place, how much time is available for listening, and, as was mentioned earlier, the difference in time between speaking and processing information mentally. Many people don't listen well early in the morning or just before the end of the work day. That is why many businesses schedule important meetings near the middle of the work day. Also, if you feel that you are being

rushed through a speaker's presentation or that you simply don't have enough time to be there, you will be distracted. All of these problems get in the way of effective listening.

- Age -- some listeners increase their skills over time, while others can lose their capacity as they grow older. You may not know until late in life just when you were at your peak as a listener. Studies have shown that some people listen best in their early to late 20s while others are at their most effective in their 60s. There is no specific time in life that a person becomes the most skilled.
- Sex -- research shows that men and women have different attention styles and somewhat different styles of processing information based on the fact that each uses a different area of the brain with which to think. Now you know just why there are some problems between the way men and women listen to one another; each completes the process from a different location in the brain that dictates different behaviors for both sexes.
- Self-Concept -- if you don't believe that you are a good listener, you aren't. In psychology, this is called a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe that you can't accomplish a task, the likelihood is that you will subconsciously cause that very thing to happen. In a sense, you can hijack your own ability to listen by thinking that you can't do it.

As you can see, there are numerous obstacles that get in the way of listening. There are actually even more than were discussed here, including cultural differences, biases, differences in age and ego. It would take a whole book to completely discuss all that gets in the way of good listening, but the point of mentioning these is to make you aware that you there is a great deal working against you when you are attempting to listen to anyone. Keep that mind, and also keep in mind that by understanding that these kinds of things can take your attention away from listening, it is possible to keep some of these at bay when you need to.

## *Finding The Solutions*

You don't have to be a victim of poor listening skills; there are many things you can do to ensure that you are always at the top of your game when it comes to processing information. Just as you would when getting ready for the Olympics, you have to train to become a good listener.

- Make a conscious decision to listen; there is always going to be something that will benefit you in the long run.
- Identify immediately the barriers present and focus on resisting them.
- Keep an open, curious mind.
- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Display humility; you don't know it all.
- Don't talk when someone else is.
- Focus on the speaker's strengths.
- Listen for new ideas and work at combining them with knowledge you already possess.
- Listen for main points and summarize them in your own words.
- Adopt a positive attitude by remembering that there is something to learn from everyone and everything.
- Listen for evidence.
- Watch for physical clues, body language, that will help you comprehend more.
- Actively work at listening by reading, learning new ideas and increasing your vocabulary ahead of time.
- Take efficient notes that focus on key words and phrases, not every word.
- Don't fall prey to emotional responses before you have heard everything.
- Be ready to ask questions for clarification or qualification.
- Analyze the nonverbal information present in connotative meanings.
- Be critical of content, not delivery.
- Recognize biases and try to put them aside.
- Concentrate.
- Practice as often as you can.
- Be patient and tolerant.

## **What Can You Do To Make Them Listen?**

Now that you know how to make yourself a better listener, what can you do to make sure that an audience will be willing to listen to you? That's a bit tougher to deal with. But there are a number of things you can do to strengthen the likelihood of having your audience, whether it is one or one hundred, display good listening skills when it's your turn to speak. First, be aware of their needs. That simply means that you need to understand who they are, what they want to know and what they are thinking before you speak to them. This is called **audience analysis**, and it simply means that you understand their makeup, their attitude about your topic and their level of understanding of the information you are going to deal with. What should you know?

- Remember they will be asking the question "What's in it for me?" Think about how you can benefit them with your presentation and let them know right up front.
- Understand their disposition about the topic before you begin. For instance, if the audience is already opposed to what you have come to say, find a way to present your information that is not met with complete resistance. Choose your language carefully and be respectful of their perspective. You can still make your point without offending them. Keep in mind that the quickest way to keep an audience from listening to you is to criticize it for its opinion or to use inflammatory or accusatory language.
- Know about the makeup of the audience, including their gender, age, level of education, occupation, socioeconomic level, cultural and ethnic background and understanding of the topic. Use that information to decide how to approach what you want to say.
- Understand the audience's expectations regarding what you say and how you say it.

## **Why Do You Need to Know This?**

An awareness of your audience's makeup and needs will help you decide what you tell them and how you approach your presentation. For example, if you know the education level among the audience members is equivalent to that of a college graduate, you will speak differently

than you would to grade school-aged youngsters or to those with a high school education. Your language will be different, as will the kind and amount of information you would include.

Economic status of the audience can also play a role in your presentation. It is likely that different socioeconomic levels would view the topic of tax reform or cutting aid programs for the impoverished differently. And gender? Men and women often have different viewpoints on many issues such as equal rights or affirmative action. Be aware of these factors when deciding how to approach such topics.

### **Know What You're There For**

One other major consideration to ensure your audience's listening to you is to be conscious of the occasion at which you are speaking. Make sure your presentation complements the occasion and does not distract from or show disrespect for whatever the purpose of the gathering is. Know ahead of time if the audience is going to be happy or sad, eager or cold. Again, know what the audience expects and then deliver it. Understand what the time limits are, what the purpose of your presence there is, what you are contributing to the occasion and if you are the only speaker or one of several. All of these considerations are significant; by being aware of them, you can anticipate and guide your audience's participation in your presentation.

### **Talk to Them Before You Speak to Them**

There are a number of ways you can be sure of the audience's makeup before addressing them. First is a direct interview ahead of time with a couple of members of the audience that you know will be in attendance. Ask several members of your class what their disposition is about the topic you plan to speak on, or talk in advance of your presentation to the organizer of whatever function you are speaking for. Find out what the audience thinks and feels about your issue. Ask the questions about audience makeup that will affect your presentation. Another way to make sure you understand your listeners is by asking them for their responses to a questionnaire that will reveal their attitudes and levels of understanding early. That way you can match your approach to your audience's needs.



## **Be Straight With Them**

Listeners respond to your **credibility**. Make sure you never compromise yourself as a speaker by not having enough information or by attempting to present false or unsupported information. That is one sure way to unplug listeners' attention. If the audience thinks that you are unprepared or unqualified to speak on a topic or that you are being dishonest or devious, you can count most of the good listeners out immediately. Make sure of your facts, statistics and expert testimonies and never assume that the audience is either ignorant or gullible. Good listeners pay attention to content, even if a speaker's credentials might demand respect for that alone. Remember that trust is a major issue with an audience, not just for reputation, but also for the quality and completeness of the information in the presentation.

## **Where Will I Be?**

Know in advance about the environment in which you will speak; that too will have an effect on how the audience responds. Get answers for these questions ahead of time: What is the physical layout of the room? How will it be arranged? Will you have a microphone? Will there be a podium? What is lighting like? Where will you stand? Will you have adequate equipment for your presentation? How close will you be to the audience? You need to know all of this before you can be completely in charge of your performance.

As you will see in a later chapter, listeners also respond to a dynamic and energetic delivery, one that captures their attention and allows them to focus on the message easily and clearly. So it is clear that there is a great deal to learn about an audience before you can feel completely confident in addressing them.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Collect articles; cartoons; lines from commercials, television, movies, songs or radio programs that call attention to ineffective thinking and discuss them with the class. Explain why these were examples of poor listening.
2. Watch people around you in public places, in classes, in your home, in church or anywhere you may observe them listening to someone speaking. Observe their listening behaviors to see if you can spot some of those discussed earlier. What distractions can you attribute to the situation? What could have been done to remove the problem?
3. Listen to your favorite song from each of the different listening perspective (comprehensive, discriminative, critical, therapeutic and appreciative). What do you discover from each perspective? Does listening in this manner change the way you "hear" a song?
4. List any listening behavior that annoys you when you are speaking to someone else. Then think about your own listening behavior. Do you have any of those annoying behaviors yourself?
5. Listen to a TV newscast. Is there supporting evidence for any of the issues reported or are there unsubstantiated claims? Were the sources of the information provided?  
Next listen to some TV commercials. What types of evidence do they use to support their claims? Were the sources of the information provided? As a critical listener, what are some of the differences you see between these two ways television presents information?
6. How do you feel when someone truly listens to you? How do you feel when you are aware that someone isn't listening to you carefully? Do you think it is possible for your self-esteem to be raised when someone listens to you carefully and attentively?
7. What things can you do as a speaker do to help your audience be more effective listeners? What can you do as a listener to help the speaker become more effective?

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. A volunteer will be required for this exercise. If you think you are adept at giving clear instructions, go to the front of the room where the instructor will give you a drawing of an object. Do not let the class see it. Sit with your back to the class, keeping the paper in your hand hidden at all times. Give instructions to the audience without seeing their faces or using your hands. The listeners may ask no questions. See if you are as effective as you think at giving instructions in how to draw this object. When you have finished, try the exercise several more times with different volunteers and different drawings.
2. For 60 seconds, ask the class to sit silently and attempt to make no noise. Listen carefully for sounds around you. Sit with your eyes closed so you can process sound only. After the allotted time, write down what you heard and discuss your responses with the class. How many did you get? Did others hear more? Less? Did you recognize all of them? How could sounds like these interfere with your paying attention to a speaker?
3. Interview a student or acquaintance from another country. What kind of listening skills do you have to display to understand the person? What is the most effective tool you have to clearly get the speaker's message? Did you ask questions? Watch the speaker's face? Ask the speaker to repeat himself?
4. Watch a videotape of a national news broadcast with the class. Take no notes, but listen for specific details, names, dates, locations, and other fact-based information. Also listen for opinion. At the end of the video, have a class discussion about what you all heard. Was it easier to listen for fact or for opinion? Did you recognize each as being different?
5. Poll the class and find out opinions on several major controversial issues such as the death penalty, euthanasia and immigration laws. Then bring in newspaper or magazine articles that support both sides of the issue. Takes turns reading aloud articles that first support one side and watch how proponents and opponents of that view respond when the information is read. Then read articles that support the opposite view. Watch faces, listen to responses and observe attitudes. Do people stop listening when their opinions are challenged, and do they stay attentive when the information agrees with them?

6. Try this exercise. Draw a series of boxes in any configurations you wish, than ask a classmate to explain to the rest of the class how to draw the figures. Don't let anyone except the speaker see the drawing as it is being described. Have the speaker either sit behind a screen or turn his or her back on the audience while describing the drawing. The speaker is not allowed to use any gestures that would reveal anything about the shapes. Also, the class may not ask questions of the speaker or give any feedback on how they are reacting to the message being given by the speaker. This includes any sounds such as sighs, groans, gasps or giggles. When the speaker has finished, ask the class to hold up and compare their drawings. Now show the drawing the speaker used. Are they close? How difficult was it to do this kind of exercise by simply listening to the speaker? What could the speaker have done to improve the clarity of the description for the listeners?

## CHAPTER 4

### ETHICALLY SPEAKING: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPEAKER

Now that you may have begun to get a sense of how powerful communication can be, you also need to consider how you should use this tool. In a time when distrust of political figures, journalists, members of the judicial system, medical personnel and even some religious figures is running rampant in America, it is painfully clear how much ethical use of language and honesty play a role in how a person is perceived. Many members of professions such as those mentioned earlier have consciously been dishonest and misleading through their use of language. As a result, much of society has come to be cynical about those people and their messages.

#### **Honesty's The Policy**

Are there people you do not trust because they are not honest or because their language leads you to believe they are trying to manipulate you? Who leaps to mind when a question like this is posed? Richard Nixon? Oliver North? Disgraced ministers Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart?

It is obvious that Americans still have great respect for honesty and demand it, especially from people who govern. Consider what happened to presidential hopeful, Colorado Senator Gary Hart, who denied that he was involved in an extra-marital affair with a young female model. Hart challenged the media to uncover his relationship and when they later did and when Hart was forced to acknowledge that it was true, he was forced to end his 1984 bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. Another example is that of Delaware Senator Joe Biden, who mounted a respectable early bid for the 1988 Democratic nomination for president. It was discovered that he had plagiarized much of a speech from British Labor Party Leader Neil Kennock. When this fact was made public, along with the revelation that he had also plagiarized from Robert Kennedy, he

too was forced to withdraw from the race. Do you remember what happened during the 1992 presidential campaign when then candidate Bill Clinton was accused of having an affair? He avoided any direct answer to the accusation. What did many people think then? Arguably the greatest example that demonstrates how Americans feel about honesty from their leaders is Richard Nixon. Instead of being remembered as a fine statesman and leader, many will think of him as a broken man hollowly denying that he was not a crook.

Keep that in mind as you think about what to say in any presentation.

## *Recognizing The Ideal Speaker*

The notion of honesty is not just a current issue. It has been a topic of major importance for as long as man has understood the power he possessed through oral communication. Think about Roman rhetorician Quintillion's opinion around 80 AD that an orator is a good person speaking well. Even then the idea of being responsible with language was a part of understanding its use. So how does this have bearing on your participation in a speech class today and as a speaker in the future? Your credibility as a person is on the line because of your behavior as a speaker, no matter what the circumstance. Once you are labeled dishonest, it is hard, if not impossible, to shake it. Don't falsify information by claiming it is yours or even by just failing to mention its source. It can cost you more in the long run than it is worth at the moment.

### **Have Positive Goals**

A good speaker should not just be honest but should also have a responsible goal. That is, he or she should be prepared to use language and its ability to persuade positively, not negatively. Think about who has used language to bring horrible results in the past. These were people who manipulated the language and abused its power for their own benefit. Of course, Hitler comes to mind, as do Stalin and Mussolini, all World War II leaders who are condemned by history as killers who used language to suit their own desires. More recently, tyrannical Chinese leader Ding Xiaoping convinced some of his followers to reveal the whereabouts of young people who took part in a student uprising in 1989. Armed only with words and idealism, the students opposed his

rule and began a nation-wide protest. Many citizens, however, still trusted Xiaoping and as a result, they sent some of the students to their deaths at his order.

History books are filled with the names of religious leaders who persuaded their followers that death was a better alternative than living if it had to be done away from the leaders' control. In 1977, Reverend Jim Jones ordered more than 900 members of his People's Temple to drink a deadly poison at their compound in Guyana, South Africa. Jones was afraid some would take the option of returning to San Francisco, where the church originated, and leave his control. Jones established the compound there to escape government scrutiny of some of his practices. However, when Jones' unethical teachings and illegal use of church funds were uncovered by the federal government, the church was investigated. As a result, Jones talked his followers into dying, convincing them that they would never be free of government oppression otherwise.

David Koresh's ability to persuade was responsible in part for the deaths of 96 men, women and children when the compound they lived in outside Waco, Texas, burned to the ground in 1993. Koresh persuaded his followers that they would only enter heaven if they followed his teachings. When the FBI and the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms attempted to make the Branch Davidians leave the compound after reports of stockpiled weapons and child abuse, a fire broke out in the ensuing siege and Koresh's followers perished. In both cases government intervention in a cult religion ended disastrously, but in both situations, it was a spiritual leader who beguiled through language to suit his own purposes who may well have been responsible ultimately for what happened.

In America today there is a new name for those who manipulate language for their own purposes; they are called *spin doctors*, and it is their job to interpret language to best suit the political candidates they work for. They spin, or change the interpretation of the language to give themselves better position in the public eye. For example, when 1996 Presidential hopeful Senator Bob Dole came in a distant second to multi-millionaire Steve Forbes in one early primary, Dole's spin doctor commented, "This is the best thing that could happen because it proves Senator Dole has not bought his way into the political arena as Mr. Forbes seems to have done."

## ***Becoming Aware Of Ethical Problems***

Don't mistakenly think that plagiarizing and telling blatant lies are the only issues of the ethical use of language that you need to consider. Intentionally misleading a listener is also part of that realm. Think back to the discussion of how people interpret words differently. If you know that you and a listener have different meanings for a word or a concept and if you intentionally use that to mislead someone, your ethics will be called into question. Situations like this are common among salespeople who mislead potential buyers by saying something is *on sale today*. The buyer interprets that to mean that he may have only today to take advantage of the lower price. This entices him or her to buy on impulse. However, the salesperson knows that the sale price is the same every day. He or she does not offer the buyer the opportunity to comparison shop; instead, the salesperson manipulates language to cheat the customer. While this may sound like a small consideration, think about what kinds of problems arise with this type of thinking. Senior citizens in their eighties take out 20-year contracts for home repairs that are *only* \$90 a month instead of understanding that the charges will amount to \$10,000 over time. Young people buy cars that have *low-mileage and new tires* without being aware of engine or transmission conditions because the salesperson did not deal with those issues first. The list goes on and on.

### **Just Give Me The Facts**

You're being deceitful if you use facts out of context to support your point. Don't cite statistics such as "It costs nearly one and a half million dollars to house and feed an inmate for life, so we should keep the death penalty" and offer this argument up as proof that your position is undeniably right. You failed to offer the listener the rest of the statistical information, which is that it costs as much as three times the amount you named to execute a death row inmate in America today. If your argument is built on economics, you can see how misleading this can be. Be aware of this tactic when you listen to a speaker.



## *Identifying Fallacies In Logic*

The ethical use of language is directly tied to logic, a form of thinking that can be used to enhance a speaker's message or to allow him or her to use the message to control or manipulate the listener. Fallacies in logic are plentiful and come in many forms. We have all grown up with some of the lapses in logic; some of them might even bring a chuckle when you realize that you have heard them before. But don't underestimate their power to confuse and mislead. Listen for them carefully, and avoid them when you're speaking. What follows are just a few of the problems you might deal with that are explained without great elaboration. However, they will give a clearer understanding of how fallacies in logic work.

### **This Is What Caused That**

**Causal fallacy** is suggesting incorrectly one thing happened as a result of having followed another. Maybe some of you have heard something like this in your life: "You were a great kid until Johnny moved onto the block. Now you're a pain in the neck. It's Johnny's fault." That may be, or your change in behavior could just be a coincidence. Here's another example that might help. "Eat; children in Europe are starving." Your eating your peas won't have any effect on the welfare of those starving children, even though parents have used that illogical approach for years.

As a speaker, you need to establish a clear relationship between these elements. One element actually has to cause the other. For the relationship to be effective, it would have to be something like this. Your car breaks down on the way to work, and you miss your shift. You lose your job because you could not get there. That is an undeniable relationship between cause and effect; one literally caused the other

### **Going in Circles**

**Circular reasoning** is not only worthless, it is often funny. For example, "The highway is always jammed with traffic because it has too many cars on it." Another example is arguing that you can't do well on a speech because you never do well on speeches or that you can't diet successfully because you don't do well on diets.

## **Jump On The Bandwagon**

**Bandwagon fallacy** is attributing agreement to everyone when that is not the case. It would include statements such as “Everybody believes that Jeff is a cheat, and you should, too.” Obviously it is impossible to ever suggest that everybody is in agreement about anything. You are also trying to coerce your listener based on pressure from a false source.

## **Around The Globe**

A **global statement** is similar to the bandwagon fallacy, but it involves attributing opinions to mass unnamed groups. “They say that TV is bad for you” is an example. “They” are never identified. Do you remember your English teacher scrawling a note to that effect on your compositions whenever you included a “they say”? Remember that when you’re putting your speeches together.

## **It’s One Way Or The Other**

This is often called the **either/or dichotomy**. It involves making only two options available to the listener. For example, “Either the Democrats’ plan will work, or the Republicans’ will.” This is a situation that allows the speaker to offer no other solutions and is very effective when he or she offers one position as positive and the other as negative, such as “Either we vote to keep sports in the curriculum, or we can kiss all alumni support for the school good-bye.”

## **Attack!**

Another way to misuse the power of logic is to **attack the character** of someone whose message you disagree with. This will sound familiar if you have ever listened to political speeches during the last few months before a major election. It seems that issues get lost in the mudslinging and name-calling. “My worthy opponent is obviously not a supporter of children in this country because he voted to raise the price of school lunches.” Now there’s some logic for you.

## **Don't Be Hasty**

Jumping to a conclusion based on too little evidence is an example of **hasty generalization**. One example would be suggesting that because one person failed an exam that the test was unfair and too difficult. There is not enough information to support that claim. Think about just how much information you might need to decide as a jury member on a person's guilt or innocence.

## **Stuffing It With Straw**

There is a fallacy that is called **straw man**, which involves setting up a false adversary to defeat so a weak argument can be skirted. That way the initial argument can be overlooked by the listener. This makes the speaker sound informed and effective. An example is saying, "There are those here who don't believe that children go to bed hungry in America." By saying this, the speaker can attack a non-existent foe while ignoring the fact that he has no solid support for instituting a tax increase for summer playground snacks.

## **Red Misleads**

One of the oldest tricks in the political book is called a **red herring**, which gets its name from men who used to drag a fish across their tracks to throw dogs who might be following off the scent. If you have ever watched a political press conference, could you count how many times you heard something like this?

"Senator Smith, what is the validity of the allegations against you of embezzling money from your campaign funds?"

"I stand on my record as a gentleman and a respected member of the Senate who votes for tax cuts as often as they come up. I am solidly in the corner of the average citizen who cannot afford the luxury of sending his child to college or having a second car. I live by the Constitution and serve it faithfully. And I feel that the Senate now needs to address the issue of budget balancing as its priority."

Fine, but what does that have to do with the original question?

## **Authority Figures**

When you see a basketball star selling hamburgers or a TV game show host endorsing the benefits of a health care system, this is called a **misplaced authority**. What makes these people experts in food or medical value and quality? Think about why we trust actors or sports figures to tell us what kinds of products we need to deal with illiteracy, body odor, pregnancy or food choices.

You as a speaker and a listener need to understand what is acceptable expert testimony and what is not. It's more reasonable to assume that someone in the medical profession, perhaps a doctor or a scientist, is more qualified to explain what is the best choice relative to health care products and services.

Don't be misled by these lapses in logic, and don't use them to make your point, either. There are enough honest, reasonable approaches to oral communication that you can use instead of these dishonest ones. Remember that you have to take responsibility for what you say, how you say it and what you want to accomplish.

## ***Using Appeals***

The final area of logic involves what are called **appeals**. These involve speaking directly to the listeners' sense of emotion, logic, or idea of character, all of which are highly motivational elements of persuasion. Aristotle, Plato and Socrates were among the first to identify and explain the power of these appeals, and that power has not diminished over the course of time. It is just as important for both speakers and listeners to understand them today as it was when Greek orators examined the nature of oral communication more than two thousand years ago.

**Pathos** asks the listener to respond with his or her feelings by offering information that would call for an emotional response. For example, think of those TV appeals that tug at your heart each time you see a starving child's face peering back at you from a filthy hut in a Third World country. That's an emotional appeal. So was uniting Americans to rally behind the troops who went to the Middle East during Desert Storm. Patriotic pictures, songs and TV shows sought to make Americans feel proud of their young men and women. Do you remember the emotions you felt when you first saw the picture of the Challenger explosion or of the fireman carrying the

lifeless body of the child from the rubble of the bombed federal building in Oklahoma City? What about pep rallies? Political rallies? Sermons? Each of these is specifically designed to get you to act on emotions that reflect your sense of hope, courage, reverence and pride.

The next appeal used by communicators is **ethos**, which asks listeners to respond based on the speaker's character and credibility. Some elements of ethos involve occupation, education, appearance, personality, respect for others, sensitivity, knowledge of the situation being discussed, ability to verbalize information, trustworthiness and expertise. Take another look at your good and bad speaker list. Did you include anyone who might have been there based on character? There are clear examples of listeners responding to a person's good character in history. Some familiar names are Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mother Teresa, any of the popes, Billy Graham, Colin Powell, Norman Schwarzkopf and more, each of whom has displayed honesty, trustworthiness, patriotism and altruism. As a result, listeners trust their viewpoints and their leadership, and respect them as people. Of course, if you look at the other side of your list, you might also see some names that represent people whose character is questionable.

**Logos** is an especially complex appeal aimed at the listeners' sense of logic and reasoning. As was discussed earlier, there are a number of ways to compromise logic, but sound logic is a very strong tool when speaking to an audience that is interested primarily in statistical information, facts and expert testimonies. For example, when you hear news journalists discussing issues on television, their primary component of analysis is logic. The areas that deal mostly with logic are the sciences, the humanities and law, although it has an effect on nearly everything you might study. For instance, if you were asked to do a report on the destruction of rain forests in the world, you probably would approach the assignment by explaining what effect rain forests have on the planet, for what reasons they are being destroyed, what the absence of rain forests will create in the future and how that will affect humankind. You would probably include statistical information and testimony from experts about what is happening and what will happen. You would be appealing to the reader's sense of logos. And you would do the same if you were to give the report orally.

## ***Understanding Reasoning***

There is more to logos than logic alone; it also includes the use of reasoning, or logical arguments. All well-developed arguments are based on critical thinking, which asks the speaker to craft a speech that demonstrates careful and clear reasoning using three primary reasoning tools: **inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning** and **causal analysis** or **cause and effect reasoning**.

**Inductive reasoning** is based on probability. That is, you will present your argument to the audience by explaining what conclusion can be expected from the available evidence. The more specific your examples of evidence, the more likely your conclusion will be believed and trusted. For example, by telling the audience that one in five students flunks out of college by the end of his or her sophomore year and that one out of four is on academic probation at some point during his or her first two years of college, you could conclude that one fifth of your class is at risk of not graduating. This is an example of moving from specific evidence to a general conclusion.

**Deductive reasoning** is based on logical necessity. That is, if the audience accepts the proposition that the argument is built on, what is called premise, then they will also have to accept the conclusion. For example, if you were to claim that students who do not study at least 20 hours a week don't keep up with material, those who do not begin assignments at least one week before they are due don't do their best work, and those who do not attend class regularly are more likely to fail tests than those who do attend regularly, you could clearly draw the conclusion that students who apply themselves are more likely to succeed in college than those who do not. This is an example of moving from general evidence to a specific conclusion.

It is important to understand which appeal a speaker is using so you may clearly focus on the message and not just on the appeal itself. There are many examples of speakers dealing with an emotional appeal and convincing an audience's heart of something that their minds would later reject. But by then, it was too late. This kind of understanding can also be a tremendous tool to you as a speaker when you use it responsibly, but it can just as easily be used without conscience. It's up to you to use it wisely.

Now that you understand that ethics, logic, reasoning and appeals make a difference in how you will speak to an audience or how you will listen to a speaker, you're ready to move on to the next step: developing what you are going to say to an audience.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Tape examples of TV commercials that appeal to pathos, ethos and logos, then share them with the class. Discuss how each asks you to respond.
2. Look at the commercials again to see if you can detect which ones are examples of deductive, inductive and cause and effect reasoning. Discuss the effectiveness of each approach and how the commercial might have been different with a different reasoning pattern.
3. Bring in examples of fallacies in logic from literature, advertisements, movies and TV. Discuss why each is not acceptable and what would work logically in its place.
4. Watch either Court TV, tapes of court proceedings or even scenes from movies that portray court cases. What examples of reasoning and logic can you spot? How effective were they to you? How do you think they might have affected the jury?
5. Discuss with the class examples of times when you have been dealt with unethically, perhaps by a salesperson, an instructor, a friend, a parent, peers or a brother or sister. What happened? How did you respond? How could the situation have been dealt with ethically?

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Break up into groups of three. Each member will deliver a one-minute impromptu speech on the same topic, but from a different appeal. For example, use the topic of American intervention in foreign governments and how to best approach the audience through pathos, logos and ethos.
2. Watch the same video that you used to assess language. This time look for ethical uses of language, logic, reasoning and emotional appeals. Once again grade the speaker as you would if you were the instructor.

3. What examples can you cite of people who have impressed you in difficult situations with their ability to speak well? Discuss why you were impressed.
4. Think of a time when an emotional appeal moved you. Did you change your mind later when you had more time to think about how you responded? Why did you feel that way? What was said that swayed your emotions?
5. Write a paragraph about a controversial issue using only pathos as your appeal to the reader. Then write another on the same topic using only logos. Finally, write a third that uses only ethos as the appeal. For example, if you want health care reformed, you could possibly discuss the case of one senior citizen who is not able to get treatment for an illness because of budget cuts as an example of pathos. Logos might have you discussing the number of people who are affected by this situation and how much money is wasted on other programs that could be channeled there. Ethos might involve your telling a story about a relative who was affected by spending cuts. How does each paragraph differ? What could you include as support for any one of them?
6. Find examples of specific fallacies from a local or campus newspaper. Discuss with the class what that fallacy is and why it is false.



## CHAPTER 5

### CREATING A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION

#### ONE STEP AT A TIME

It's time to begin to assemble the oral communication building blocks you've acquired so far. With language, listening and thinking skills beginning to grow, now you need to learn develop a well-crafted speech. But where should you begin and what order should you follow? Just as there is no one way to say anything, there is also no one way to build a speech. However, what follows is a time-tested and successful format that will help you begin to develop an organized, effective speech. You know what the audience is listening for and what pitfalls to avoid, so let's get started on putting together a well thought out and well-written speech.

#### *Choosing The Topic*

The first major hurdle anyone ever has to deal with when faced with the task of speaking to an audience is deciding on a topic. Of course, that is not a problem when you are talking to members of a group you belong to about how to raise funds for the organization or when you have been asked by a civic group to describe how your company helps the environment. Your topic is chosen for you, and you can begin with that in mind. But what happens when you are not so fortunate as to have someone else do the choosing for you? You are left to your own devices to come up with a topic -- just one topic -- from the world of subjects available to you.

Think back to when you first looked at the syllabus for this course; you probably skipped past all the information dealing with attendance and prerequisites for the course and went straight to the section on assignments. There it was: the list of speeches you will probably have to do this semester, printed in large black letters that all but jumped off the page at you. You found those

dreaded three words -- **informative, demonstration and persuasive**. You likely shuddered as you read the list again, hoping you had been wrong the first time. No, there the offending words were still there, threatening to keep you awake the rest of the semester. Now you were going to have to pick a topic for each type of speech and actually give facts and background information on it. You thought you would never be able to select something to talk about for those seemingly endless few moments.

### **What Do You Know and What Do You Like?**

Yes, you can. The place to start is with something you know about or are interested in investigating. You as a speaker are much more committed to a topic you enjoy, and you are much more able to deliver it with energy and conviction if it is something you can say is familiar and comfortable to you. That is especially true if it is something from your own experience. The first place to begin a topic search is in your own mind. What do you know about? What do you like? What would you like to tell someone else about? Start there.

There are some helpful techniques you might use to assist you in coming up with a topic.

\* **Brainstorming.** This involves sitting down with a piece of paper and a pen for a specific period of time, perhaps three to five minutes, and writing down every topic that comes to mind. Don't worry about really forming the topic ideas clearly; just write in a word or two of what pops into your thoughts. Then the next idea that follows should be added to the list. Sometimes one idea will lead you quickly to another. In a few short minutes you can have a number of topics to choose from. And you will likely discover a pattern to many of them, a relationship that might help you to realize that you really know a great deal about one topic in particular that could be turned into a speech.

There are several other ways you can begin to think about what your topic might be.

\* **Read.** Gather some magazines, newspapers or books lying around your house or dorm. Take a look in them to see if a topic jumps out at you. You can do the same with TV or with movies. Is there something you have heard or seen recently that intrigued you? The topic of a talk show that caught your attention? You might want to deal with that.

- \* **Check out the library.** The computer topic listings or the card catalog at your library may well hold the key to a subject that excites you. Run down the list of indexed areas in either to see if there is something there for you.
- \* **Cross-curriculum learning.** What's going on in another of your classes that you are interested in? Is there a topic there that you could use here? Was there one in a class last semester or last year that really fired you up?
- \* **Talk with friends and classmates.** Have a discussion with friends about what they are curious about or what they would like to hear a speech on if they had to. That might give you even more ideas.

If you are still stuck after all of that, try this. Imagine you have \$50 to spend at a bookstore. What book or books would you buy to bring home? What topic would you likely look into? Armed with this perspective, you might be able to begin with the first step you need to take after coming up with an area of interest.

### 1) **Narrow your topic.**

If you are intrigued with space travel, you now could begin to define the topic more narrowly. What specifically about space travel would you like to share with an audience? What interests you most that you could explain clearly and fairly completely in under 10 minutes? Obviously that won't be something like the history of NASA; that is far too broad a topic. But you could perhaps talk about how NASA originated and what its initial purpose was. Maybe you could deal with what kinds of training astronauts have to go through before they can qualify for a mission.

Perhaps your topic will be sports, specifically basketball. That is a subject that volumes have been written on, so it will have to be narrowed considerably to something like when it began and who developed it or what a coach has to know about his or her players to successfully devise a playing strategy for a team. In either case, just make sure that your audience will not be bored to tears by your choice of a topic, a strong reason to analyze the audience early in your planning process.

## **2) Know your audience.**

As you are selecting your topic, you need to consider your audience concerning the points discussed earlier, such as level of understanding, attitude about the topic, and expectations regarding the topic. Also think about the audience's gender, age and socioeconomic makeup. There is nothing more frustrating for speaker and audience alike than dealing with a topic that is not interesting or relevant to the listeners' needs.

## **3) Think About Time**

You also need to consider the time you have to speak and the time you have to research. Both could have a bearing on what kind of topic you take on and how efficiently you can present it to the audience. Without enough time in either area, you can't successfully deal with even a narrowed topic.

## **4) Understand your purpose**

Why are you giving this speech? Is it to inform, to entertain or to persuade? The reason for giving an **informative** speech is to give the audience information that will benefit it or interest it. Speaking to **entertain** is offering a presentation designed to let the audience have fun with the your speech. **Persuasive** speaking asks the audience to think and to respond by changing their minds or attitudes about the topic on which you are speaking. You will need to understand which is your purpose because it will affect how you deal with such choices as language, style of delivery and support information.

## **5) Keep The Occasion In Mind**

What is the occasion for which you are speaking? This is another important consideration because different occasions will call for different approaches. For instance, you will speak differently to your class than you would to the congregation at your church or at a sports award banquet.

Is the occasion formal or informal? A special event or a regular meeting of people who already know each other well? Both of the questions will have a bearing on the kind of language you use and the level of familiarity you express with the audience members. If the function is

formal, you will not be as personal or chatty with your approach as you would be if this were a meeting of a fraternity or a civic organization whose members have met weekly for years.

Any time you speak to an audience, understand why you are there. Know ahead of time what you expect to accomplish if you are introducing someone, receiving or giving an award or an honor, giving a speech of welcome to a group or an individual, nominating a person or a group for something or giving a tribute. Each of these different purposes will demand that you stay focused on the job at hand and not wander off into information that has no bearing on why you are there. For instance, if you are giving someone an award for an accomplishment, it is not generally useful to include personal stories about how the two of you used to go fishing together years ago. While that is charming, it is not relevant to the reason the award is being given.

**Developmental Hint:** Don't deal with more than one main central idea in any speech. If you do, you will find yourself unable to be clear and concise, something by now you know the audience needs if it is to understand your message.

## *Doing The Research*

What do you do after you have decided on a topic? Should you just write down what you already know and develop your entire speech from that alone? No, because you probably don't have enough *specific* information about anything to successfully speak to an audience for 10 minutes at a time. Of course, if you are an expert or have vast experience in a particular field, that might be different. If you are like most people, however, you know just enough about any one thing to have formed a strong opinion about it or a solid interest in it and little else. This is the time in the process of building your presentation that you need to do some major research for background material, which is called getting **documentation**. Even if it is a testimonial or an introduction, research is important in making your speech colorful, fact filled and believable.

What is the reason for including documented support in your speech? It allows you to verify your information for the audience. It is rather like saying, "I think this, and somebody very knowledgeable agrees with me." Any statements that you make, any opinions that you offer that you don't verify, or back up, with support are the result of what is called **tavern talk**. You've

probably heard it before. It happens when some folks are sitting around in a bar over a drink or in a restaurant over a cup of coffee and spouting unsupported claims that have no basis in fact. For instance, you might hear, “That senator is a real jerk. He’s stupid and he’s crooked.” What is there to prove those claims? Nothing, so it is basically just a lot of hot air. However, if there are specific incidents that you can cite that prove your claim, then you have a solid argument and a credible point.

If you speak to an audience on a topic with which you have had little or no direct experience or knowledge, you will have to offer evidence of the correctness and truthfulness of your information. You do that through researched and documented sources that are considered to be honest and reliable by your audience. How would you react if you listened to a speaker who basically said, “Trust this information because I said so.” It doesn’t appeal much to children when their parents offer that as a reason for something, and it even less likely that a speaker is going to be successful at passing that tactic off on a listener. So, you are going to have to do some investigating.

## **Where To Search**

Whether you are just trying to discover potential topics, doing some background reading or attempting to find specific documentation, when the word *research* comes up, most people automatically think of the library. And it is the most accessible and logical place to begin to find supporting information for your presentation. While many think of the library only as the place they used to get in trouble for talking, it is also the primary repository of information in our society. There are probably few of you who do not already have at least a working knowledge of the library, so an in-depth discussion isn’t really necessary here. But there are some hints that might help you in your search for supporting information.

- \* Don’t forget that the library has a staff who know all of the nooks and crannies that contain the best information. If you have a topic in mind, ask them where you might begin your exploration; they are the guides in that facility.
- \* Use the computer as much as you can to locate specific sources of material, or you can use it to help you establish a topic if you don’t already have one.

- \* While you are there, familiarize yourself with the different sources of information that are available for the next time you need to do some research. For example, you will often find not only books, periodicals and newspapers, but also videos, compact discs, CD ROM computer programs, records, audio tapes, computer data bases, microfilm files and sometimes even access to the Internet.
- \* Most libraries also provide direct access to the contents of other libraries, so if what you want isn't at that location, it can probably be found and sent to your current location for you. Check the computer for interlibrary loan information.
- \* The computers will also allow you to do printouts of magazine or newspaper articles, as well as journal or book excerpts. They will also provide printouts of all of the listings under a specific topic or author heading.

**Research Hint:** Don't forget that most libraries have photocopy machines, so bring your change along. Instead of writing out long pages of notes, copy the pages you need so you can read them at your leisure. Many times you can find more information later that you would have overlooked otherwise.

**Research Hint:** If you do photocopy something, remember to take down all of the information you will need for your bibliography or for a return trip to the source if you should need it. If you don't have those source citations, your instructor will not likely let you use them in your class presentations.

### **Don't Quit When The Library Closes**

There are several other excellent sources for researched information than just the library.

1. Don't overlook experts in your area who are considered to be valuable sources of information. In your college or university are professors and instructors who hold a wealth of knowledge and who are generally willing to be interviewed.

2. Talk to agencies in the community that can offer insight into specific areas. For example, if you are going to do some research on clinical depression, you might want to speak to a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a therapist or a medical doctor from a hospital or a mental health facility to help you with your information.
3. Conduct surveys and polls. If you use this method of data gathering, be sure that you have large enough sampling to fully prove your information. Be sure that you pose unbiased questions so you may get answers that are representative of the general public.
4. Speak to people who can offer testimony from personal experience about an issue. One example might be talking to someone who has been treated for depression about how the condition affected him or her.
5. Contact out-of-town sources by mail, e-mail or phone to get their interview information. Names of these sources can be found through newspapers or even as recommendations from local sources.
6. Use the Internet. This is one of the most remarkable sources of information available at the moment because not only can you find facts and opinions about nearly everything imaginable, you can also have direct interaction with people who are experts or with sources such as government agencies that you would not be able to contact otherwise.
7. The electronic media are also a viable and useful source of facts. Television and radio news broadcasts are up to the minute and often well researched.

**Research Hint:** The most current information is the most reliable. You can mislead an audience by using old sources that are no longer valid. Always try to find statistics and facts that are as recent as possible and identify them to the audience as such.



## Stay Away From That

All of these possible sources of information are littered with problem areas that are considered to be unreliable. For example, even though *People* magazine can be found in most libraries, it is not viewed as credible a source of information as is *Time* or *U.S. News & World Report*. Avoid entertainment-based sources that rely on sensationalism more than fact to generate articles. Quoting *The National Enquirer* on almost anything can lead your audience to chuckling.

Another source that is not always usable is a brochure or a pamphlet. These are often filled with pieces of information taken out of context and are not documented themselves. They are also often used as marketing tools, so they are slightly biased in their presentation. They can be more problem than help in the long run.

People who are not recognized as experts or who have little experience in a field or issue are also not credible sources. How would you react if you listened to a speech on the impact of censorship in America for which the speaker used an interview as his primary reference, only to find out later that the person interviewed was a stranger waiting in line at 7-11 with the speaker? You probably would not consider that a reliable expert.

The final no-no when dealing with documentation deals with identifying sources. **Never** offer researched information to an audience without clearly naming the source it came from. For example, if you found a statistic dealing with depression and how many people it affects in this country, you would need to explain it this way: "According to Dr. John Smith of the Harvard Medical Center, depression affects one in six adults in America today." Not only would you be guilty of plagiarism should you lead the audience to believe the information was yours, but you could also miss a very valuable opportunity to add credibility and power to your speech by offering expert testimony.

## *Developing A Speech*

Once you have decided on a topic, when you have narrowed it so it can easily be explained by you and just as easily understood by the audience, and after you have found all of the support information you need to fully explain the topic, then you should begin to develop a **central idea** for your speech. That is, you need a statement that expresses exactly what you want

to tell the audience. In writing class, you might remember that this is called a **thesis statement** or **controlling idea**, the idea that you build a piece of writing around and the message that tells the reader what to expect as he reads. The same is done with a speech. Write a one-sentence summary of your speech, which will become the central idea or thesis statement. For example, if you have decided on clinical depression as your topic, if you have decided to give an informative speech, and if you have narrowed the topic to explain the behaviors of people who experience this condition, you can now write your central statement like this: There are some clear symptoms that sufferers of clinical depression display that will allow a person to identify the condition in a family member or friend.

### **Put Your Plan Into Action**

Now that you have a thesis statement in mind, you can begin to develop the points of support you need to use to explain your topic. What could you include if you want to let the audience know about the behaviors that those who are clinically depressed have? List several behaviors that you are aware of. Each one of these can later become a primary support point that acts as a specific example of the thesis statement. Some could even become details that aid in the explanation of one or more of the main points. Depending upon how many you can generate, you may keep them all or pick and choose among the most effective for your presentation, leaving out those that are not as useful. This is actually the beginning of an outline, a map for development, that you will create for your speech. Your mini-outline might look like this at this point:

- behaviors of the clinically depressed
- feelings of worthlessness
- withdrawal from people
- no sense of hope
- no trust in others
- low self-esteem
- unwillingness to eat or a desire to sleep constantly

## Discover Relationships Between Ideas

As you develop your ideas further, you can begin to see that some things on your list might actually be illustrations of others that you have named. These can be used as specific support, or minor points, for one of the primary points. Is there something on this list that seems to be an example of a larger area? Could feelings of worthlessness be an explanation of low self-esteem? Yes, just as not wanting to eat or wanting to sleep a great deal could be considered to be examples of hopelessness. As you think more about the topic and do more research, your working outline might begin to expand as you start to make connections between ideas.

You still haven't yet begun to put the items in the order that they will ultimately wind up in. There are several different strategies that you may find useful:

1. Chronological, which arranges items in the order in which they happen.
2. Topical, which divides a topic into classifications.
3. Cause and effect, which may present a cause and discuss its effects or present a problem and examine its causes.

It is the cause and effect approach that has been used here as an example of how to develop the speech on depression. Following this organizational plan, your mini-outline might look like this at this point in the development process:

behaviors of the clinically depressed  
hopelessness  
inability to sleep  
thinks only of what is wrong with life  
inability to look forward to future events  
unwillingness to take medication  
thoughts of suicide  
unwillingness to eat

withdrawal from people  
won't answer the phone or the door  
will not engage in eye contact  
unresponsive when asked a direct question  
unwilling to see family members  
unwilling to see friends

low self-esteem

- feels appearance is bad
- feels unable to take care of self
- feels unable to do anything successfully
- feels valueless
- thinks he or she is unintelligent
- refuses to believe he or she has good qualities

### **Put It All In Order**

Next you need to begin to think about how best to organize this information. What is the most important point? Maybe that will have to do with which point you have the most clear and supportive information for, or maybe it will be the behavior that is the most apparent to the audience. It might also be the point that seems to be the one from which the others develop. For example, in examining the list above, which point might be the result of another? Withdrawal could easily be seen as the result of low self-esteem and hopelessness. Of the remaining two, which one would likely be the result of the other? It is distinctly possible that hopelessness develops from a sense of not having any confidence or sense of self worth.

You next need to do the same kind of thinking about how you wish to organize the support details that explain your main points. After you have done that, your mini-outline could then look like this:

low self-esteem

- thinks he or she is unintelligent
- feels unable to do anything successfully
- feels appearance is bad
- feels unable to take care of self
- feels valueless
- refuses to believe he or she has good qualities

hopelessness

- thoughts of suicide
- unwillingness to eat
- inability to sleep
- unwillingness to take medication
- inability to look forward to future events
- thinks only of what is wrong with life

- withdrawal from people
  - unwilling to see family members
  - unwilling to see friends
  - won't answer the phone or the door
  - unresponsive when asked a direct question
  - will not engage in eye contact

## **Move To The Next Level**

You now have devised a specific plan of organization, and you can begin to develop your outline more formally. It might begin look like this as you move ideas around to discover in which order they best explain your message:

### **II. Low self-esteem**

- A. refuses to believe he or she has good qualities
- B. feels unable to do anything successfully
- C. feels appearance is bad
- D. thinks he or she is unintelligent
- E. feels valueless
- F. feels unable to take care of self

### **III. Hopelessness**

- A. thoughts of suicide
- B. unwillingness to eat
- C. inability to sleep
- D. unwillingness to take medication
- E. inability to look forward to future events
- F. thinks only of what is wrong with life

### **IV. Withdrawal from people**

- A. unwilling to see family members
- B. unwilling to see friends
- C. won't answer the phone or the door
- D. unresponsive when asked a direct question
- E. will not engage in eye contact

Remember that the order of the minor support elements under each major point is also subject to changes. You should arrange them in an order that best explains your points in logical or chronological order. Ask yourself which one might be more important than another or which one might come before another.

## **Break Down The Elements**

You may have noticed that the Roman numerals began with II and not I. There is also nothing after IV. That is because you probably will be dealing with your introduction and conclusion after you have developed the central elements. (Don't be misled; the body of your speech could take many more subdivisions than are offered here.) Many speakers find writing the opening and closing elements later is a more effective way to write their speeches because it gives them freedom to discover the best way into and out of the speech after they have thought thoroughly about their topic and its development. Sometimes something will become apparent as a strong opening or closing only after you have written the rest of the speech.

Introductions and conclusions will be discussed a bit later, but now the next you need to concentrate on beginning to use the researched elements you found when you went looking for information. Where can you put in quotes from experts, statistics or facts so they will be useful and helpful? The answer to that is simple: Use them anywhere they will back up a claim you make or anywhere they can clarify a point. For example, if you state in your speech that depression is more prevalent in women than men, you need to offer proof of that by quoting someone recognized as an authority or giving a statistic from a reliable source. You can add clarity by using a source to give statistics on the percentage of women affected as compared to men and the ages of those who are likely candidates for the condition.

## ***Completing The Outline***

By now your mini-outline, or what is called a **working outline**, will have begun to develop into a larger, more detailed version that lists all of the elements discussed thus far and a few yet to come. The format for an outline can vary from speech to speech; so can the type. There are outlines that are a breakdown of the speech in its fully written text form that are called **sentence outlines**, and there are others that simply ask for its elements written in words or clauses, called **topic outlines**. A sample outline format that you submit to your instructor might look like the one on the following page.

However you choose to make your outline, whether it is sentence or topic, remember that if you use one example at a subdivision, you must use a second. That is, if there is a I, there must be a II; if there is an A, there must also be a B; if there is a 1, there must be a 2.

**Development Hint:** The outline is meant to help you organize your presentation and assist you in finding and showing relationships between points in the speech. Without it, you may wander around aimlessly, mentioning points that may be important to the speech, but that may not be in an order that allows the audience to understand their relationship to one another.

### **Tell ‘Em Where You Got It**

You will also need to include a bibliography with your outline when you submit it to your instructor. This allows you to list all of the sources you used to get information for your presentation. There is a sample version that follows the outline. (The entries are in the correct format but are not real or existing books or periodicals.) Be sure to remember to alphabetize your cited works. Further examples of bibliographic citation may be found in the MLA Handbook.

### **Map Your Speech**

The point of an outline is not just so your instructor can give you extra work to do; it is so you may have a map from which to plan this journey that is developing a speech. Without a map, you might eventually get to your destination, but it will probably be circuitous and frustrating. With a charted course, the trip will be smoother, more direct and much more enjoyable. And unless you have used a map, the audience will be just as likely to get lost during the trip.

## SAMPLE OUTLINE

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Statement \_\_\_\_\_

---

### Introduction

I.

A.

B.

### Body

I.

A.

B.

C.

II.

A.

B.

1.

2.

3.

C.

III.

A.

B.

IV.

A.

1.

2.

B.

C.

### Conclusion

I.

II.



## Sample Bibliography

Adkins, Elaine. "Depression and Me," Psychology Today, 10 March 1992, 23-31.

Bellemeare, Jonathan. Clinical Depression in Mainstream America. Boston: Harper Press, Inc., 1994.

Goff, Henry and Michael Miner. Under Siege: The Effects of Depression on Women. New York: London Books, 1989.

"Running scared from depression," Hatfield Times, 17 June 1995, A4.

## *Developing The Body*

Now that you have organized the order of your points and discovered how you can use some of your documentation, you need to think about exactly how you want to say what you have to say. Now is the time to consider how you are going to explain your points. Do you remember the reference to journalism earlier? It is this area of development of your speech that you need to use those six divisions of inquiry to best explain your meaning to your listeners. Think about **who, what, where, when, why** and **how** as you write the body of your speech. Illustrate your ideas with examples and quotes from authorities, statistics and facts that you have found during your research. Also offer reasons in the form of *because* statements. For example, "More women than men suffer from depression because women are both psychologically and sociologically more emotional than men."

There are a number of devices that you may use to enhance the body of your speech such as:

- **Brief examples** offer short illustrations. “Depression was once called melancholia and perceived as a fatal condition. Today it is considered a treatable condition from which someone can recover.”
- **Extended examples** are more detailed and could be a paragraph or longer. They often take the form of a narrative or a description. For example, telling the story of how one person battled depression is useful.
- **Hypothetical illustrations** could be of any length, but what distinguishes them from brief or extended examples is that they have not happened yet and are mostly a matter of possibility. Suggesting to the audience that depression that goes untreated could be devastating is an example.
- **Explanations** clarify how something is done or why it is done that way. They could take on any form as long as they offer details about who, why, when, where, what and how. Telling the audience how depression is diagnosed is an explanation.
- **Descriptions** allow the identification of facts, information and details about something. Telling the audience what a person who is suffering from depression looks like is often very helpful to the listeners’ understanding.
- **Definitions** are explanations of the meanings of terms. Defining *clinical depression* lets the audience know what you know.
- **Analogies** allow you to compare ideas, items or points. You might help the listeners understand by comparing depression to any similar disorder.
- **Statistics**, which are usually percentages and numbers, are considered by many to be the most believable support. By telling the audience how many people suffer from this ailment, you can help them understand better how far reaching it is than by saying that “many people suffer.” Remember, however, the discussion of how this kind of information can be manipulated.
- **Expert testimony** is quotes from authorities recognized as reliable and are invaluable to your speech when they can corroborate your statements.

**Development Hint:** Unless you are absolutely certain about how much the audience knows about your topic, presume it knows nothing and include as much as you can to explain it completely.

**Development Hint:** Be sure to include the identity and the credentials of your sources so your audience will understand the validity of the support. For instance, if you quote a researcher, you will need to let the audience hear something like this: “According to research expert Dr. Henry Jones of the Johns Hopkins Medical Research Center in findings from 1993, the results of the testing on clinical depression are not as conclusive as we might have liked.”

## *Creating The Introduction And The Conclusion*

Once you have organized the body of your speech, you now need to concern yourself with how to begin and end it. There are a couple of reasons for writing the body first: you probably know more at the beginning about what you want to say in the body, and you may not be writing smoothly or clearly when you first begin. Because the introduction is the what grabs the audience’s attention, it needs to be the strongest, most well-written part of your speech. Also, because the conclusion ties up all of the elements you talk about in the speech, it too needs to be extremely well written. Come back to them when you are warmed up and feeling confident.

**Development Hint:** There are many people who are more comfortable starting with the introduction and moving straight through the speech. Use the method you feel the most comfortable with, but keep in mind that a weak introduction can cause you to lose your sense of organization in the body of your presentation. It can also lose the audience right up front.

## Open The Door

The opening paragraph of your presentation is easily the most important part of it because it is there that you attract the listeners and establish your thesis. You provide the thesis as a sort of listening guide for the audience that identifies your topic and what you plan to speak about. It is also in the initial paragraph that you establish your credibility with the audience. All of this is a great deal of ground to cover in just a few short sentences, so it takes some major planning. If you have taken a writing course in the past, much of this may well sound familiar. The techniques for writing a good essay are the same for writing a speech as well.

It is imperative that you remember that the opening of your speech, what is called the **motivator** or **attention-getter**, is as important as anything inside it is there that you either capture the audience or lose them forever. Think about this. When you are sitting in front of the TV with the remote control in your hand, how long do you linger on a show before deciding to either stay with it or channel surf? Probably not more than about 30 seconds and sometimes even less. In just about the same amount of time an audience will decide to listen or to tune you out.

Now think about how long you might have spent researching and writing a speech. Does it seem reasonable to you that hours of work might be wasted because you didn't prepare strong enough opening to get the audience's attention? Probably not. One way you can avoid that kind of catastrophe is to remember the first thing the audience members are going to be thinking as you begin to speak: What's in it for me? How am I going to benefit from listening to this? Within the first few seconds, you need to relate your topic to the audience somehow. There are some strong tools that you can use to get the listeners fired up and ready to plug in to your presentation.

- ◇ **Tell a story.** Offer an anecdote or a narrative that puts the audience into the situation of your speech immediately.
- ◇ **Use startling facts or statistics.**
- ◇ **Begin with a quotation.**
- ◇ **Use humor.** Be careful with this, though, because you must be very aware of appropriateness.
- ◇ **Ask a question.** This usually does not require an answer, but it asks the audience to think.
- ◇ **Refer to a historical event.**
- ◇ **Refer to a current or recent event.**
- ◇ **Use personal experience.**

- ◇ **Refer to the occasion.**
- ◇ **Mention a previous speech or speaker.**

Use these effectively, and you can avoid the death sentence given by any audience to a speaker who begins with “My name is ..., and I am going to talk about...” If you do open that way, it is likely no one in the audience will be able to remember enough to fill in those two blanks later. Once you have grabbed the listeners’ attention, then you can offer the thesis statement and a blueprint or list of the main points you are going to discuss. Do you remember these elements as well from writing class?

### **Finish Your Speech**

Just as your opening provides a first impression, so the closing offers a final impression, something to send the audience away thinking about. The closing actually has several purposes.

- \* To summarize the speech: Let the listeners hear once again the idea established in the thesis statement and the point you put forth in the body of the presentation, but be sure to paraphrase instead of repeating the same words.
- \* To remind the listeners of the main points: Refresh the listeners’ memory about the principal support examples you used.
- \* To provide a sense of closure and completeness: Close the presentation with food for thought.

To have an effective closing, refer to your introduction, and if your purpose is persuasion, call for an action from the audience. Conclusions may actually use the same elements as introductions to get the listener thinking. A quote, a bit of humor, a startling statement and a statistic are just as effective at the end as they are at the beginning.

**Development Hints**: When joining together the introduction, the body and the conclusion, there is a clever saying that clearly sums up what you need to put in which section of the speech: “Tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em” in the introduction, “tell ‘em” in the body, and “tell ‘em what you told ‘em” in the conclusion.

Never add new points or information in the conclusion. That section of the speech is strictly for summary and closure.

## *Adding The Connectors*

When you have finished writing your speech and included all of the elements discussed thus far, you now need to go back over it to make sure there is ample glue to hold all of the parts together. This adhesive comes in several forms. Once again you will recognize them as part of the elements of good essay writing.

- **Transitions.** These are words, phrases, clauses or sentences that act as bridges between ideas and that help the listener get from one idea to the next. They *include also, and, in addition* and *another* to signal adding on an idea. *First, second, third,* and *next* indicate order. *But, yet, however, still* and *although* announce a change in the direction of thought. *On the contrary, on the other hand* and *conversely* identify opposite ideas. *For example* and *for instance* indicate illustrations and details. *In conclusion, in summary* and *finally* announce a conclusion.
- **Reference to the thesis statement.** Each time you move on to a new main point, refer to the original central idea to refresh the listeners' memory. For example, you might say, "Another symptom of depression that is able to be detected by the non-professional is through the awareness of the person's lack of self-esteem." The underlined words refer to the thesis statement and remind the listener of the topic.
- **Summaries.** Now and then it is a good idea to remind the listeners about what they have heard so far. For instance, "Now that you know that hopelessness and low self-esteem are clear signs of depression, there is one more that is equally as telling."
- **Repeating key words.** Though the audience never wants to listen over and over again to the same words as you go through your speech, there are some words that can be repeated to give them emphasis and to get them to stick in the audience's mind. An example might be how often you say *depression*.

## **Make The Right Choices**

The final area you need to deal with is revising your speech as you would an essay for composition class. Keep this in mind, though, as you make comparisons between good writing and good speaking. While there are many similarities between writing an essay and writing a speech, there are also some major differences. Writing depends completely on words and punctuation to get its message across. Feedback is often delayed, even sometimes coming in the form of more writing, while the feedback for a speaker is immediate. A good speech is often repetitive, allowing the listener the opportunity to process a word or a thought several times so he or she can remember it. Writers don't use that strategy as often as speakers. Too, speeches are not quite as disciplined as essays, at times allowing the speaker to depart from a prepared text if he or she needs to clarify a point or add an idea on the spot. Effective speaking is aimed at minds and hearts through ears, which prefer short, conversational style sentences. Writers, however, are given the freedom to use long, involved sentences because a reader's eyes can absorb more words at a time than the ear can hear and because the reader can backtrack and read a sentence again if something is missed the first time. That can't be done with a speech, of course; once something is said, it's gone, unless it's brought up again in a question and answer period.

Still, when you are revising your speech, you will use some of the strategies that you learned in writing class. And it is during revision that you also pay attention to all of the elements discussed in the unit on language. Proper grammar, vivid words, concrete words, noisy language, pompous language, loaded words, sexist language and more are all considerations that need to be checked and rechecked to make sure you have made all the right choices. Make sure you are not using false logic or an appeal that doesn't suit your purpose. When you have that and when you are confident that you have written the best possible speech you can with the most care you can give to the audience's needs and their expectations, you can then move on to adding visual aids to the foundation you have built from strong information, solid organization and excellent language. But first you need to work on how you are going to deliver your speech.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Listen to a speaker who is recognized as being extremely effective. Listen specifically for how the speaker narrowed the topic and how successful he was at keeping the topic clear, concise and understandable. Did he include too many points or did he keep the number small enough so that you could follow his thinking easily and be able to repeat his primary points at the end of the speech?
2. Brainstorm for topics for five minutes listing as many topics as you can. Select which topics would be of most interest to your audience. From this list, choose the top three topics that you would be most interested in speaking on. Is there one that strikes you as more interesting than the other two? Think about how you could build that topic into a speech.
3. Take a broad topic such as music or literature and work with a partner to narrow it to at least 10 different useful topics that could be turned into informative speeches. Next try for five topics for demonstration speeches and finally, five for persuasive. How do the topic approaches differ? How successful were you at narrowing them for each type of speech? Are there some topics that are not suited for some speech types? Each pair in the class should take on a different topic area. Compare your findings with the class.
4. Listen to or read an informative speech. What experts or sources did the speaker cite? Were they used effectively? Did you think the speech was more believable with the references in it? Was there other information that you would have benefited from having heard in the speech that was not there?
5. Listen to a political analyst. What specific support does he or she use to back up claims? What points does he or she deal with? If you were to analyze the speech, would you deal with the same points? Do these analysts offer proof of their claims or only opinion?
6. Ask your instructor to bring in copies of some students' old speech outlines cut into strips with each major and minor point on a different slip of paper. Try to arrange the pieces so you can discover the logical order of the speech. How successful were you? Which pattern of reasoning was used - inductive, deductive, or cause and effect?



7. Read a printed speech. Outline it. How difficult was it to spot the major and minor support points? How easily identifiable was the thesis statement? What kind of introduction did the speaker use? Conclusion? Transitions? Summaries?

## DELIVERING THE MESSAGE:

### LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Once you have narrowed your topic and picked one speech style, address the rest of the list of considerations to develop a strategy for how to deal with time, audience analysis, purpose and occasion for a presentation on this topic. How could you use your topic? What would the audience be like if it were to be ideal? What time constraints would you have to consider? What would the occasion be? What would be your purpose?
2. Go to the library with a partner. Both of you research the same topic, but each of you take a different source of information. For instance, you could take periodicals while your partner deals with books. How does the information differ in each form? Which would serve you best as a researcher and speaker? How credible are the sources? Can you find discrepancies in statistics? In interpretations? In opinions? Discuss your findings with other teams in the class.
3. Ask a fellow student for a copy of his or her last speech. Take the text and read it carefully. Then revise it by adding summaries, transitions, repeated key words and repeated references to the thesis statement. How effective is the speech in its revised form compared to its earlier form? Ask a student to do the same with one of your earlier speeches.

## CHAPTER 6

### DELIVERING THE MESSAGE: SAYING IT VERBALLY AND NON-VERBALLY

Now that you have successfully written a well-developed, well supported speech, what are you going to do with it? You can't just hand out copies of the text and call it a day. No, you are actually going to have to stand in front of your audience and speak to them. There are a number of issues you need to think about before you begin speaking. If you take these helpful hints and practice them, you will feel confident, and your audience will likely respond very positively to your delivery.

#### *Discovering The Voice*

Have you ever watched a three-year-old sit wide-eyed and enthralled by a cartoon or an animated film? What was that child responding to? The great writing in the story? The moral/philosophical issues brought up in the tale? The characters? The plot? It's not likely that any of those considerations would hold much appeal for the youngster immediately. What he or she responds to most is the sound of the voice that brings the yarn to life, the care given by the actor to make some words more energetic and emphatic than others. The excitement in the voice helps the cartoon images become real and thrilling for the child. What he or she responds to is **delivery**.

Interestingly enough, no matter how old you may grow, you will still respond to the same things in the voice, the same characteristics that send a child into gales of laughter or whimpers of sadness. People of all ages are captivated by the power of the human voice, something even Hollywood recognizes; the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences gave Robin Williams a special Oscar for his vocal performance of a character in the animated film *Aladdin*, proof that delivery is a motivator for listeners.

## **Adding Color**

Think of the characteristics that captivate a listener as the elements that offer color to an otherwise black and white language. Volume, rate, pitch, pauses, pitch variety, pronunciation, articulation and dialect are all contributing factors to what becomes a rich, exciting vocal delivery capable of enticing a listener to pay attention.

Think back once again to the list of speakers you prepared early in the semester. Did any of the people on your good speaker list have voices that were charismatic or powerful? Was there a resonant James Earl Jones there? A husky and sensual Demi Moore? A Shakespearean sounding Patrick Stewart; an energetic, compelling Elizabeth Dole; a calm, compassionate Billy Graham; or a comfortable, charming Barbara Bush? Were there names like Fran Drescher or Roseanne on the list of those that you thought were poor speakers, actresses whose nasal and whiny voices often serve to irritate listeners? Was there a monotonal Henry Kissinger? If so, you have discovered one of the pluses involved in holding an audience's attention: good vocal delivery.

That doesn't mean that only people with great voices can be effective communicators. As you have no doubt already discovered by going back to your list of speakers a couple of times, listeners respond to a number of different qualities in speakers, only one of which is vocal characteristics. Winston Churchill's stammer kept him from being a vocal giant, but not a giant among men. John F. Kennedy, whose strong Massachusetts accent caused him to sound foreign to some in this country, was hampered only slightly by the dialect, but not defeated by it. And Jimmy Carter could never be considered to have a dynamic delivery, yet he has functioned successfully as a negotiator and diplomatic ground breaker with nations around the world for many years. Still, if you can develop your vocal characteristics to serve you well, you are ahead of the game as a speaker. You can count on many listeners to respond quickly and positively to solid delivery skills.

## *Understanding The Vocal Process*

How does the voice work? While it is much more complicated than this, the basic process involves a series of exchanges. Air is taken into the lungs, which then push down on the diaphragm. That muscle is not comfortable in a flat position, so it forces itself back into its normal crowned state, pushing air out of the inflated lungs and up through the esophagus as it does. As the air rushes through the larynx, or what is commonly called the voice box, a vibration is set up in the vocal folds, folds of muscle most people refer to as the vocal chords. It is from here that sound is generated and amplified by means of the resonators, places that sound bounces around on, which include the chest, the throat, the nasal passages and the mouth. Words are then formed as the tongue makes contact with the teeth, the roof of the mouth and the lips.

The next time you hear a voice on radio, on TV, across a room or on stage that catches your attention, stop for a moment to think about what you are responding to. What particular quality in the person's voice caught your ear? Is it something you can develop as part of your own speaking arsenal? Think about it.

## *Using Vocal Tools*

Each of the components of the human voice adds an important and very distinctive element to its power. Since air is the fuel for speech, **volume** is generally the first area discussed because it is the one most directly tied to breathing properly. Common sense dictates that in order to communicate, you must be heard. Volume, then, is most definitely crucial to speaking effectively. But is that the only way loudness plays a role in speaking? No. Volume also has bearing on emphasis; if you are an effective speaker, you will raise your volume a bit when you want to make an emphatic point or to call attention to a specific word or group of words.

These words are called the **power words** in a sentence. That is, in every sentence there are some words that are simply more important than others because they carry the bulk of the meaning in the sentence. Read back over the last sentence. Which words there seem to be the most important or the most meaningful? If you identified *every*, *some*, *more important*, *bulk* and *meaning*, you have picked the power words, the ones that need to be empowered by you to allow the audience to understand what you think the most important information is. The audience has a

lot to deal with when they are listening, so if you can help them by pointing out which words in your message are the most important to you, you can ease the burden on the listeners and help yourself by adding clarity for them.

Remember that listeners don't always deal with every word you are saying; they are listening for main points and specific details that are related to those points. You can help by emphasizing which words the listeners need to pay attention to, almost as if you were underlining them vocally. This could be done with bold print, italics or underlining in a written text, but your voice is the primary source of emphasis in a speech or a conversation.

The most important thing to remember here is that proper breathing is the only way to successfully call upon and use volume when you need it. If there is not enough air, there is no volume.

**Delivery Hint:** Sound travels differently according to pitch; high pitches travel in a straight line while low pitches spread out and fill a room. The human voice is generally at the upper end of the mid range of sound humans can hear, so it travels more directly than a low note from a bass speaker on your stereo. Think about the last concert you went to. Could you always hear the voices over the roar of the base? Probably not. Keep that in mind as you speak to an audience. If your head is lowered as you speak, perhaps from reading your speech or from unwillingness to engage in direct eye contact, you cut off a great deal of the volume you need to reach the listeners.

### **Don't Set Your Voice On Cruise Control**

**Rate** isn't just the cost of something. It too plays a role in delivery because it involves how quickly or slowly a person speaks. There are a number of issues to consider when dealing with rate; the first is an awareness of what is appropriate for your performance. That is, depending upon your purpose, you will choose a rate that reflects the mood of your presentation. Suppose you are speaking to fire up a crowd to get it to agree with you about an emotional issue. More than likely you will speak a bit more quickly than you would if you were explaining a complicated technical process in a classroom or in a meeting.

Novice speakers are prone to speaking too quickly, primarily because of fear, which is manifested in two ways. First, the speaker seems to think the more quickly he speaks, the more quickly he will be able to sit back down and hide from the audience. Removing this kind of fear takes a bit of time and practice in areas already discussed.

The second is easier to control. Many people speak too quickly because they are under oxygenated. Have you ever stood before an audience and felt your fingers and toes tingle, had blurred vision, seen spots before your eyes or felt as though you couldn't breathe? It was the stress of fear. The problem is that you were not taking in enough air to fully meet your needs. Your fingers were telling your brain that they didn't have enough oxygen in them, so the brain processed the message, telling you to hurry up so you could get another breath. It is for that reason that the ends of many speakers' sentences are lower in volume than the beginnings; the speaker runs out of air before finishing.

**Delivery Hint:** When you detect any of these sensations, pause for a second, draw in a deep breath through your nose and relax. By the time you have the oxygen in place, you will be calmer and more collected, and the audience will be none the wiser because it took you only a split second. The reason for breathing through the nose is that when panicked or in a hurry, a speaker tends to gulp air. That allows some of the oxygen that should be going to the lungs to wind up in the stomach, leaving the speaker without enough fuel to think and speak.

**Breathing Exercise:** Try this in class. Stand as you would if you were speaking. Place your hand on your stomach and breathe in through your mouth. If your stomach does not extend and if your shoulders rise markedly, you are not breathing correctly. Instead, place your hand about three inches in front of your stomach, and as you breathe, force your stomach out to meet your hand. Your shoulders should be moving very little at this point, and you should be taking in enough air to successfully support both thinking and speaking. Here's a suggestion that might help you understand better. Let out the air slowly, counting the seconds to yourself as you exhale. Then try the entire process again through your nose. If you have done it properly, you should take in more air through the nose and take longer to exhale.

**A Reminder:** Remember that you can tell if you are speaking too slowly or too quickly by the non-verbal feedback from your audience. Watch them to see if they have shifted forward in their seats, if they have taken on a confused or stressed facial expression, or if they have lost attention. You can adjust your rate as you are speaking. You don't have to wait until later to have someone tell you that your delivery was too slow or too fast.

### **Adjusting The Pitch**

Think of language as a form of music played by the human voice. Words, as you have already discovered, have swells and lulls; they have slow, methodical and fast, emphatic meters; and they have pitches, which are various tones that are the same as those used by singers. As was discussed earlier, listeners respond to **pitches**. Have you ever had a professor drone on for an entire class period without once changing the pitch of his voice? That would be just as exciting as listening to a band play a song that had only one note in it. It is the mixing up of pitches, **pitch variety**, that creates energy in the speaker and that grabs the listener's attention and his or her comfort level.

Monotones aren't the only problem area when discussing pitch. At times a speaker will push himself or herself to the limits of the vocal range and stay there. Sometimes he or she might speak at the bottom of his or her range, thinking that it sounds authoritative and resonant. That leaves no opportunity to speak below a certain pitch. Others might speak at the top of the range, thinking it makes them sound young or energetic. That leaves them no possibility of speaking above that pitch. The ideal speaker finds his or her median pitch -- that place that is the most comfortable and the most consistently produced -- and then uses three to four pitches above it and three to four below it, so there is a good variety of pitches to choose from.

**Delivery Hint:** The best way to find the median pitch is to let the voice warm up completely, which usually happens five to six hours after waking, and then speak easily and with little effort. Speak in a breathy monotone; the pitch produced is usually the one the vocal folds are the most comfortable with and one that allows movement above and below it.



Pitch can also play a strong role in meaning. If you were to say “Oh” in a low pitch, that might mean something completely different than if you said it in a high pitch. The first might mean submission and the second surprise. These are called **inflections**, and they are what add warmth and excitement to your voice. Inflections are responsible for revealing mood and emotion.

**Delivery Hint:** Practice your speech once as if you were giving it to a group of children whose attention span is dictated by the energy and excitement in your voice. Of course, it will likely be more colorful than it will need to be ultimately for adults, but you will begin to get a sense of what kind of variety you can use to add to your presentation.

**A Reminder:** Pitch is also related to power words. You can emphasize words by changing pitch to call attention to them. For instance, if you told the class that you had just had the “most exciting experience of my life,” your voice might rise on *exciting*, lower on *experience* and then rise again on *life*, or you might change the meaning slightly by rising on *most* and *life* and lowering everything else.

### **Let’s Pause for a Moment**

One of the more difficult elements of delivery for beginning speakers is learning to use **pauses** to their advantage. These can be tremendously important aids because they allow you another option for emphasis and clarity, offering extra time for the audience to process the meaning of something important. An absence of sound -- even for the tiniest of moments -- is frightening for many people when they are facing an audience. This is where most *uhs* and *ums* come from as the speaker becomes desperate to fill in the silence with something until he or she can figure out what to say next. These distractions may seem unimportant to you while you are speaking, but they can be costly in the long run because an audience could interpret them as signs of unpreparedness, of a lack of intelligence or even of deception. What is your reaction when you hear an abundance of these vocal fillers in someone’s presentation?

Pauses do have solid uses, however. As you will learn as you grow more confident, a well-timed pause can send shivers down a spine, laughter to the heart, or a message to the soul. This tool is called **timing**, and once again comedians and actors are masters of the device. Think back



on the last really great comic you heard, the one who set you to wiping your eyes as you laughed uncontrollably. Did that comic run through the words, or did he or she pause at just the moment so you could get ready to listen to the punch line? Who else uses pauses effectively? Ministers? Politicians? Motivational speakers? The most successful instructors?

**Delivery Hint:** Speeches are generally constructed in blocks of related information or paragraphs. Where the *uhs* and *ums* appear are most often at the junction of ideas, at the beginning of a new paragraph in a text. Practice those areas a great deal to avoid getting lost in those particular places. Also, listen to speakers whose delivery you admire. Identify how they use pauses and try to emulate that until you are comfortable on your own.

### **The Voice Resonated Majestically**

**Resonance** is the echo produced by the voice as sound bounces off bone and open cavities in the body. Listeners seem to respond to deep, resonant voices such as that of actors James Earl Jones and Maya Angelou. It is much like the richness that was added when you and some friends would sing in the restroom in high school or in the sanctuary at church; the open space allowed vibrations to echo around the tones produced.

**Delivery Hint:** You can enhance your resonance by opening your jaw farther than usual when speaking. This allows the mouth to act as a major echo chamber. By opening your mouth far enough to fit two fingers vertically between your teeth, you can also help other areas of delivery such as rate and volume. You will have to slow down if you open your mouth farther because the jaw has to travel farther to form words, so it will simply take more time to speak. Also, volume is helped because sound is not blocked by teeth and lips from a tight jaw; more sound can flow from a larger opening.

This is also helpful when you have a cold. When you open your mouth wider, you rely less on nasal cavities to act as resonators, bypassing areas that might be clogged from a cold or sinus congestion. You can't imagine how many *-ng* sounds there are in the English language until you have to speak to an audience when you have a cold.

## Say It Correctly

**Pronunciation** is the next area of vocal delivery that is important to understand. Of course, there isn't a person who doesn't mispronounce something occasionally, but you need to try to avoid it as much as you can. However, there are some words that just stand out as opportunities to misspeak. Think about these and how you pronounce them.

nuclear    mischievous    February    arctic

If you are like most people, you will have pronounced them incorrectly like this:

nu-cu-lar    mis-chie-vious    Feb-u-ary    ar-tic

If most people do it incorrectly, why learn to pronounce words properly? The reason is simple: Mispronounced words are often not understood by the listener. Also, to those people who know the correct pronunciation, your credibility could again come into question. Is there any reason to run the risk of being laughed at or being considered to be unintelligent by the audience for mispronouncing something? More than one person had a chuckle at former President Ronald Reagan's expense when he repeatedly pronounced *government* as *gubmnt*. Listen to people around you. What words do you hear mispronounced and how do you react to those people when that happens? When you hear a newscaster flounder with pronunciation, what is your immediate reaction?

**Delivery Hint:** Keep a running list of words you hear mispronounced and occasionally refresh your memory about their correct pronunciation. It is easy to retrain an ear that is constantly bombarded by improper pronunciation, so do some pronunciation calisthenics now and then just to stay in shape. If you are unsure of a word's pronunciation, simply look it up in a dictionary. That will leave no opportunity for you to compromise yourself. If there is no way for you to find out prior to a speech what the correct pronunciation is, think of a synonym and avoid the problem. However, if you have to use a word you can't pronounce, such as a name, write it on the board, on a poster or on a placard that you can show to the audience.

## Say It Clearly

**Articulation** also plays a great role in a speaker's delivery. This involves clearly forming and verbalizing each part of a word and completely separating one word from the next. Have you experienced conversations like this?

“Whatimezit?”

“Iunno.”

“Wanna gweet?”

“Yawntu? Whin?”

“Nowulwerk.”

“Auwite.”

“Thinweecngotasho.”

“Eyeyowp.”

Now, if you deciphered this gibberish, you're on your way to becoming a world- class communicator.

What should have been said is this:

“What time is it?”

“I don't know.”

“Do want to go eat?”

“Do you want to? When?”

“Now will work.”

“All right.”

“Then we can go to the show.”

“Oh, yes.”

This is the kind of babble that turns up far too often when a speaker is less than careful about the beginnings and endings of his words. This is not only a problem for most Americans, but just imagine what a foreigner would have to deal with when trying to do business with company spokespersons who sound like this. For that matter, what kind of notes would you take if one of your professors spoke in this manner?

**Delivery Hint:** Listen to a tape of a speaker whose articulation is clear and concise. What does he or she do that you could benefit from doing? Does the speaker finish every sound within a word? Does he or she make sure to finish the ends of words before beginning the next? Read a passage from a book and try the same things that you discovered in the speaker's delivery.

Try reading this sentence aloud to see if you run any words together. "I didn't like what I heard last night on the news broadcast." If you leave off *t*, *k*, and *d* in these words and if you form words like *didnlac* and *lasnigh*, you have become a poor articulator. Practice that a bit to see if you can develop the skill.

### **Where Did You Say You're From?**

The final major area of delivery involves **dialects** or **regionalisms**. Because America is a melting pot of the world's cultures, at any time you might be listening to a speaker from anywhere else in the world. Perhaps you are one yourself or have heard one recently. From Hispanic accents to Chinese, from Iranian to German, from African-American to Cajun, the country is filled with the sounds of different cultures speaking their versions of English. The only way to more easily understand them is to listen better and more often to the particular sounds that are part of the dialects.

Were you aware that there are dialects native to Americans as well? There are four distinctively different regional dialects in the country: New England, Eastern, Southern and General American, which has some small variations from location to location. Some of you may recall having heard a speech by President John Kennedy concerning the missile crisis in *Cuber* (Cuba) during his term of office. Southern televangelists preach the gospel of the *Lawd* (Lord). Many New Yorkers often refer to a specific time in the afternoon as *two-thoity* (2:30) or explain that they are originally from *New Joisey* (Jersey).

The point of understanding this is to make it clear that as much as possible, you need to be aware of how regionalisms and dialects can compromise your audience if they are not familiar with your pronunciation or your word choices. Indulge in a dialect only if it is appropriate to both the occasion and the audience. If not, avoid it if at all possible.

**Delivery Hint:** Listen again to a tape of a highly effective speaker. Does the person have an obvious ethnic or regional dialect, or does he or she speak in what might be called the General American dialect? You will find the best speakers have spent time practicing a broader pronunciation so every kind of audience can understand and appreciate them.

**Practice Hint:** When preparing for a presentation, most speakers are tempted to use a tape recorder so they may listen to themselves and assess their delivery. To detect a dialect, this is a solid tool. But it does have a drawback. Have you ever thought that you sounded like Mickey Mouse when listening to your voice on a small recorder? That is because only the most sophisticated and expensive equipment is capable of recording anything more than pitch. Resonance cannot be caught on these small machines, so be aware that what you are hearing when you play back your voice is not what you sound like to an audience. Don't let that sound you hear make you feel self-conscious. Use these devices only to monitor your pronunciation, articulation, pitch variety, pauses, rate and word choice; don't rely on them to reproduce your voice exactly as it sounds. You will have to rely on your own ear as you speak for that.

**Delivery Hint:** There are going to be times when you will have to speak with a sore throat, with a raspy voice or with a mild case of laryngitis. If that is the case, there are some things you can do to help save your voice and make it last a bit longer than it normally would. Do not, however, try to speak when you have laryngitis because you could do some severe damage to your vocal folds. Laryngitis is the result of strained vocal folds, and just like any other muscle in the body, they can be damaged badly if not taken care of.

- Avoid speaking unless it is absolutely necessary. Rest is really the only cure.
- If you do have to speak, try eating some ice chips just prior to speaking. That helps reduce swelling in the vocal folds.
- Avoid the commonly prescribed hot tea and lemon remedy. Both create mucus and will cause you to want to cough, which will add to the problem. Instead, drink hot water and honey.
- Avoid whispering. The vocal folds can't tell the difference between talking and whispering -- the outcome is the same.

- It is also a good idea not to use the over-the-counter throat sprays that feature an anesthetic to numb your throat. You can do some real damage if you can't feel what you are doing while you're speaking.

## *Using The Body*

Just when you thought you knew all there was to know about delivery, along comes another whole issue concerning how you send messages to a listener. Here's a little mind twister for you. Try to think of a situation in life that does not involve communication. Hint: Being dead is not one. Your absence communicates something to the people who are aware you are not present. It is impossible for you not to communicate in any given situation, even when you are not using spoken language. Your clothing, how you walk or stand, a scar on your face, or where you choose to sit when you enter a room all tell something about you.

"Oh no," you must be thinking, "now I have to learn something else about how to speak." In a way you do because there is much about you that speaks without being said out loud. It is called **nonverbal communication**, which is the conscious or unconscious transmission and reception of unspoken messages. The primary tool here is **body language**, cues your body sends that may be interpreted, or "read," and that may be more important in the long run than the words you speak. Body language includes gestures, facial expressions, posture, eye contact, movement, touch, and dress. Even such things as use of space, environment, artifacts and time are part of the ever-growing area of study that is nonverbal communication.

### **The Eyes Have It**

The most significant of these wordless communicators is **eye contact**. It is obvious that people have known for some time that their eyes are their primary tool of silent communication, or why else would phrases such as "He spoke with his eyes" or "She had a look that could kill" be part of the language? Eye contact is necessary to maintain a connection of communication, for if the eyes move away, so do the attention of the listener and the message of the speaker.

Eyes can include or exclude a person, and they are the principal means people use of ensuring feedback from others. The eyes tell you clearly if the person you are speaking to is

bored, interested, confused, captivated, entertained or annoyed. Also, there are some cultural issues associated with eye contact. Those who don't engage in direct eye contact when someone else is speaking to them are often distrusted in this society. Why else would we hear "He had shifty eyes. I don't trust him."

A number of other cultures are aware of how Americans use eye contact to glean information and make assessments. That's why some choose to hide their eyes when speaking to a Westerner. Have you ever wondered why some political negotiations have been carried out with members of other cultures wearing sunglasses? Some of the reason may be due to the fact that the eyes are far too easy to read. Extremely proficient readers can detect a slight dilation in the pupil when blood pressure changes occur, sending the signal that stress or a lie may be involved.

Is there anything more annoying than speaking to a person who won't look at you? It's safe to say that more than one parent has disciplined a child while shouting, "Look at me when I am talking to you." Perhaps some of you have been on the sending or receiving end of that message.

Eye contact is a tremendous boon to you as a speaker because it is a way to control the attention level of your audience and to establish an interpersonal understanding with them. It is also a means by which you can control your own fear. Think about this -- one of the most often cited reasons for fear is that it is intimidating to speak to a number of people at once. But if you remember that you can only engage one set of eyes at time, you might get used to the idea that at any given moment, you are speaking to one lone listener. Through eye contact, you can get him or her involved in what you are saying. You can then move your gaze around the room, speaking to as many individuals as you can in the time you have to speak.

Most everyone feels much more comfortable speaking to one instead of one hundred. No matter how you look at it, it's just a conversation with one person at a time in your audience who is responding with his or her eyes and without verbalizing. And if you are lucky enough to find a couple of active listeners, those who offer feedback through direct eye contact, smiles, nods or movements with their hands or body, your confidence level can increase dramatically during your talk.

## **I Could Read It On His Face**

**Facial expressions** are another tool that offers messages to a listener. The face is easily the most expressive part of the body, and it is also the most controllable. You can convey just about any message with the proper expression; from sadness to joy, from anger to confusion, from happiness to disillusionment, the face speaks volumes. If you have ever doubted that, think now about some of your favorite movies. Were you just as aware of mood or intention from an actor's face as you were from the words spoken by him or her?

There is a major drawback here, though, and that is that facial expressions can be misinterpreted. For example, if a person has a grim, tight-lipped expression, that may be read as sadness, anger, or depression. It could, however, simply be a headache. Also, if the facial expression does not match even the most obvious meaning of a spoken message, the listener will most likely accept the facial expression as the primary message and the spoken word as the secondary. An example of that might be when you are asked by someone how you are feeling. Your verbal response might be, "Fine," but if your face reflects sadness, fatigue or physical discomfort, that is probably the message the listener will interpret.

## **Making Your Point By Pointing A Finger**

**Gestures** are punctuation for the body. As arms and hands move to underscore a message, the listener can more fully interpret intensity, mood, and order of the information verbalized by the speaker. Don't confuse the use of gestures with someone who "talks with his hands." Actually, good gestures are much larger and more appealing than the movements used by some who simply poke the air or act like windmills as they try to articulate their thoughts.

Gestures need to be wide and varied, and they need to be used above the waist and away from the body; otherwise, they won't be able to be seen well enough to be useful. And they should never be repetitious. Think about some people you have seen who use the same hand gesture over and over. After a while it no longer carries a meaning and just gets in the way, but a powerful speaker can enhance his presentation considerably by using his hands and arms to add confidence, energy and emphasis to a spoken message.



Gestures are also most helpful to you if you are a nervous speaker because they help burn up excess energy that could turn into stress, fear or panic if it is not used up. Simply by using one sweeping gesture you can use up energy that would otherwise have been allowing you to be nervous.

**Delivery Hint:** Watch other speakers. You may quickly become aware that gestures generally coincide with power words. When a speaker wants to emphasize a word or a point, he or she usually does it both vocally and physically.

### **Stand Up and Move Over There**

**Posture and movement** are two more ways you can send a message to someone about your attitude, either positive or negative. You can demonstrate your level of confidence and self-esteem by standing erect but comfortably. An audience is always more at ease with a speaker who feels confident and who carries himself or herself with ease and conviction. Have you ever seen a timid, shy soul whose body seems almost to fold in on him or her while trying desperately to melt into the background? How did you feel about that person? Would you listen to him or her as readily as you would someone who displayed self-assuredness in his or her stance? What about a person who exhibited arrogance or combativeness in his or her posture? What would you think about someone like that? Posture is important. Keep in mind that you not only have to stand up for your ideas, but with them as well.

Body movement works hand-in-hand with posture, although it is generally discussed separately. This is a tool that involves moving from place to place. A speaker who stays static behind the podium and whose fingers seem to have to be pried from it like the white-knuckled hands of a first-time flyer loses not only power, but also energy. The human eye is drawn to movement. If you catch sight, even peripherally, of something moving, don't you focus on it immediately? The same goes for an audience if the speaker takes the opportunity to move around the podium, to the edge of the speaking area or even into the audience.

Think back to the last test you took during which the teacher moved to the back of the room and stood behind you. Were you thinking about the test or about where the teacher was? Probably the latter, for at least a moment or two anyway. But just as that teacher had a purpose

for moving to a new location, so should you while speaking. Don't just pace back and forth for the sake of moving. That's distracting and annoying. Make your movement coincide with a particular point that you want to make so it adds emphasis to your spoken message. And like gestures, movement also helps the speaker diminish any stress he might be feeling by once again burning up energy that could be turned into anxiety.

**Delivery Hint:** If you should ever get lost in your presentation or conversation, walk a few steps away from where you are, which will give you ample time to regroup and allow the audience to focus on something else while you are reorganizing. The movement may be interpreted as your thinking about the next point.

**Delivery Hint:** Your presentation begins the moment the audience catches sight of you. How you approach a podium or walk to the front of a room, the way you carry yourself, sends a signal to the audience about you and how you view yourself and the situation at hand. They will view the same way. Don't give the audience an opportunity to shut down on you before you open your mouth by appearing to be shy, unwilling or arrogant. Make them want to listen by looking confident and ready.

## ***Communicating Using Space And Time***

Space and how you use it, an area of study called **proxemics**, sends a message. If you think about it, you will certainly realize that this culture takes space very seriously. When was the last time you saw a sign announcing "Private Property" or "No Trespassing"? Space is a matter of ownership, whether it be land on which you live or the area around you in which you communicate. There are four primary areas of space in which you communicate: intimate distance, personal distance, social distance and public distance. Do you recall those components of communication discussed earlier? This is where interpersonal, public or group communication arenas can be distinguished.

The first and most easily identifiable communication space is the **intimate distance**. Imagine an invisible line that begins at the outer edges of your shoulders and encases the body in a circle about 18 inches in diameter. This is the area that sends the message of intimacy and trust.

Only those most trusted and loved individuals in a person's life may communicate within that space. Whom do you let in that area? And whom do you not let in? Do you recall the last time you were on an elevator or in a cramped space with strangers? How comfortable did you feel? If your answer is that you were quite uneasy, is it because someone you did not know who was "in your space." You might not agree with this concept at first, citing the times when you shake a stranger's hand in close proximity to your own body. And you are right, but think about what happens after you let go of the hand. Don't you step back and widen the distance between you again? This kind of a reaction is rather unique to Westerners. Other cultures, such as those in the Far or Middle East, are not as concerned about this space. As a matter of fact, it is not unusual to spot total strangers deeply engaged in conversation with their noses all but touching in some countries like Saudi Arabia or Iran.

**Personal distance** is considered to be that region between 18 and 40 inches from you. Close friends and colleagues speak with us on a personal level at this distance. Family members are also comfortable here.

**Social distance** is generally between 4 and 12 feet from the body. This area is mostly used for social communication such as parties; interviews; impromptu conversations in hallways, on stairways, in parking lots, at the mall, in stores or anyplace that allows socialization with people who do not have a close relationship with you but who are known to you. It is to this distance that you will likely return after you have shaken a stranger's hand.

**Public distance** is that area that is over 12 feet. This is for meetings, formal speaking situations, speaking to a next-door neighbor across the fence, or holding a conversation with a person while you are busy working on your porch.

So what is the point of understanding these distances? Where you speak is part of the issue of the context of the message. That message can have different meanings assigned to it according to where it is delivered in relation to the listener. For example, if someone says to you "I like you," depending upon where he or she is standing, you could interpret the message as one of a personal nature or one of simple admiration or enjoyment. The closer the listener, the more intimate the message.

As a communicator, you can dictate another level of meaning, an implied or connotative meaning, when you use space to your advantage. For instance, in an interview, if you close the

space between you and the interviewer slightly, you can lessen the formality and sometimes even the stress of the meeting. If you close the distance between you and the audience when giving a speech, you can make a more personal connection with them than if you stayed motionless behind the podium. On the other hand, if you widen the gap between you and an audience, you can add to your authority as a speaker and the formality of your message.

Another communication signal is **time**, or chronemics, which is the use of time as an interaction tool. To Americans, “time is money,” and it is power. If you can control someone’s time, you have power over him or her. Think about the last time you sat waiting in a doctor’s office for more than an hour. Who had the power in that instance, you or the doctor? And when you go on an interview, who is in charge, you or the person who dictates what time you are to be there? Think about what prison must be like for those incarcerated. These are people who have no control over their lives because their time is totally directed by others. To most it is the ultimate punishment since time is personal power and prisoners are totally without it.

Any effective speaker needs to be aware of how valuable time is to his audience. Don’t spend long amounts of time explaining something that could be dealt with much more quickly and concisely. Don’t extend your presentation beyond your allotted time because that may be demonstrating an abuse of power on your part. If you control the audience’s time when they have not given you the authority to do so, your message may be lost in your listeners’ animosity.

### **Just Look at You**

Another consideration that affects nonverbal communication is **appearance**. It is arguably the easiest means by which many people create first impressions. Your appearance speaks to another person long before you open your mouth, and for many, it will help in their decision about whether or not to listen to you at all. How important is appearance in communication? The business community puts a great deal of stock in it, often turning down what could have been an asset to a company simply because of the person’s poor appearance. An interviewer might read disrespect, lack of discipline, or poor attitude into someone who comes to an interview dressed inappropriately. An instructor could think a student will be a troublemaker if he or she wears unsuitable clothing in the classroom.

Hair that is unkempt, nails that are dirty and uncared for, shoes that are run down or torn, clothing that is soiled or tattered, and makeup that is too heavy all send negative messages to others, whether in classrooms or in offices. It might be difficult to argue for your credibility as a speaker if you show up in front of your audience in dirty jeans, a torn shirt and some run-down tennis shoes, even if it is just speech class and you know everyone in it. Aside from your knowledge and delivery, an audience also wants to know that you respect them enough not to dress down for them. You don't want your first and lasting impression to be "What a slob."

**Delivery Hint:** If you did the ice-breaking exercise mentioned in the first unit, do you remember the first impressions you had of your instructor and some of your classmates? Were you right? What misled you if you were wrong? Think about how you react to first impressions and then remember that everyone else reacts to you the same way when they first see you.

### **Saying It Without Saying It**

There is one more area of nonverbal communication that has a bearing on how a listener interprets a message, and that is **paralanguage**. While it can use the voice to make sound, this form of communication involves expression through unexpressed words such as clearing the throat, sighing, coughing, or making any sound that can carry a signal of intention to a listener. This term is also inclusive of the elements of delivery such as volume, pitch, rate and more.

**Delivery Hint:** Just as the speaker offers messages to the audience through body language, the audience also offers some very easily discernible information to a speaker who is willing to watch his listeners. When you are in front of an audience the next time, think about the clues they give you.

- If you see some members of the audience leaning forward and watching your face carefully, you could be speaking too quietly or too quickly. Pick up the volume to see if they sit back in their normal positions. If not, try slowing down just a bit; that will likely solve the problem. They may simply be trying to see the words formed on your lips because you are speaking so softly or quickly they can't understand you.

- Another way you can tell if you might be speaking too low is if you discover a group of people seated near one another who are not paying close attention. They may not be able to hear you. Another problem might be that they are not able to see you clearly. Try moving around a little.
- If you find an active listener, one who gives you feedback through eye contact, head nods or smiles, don't stay long with that one person, but go back to him or her often. If you can get the person involved in your presentation, you will feel more confident as you go along, which will make you feel more comfortable in engaging other sets of eyes.
- If you see someone with a confused expression, you might mentally file that away so you can address it later if questions are encouraged at the end of your presentation. That way you can clarify anything that might have been unclear or incomplete.
- If there is someone talking in the audience and distracting listeners, walk toward that person, calling attention to your presence by simply speaking slowly and deliberately. That will likely refocus the talker. Don't try to embarrass the disrupter by speaking to him or her directly. Just let the offender know you are aware of the distraction.
- If you are speaking late in the day to a group that may already be tired, move around and vary your pitches as much as you can comfortably. That will add energy to your delivery and will help re-energize your listeners as well.

### **Put It All Together**

A truly effective speaker is one who can integrate nonverbal communication with an effective vocal delivery, an awareness of the audience, as well as the elements of listening, language, logic, reasoning and ethics. You will be able to grab the audience's attention and hold it as long as you want if you understand the value of eye contact, gestures, posture, movement, and other such valuable tools and if you use them efficiently.

## *Delivering The Message*

There is one final area of delivery that you need to consider, and it will only really make sense now that you understand what kinds of verbal and non-verbal delivery techniques you need to use to best keep an audience involved in your presentation. This area is the **delivery method**. There are four basic types of delivery: manuscript, memorized, impromptu and extemporaneous. Each has advantages and disadvantages for the speaker, but one or bits of all of these delivery methods offer options to you that will allow you to feel more confident as you work through your presentation.

A **manuscript** delivery allows you to read from a text that has been written out in advance. It affords the opportunity to make sure everything you want to say is right in front of you while you address the audience.

### Advantages

- Complex or hard-to-remember information such as names, dates, technical material, or quoted material that needs to be exact will be less likely forgotten or misstated if the manuscript is at your fingertips.
- If the wording of your presentation needs to be exact because of its delicate or complicated nature, you can ensure that you won't make a mistake by reading the text.
- If you have not had enough time to practice your delivery beforehand, you can rely on the manuscript to help you sound prepared and professional.

### Disadvantages

- When you read, you lose the most important tool you have as a communicator: eye contact.
- Even if you do have the expertise to look up at an audience now and then, when you return to the printed page, you increase your chances of losing your place and becoming not only stressed, but also lost in your speech. Imagine how long it might seem to you as you frantically search for where you were when you looked up.

- When you read, you invite the audience to think that you only know about your topic when you are reading from a prepared text. This could call your credibility as a reliable source of information into question.
- When you read, you lose all of the energy in your voice that by now you understand attracts an audience. You increase the likelihood of your speaking in a monotone and losing power words and emphasis. You also run the risk of not being loud enough because your face will be pointed down slightly and away from the audience.
- When you read, you are tied to the podium and lose any opportunity you have of moving around, which takes away energy from your presentation.
- If you are like most speakers who read from a text, you will use one or both of your hands to try to keep your place. This removes any possibility of using gestures to add to your speech. Even worse is that speaker who has to hold the paper up to be able to see. This distracts the audience and blocks some eye contact.
- Imagine how you would feel if you arrived at the place you were going to speak and your manuscript didn't.

A **memorized** delivery also has you write out your speech ahead of time, but instead of reading it to the audience, you speak from memory.

#### Advantages

- You are free to maintain constant eye contact.
- You can use gestures and movement freely.
- You can sound more energetic and dynamic because you will have practiced your delivery a great deal and because you are not engaged in reading.
- You can direct the sound of your voice more easily



## Disadvantages

- You can forget. Think back to when you were in grade school or high school. Did you ever have to memorize a poem? How did you do it? If you are like most people, you memorized it according to stanzas, using the first word or two of the stanza as a guide for what came after it. What happened if you forgot the guide word? The rest of the stanza and maybe even the entire poem was lost to you.
- If you do remember some part of your speech, it is likely that it will not be in the order you wanted it, so the audience will be confused and distracted.
- If you forget, you increase your level of stress and anxiety.
- Unless you have rehearsed a great deal, you will sound as though you are reading the backs of your eyelids. That is, the delivery will be flat and mechanical, the same as if you were reading a printed text.
- If for some reason you have to stop, such as for an interruption of some kind, you will likely have a hard time picking back up where you left off. Also, now that you have learned to read body language, should you see confusion on the audience's face or find them distracted and have to step out of your delivery for a moment to address the situation, you will find it very hard to begin again.
- The audience will feel as though you are talking at them, not with them.

An **impromptu** delivery allows you little to no time to prepare prior to speaking. It is speaking “off the top of your head” from personal knowledge of or experience with the subject.

## Advantages

- You can sound spontaneous and energetic because the presentation is literally on the spur of the moment.
- You can maintain eye contact and use gestures and movement to add energy.
- You can be flexible, adding new information as it occurs to you.
- You can demonstrate your ability to speak from a body of knowledge.

## Disadvantages

- You may have nothing to say or know nothing about the topic.
- Perhaps you can't think of information as quickly as you would like. Have you ever been in a conversation, perhaps even an argument with someone, walked away, and then on the way home, smacked yourself in the forehead and yelled, "Oh, I wish I had said that!"  
That can happen with an impromptu presentation as well.
- It is easy to ramble without the opportunity to plan in advance. This leaves not only the audience confused, but you as well. You might even find yourself asking later, "What did I say?"
- If you have a negative attitude about speaking on a specific topic or for a particular audience, it is more likely to show than if you had had time to prepare prior to the speech.
- You may not have the best delivery style without the opportunity to practice ahead of time.
- You may not make the best choices in examples or language at the moment.

The final delivery method is **extemporaneous**, which is actually something of a hybrid of the other three styles. With this method, you have the opportunity to thoroughly plan the speech in advance, but perhaps not the exact words that you will ultimately use. With this method, you can combine the best elements of the others.

## Advantages

- You can do plenty of research ahead of time and build a body of knowledge about the topic so you can speak credibly about it.
- You can memorize the opening and closing, which are the most important places for you to have uninterrupted direct eye contact with the audience.
- Your delivery will sound spontaneous and energetic.
- You can use note cards or an outline to ensure that you know where you are headed next in the presentation, and you can include such information as the correct pronunciation of names

- You will be free to move around and to use gestures often.
- You can encourage verbal feedback from the audience, even asking them for questions.
- You can adjust the direction and flow of your presentation. For instance, if you need to spend more time on a point for clarification, you may do so without being locked into a printed or a memorized delivery method.
- You can lengthen or shorten your presentation according to your need.
- You can add to your credibility by speaking fluently from a body of knowledge.

#### Disadvantages

- You can display poor grammar or language skills.
- You can wander too far away from your original intent by trying to expand a point.

As you can see, where delivery is concerned, there are many important points to remember. Each is equally as strong an element to help you become a more effective and more credible speaker.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Bring a 30- to 45-second piece of reading text to class and read it out loud so others may listen to your voice. It may be anything except a children's story or a poem, both literary styles that have meter already written into them. Have each person in the class write a brief description of your voice, whether it is clear, muffled, high-pitched, low-pitched, soft or strong. Are your pitches varied? Is your rate slow or fast? Do you use pauses effectively? Do you articulate well? Have you used power words? This might give you a small idea of how others respond to your voice and help you understand how you may strengthen your vocal delivery.

2. Tell, but do not read, a brief children's story to the class. Discover how you add color to these and how you can add the same color to your speeches or conversations.
3. Evaluate a taped speaker in all of the vocal delivery areas discussed here. Grade him or her accordingly. Don't forget the library when looking for taped speakers, either audio or video.
4. Watch parts of the movie *Nell*, which features a character who has learned to speak from a woman whose speech was inarticulate because she had had a stroke. Nell's is a convoluted version of conventional American language. Can you understand her?
5. Watch scenes from *Menace II Society*, *The Big Easy*, *GoodFellas* and *Shy People* to discover how regionalisms can affect how well you understand a speaker.
6. Screen a video, and this time only watch, or "listen," for body language. Don't get caught up in the story, but watch for how gestures, facial expressions, posture, walk, and eye contact add to the understanding you have of the characters and the situation. One really good way to do this is to turn the sound off. Can you still tell what is going on? What clues did you pick up on? Which non-verbal elements did you respond to most? Then turn the sound back up to see if you were right. Also, how did these signals enhance the spoken words? Watch the video together and discuss it in class.
7. Watch your classmates in other courses. How do they use space when they are speaking? Do they move away from the audience or approach it when possible? Where are the speakers when you feel most comfortable with them? Watch students in hallways and in public places. From what distances do they speak to one another?
8. Watch your professors and instructors. Which ones are the most effective non-verbal communicators? Which of the delivery techniques discussed do you detect in your teachers? How do they use movement and space to underscore their messages? How could they improve? Discuss your findings with the class.
9. Watch a good speaker on video to see what type of delivery he or she uses. What elements did you see that were effective and which were not? What could you use in your own delivery to enhance it?

10. Think about the last speaker you heard who got lost in a presentation; perhaps it was in your class. How did you react? What happened to the speaker? Was he or she reading from a manuscript or was the presentation memorized? Did he or she use note cards or an outline? Discuss what your experiences have been with the different methods of delivery. Has one worked better for you than another?

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Give a four-minute presentation describing an experience that made you emotional. Pay attention to all of the elements of vocal delivery discussed. Try to include language that is both descriptive and expressive.
2. Ask your classmates to listen for and note regionalisms and inarticulation in your presentation. Did you have problems? If so, where? Were they consistent with a particular sound? Work on that sound in the future.
3. Pair up with a partner. Discuss how you can act out a scenario involving only non-verbal clues and then present it to the class. Try not to make the signals obvious, but subtle. How difficult is it to “read” the clues? How successful was the class in interpreting the situation?
4. Ask a volunteer to deliver part of a printed speech to the class. He will include as many *uhs* and *ums* as he can, try to avoid any direct eye contact with anyone in the audience, and speak in a monotone the entire time. When he has finished, make a list of particular bits of information you understood from the delivery. What were they? How did you react to the speaker? What can you learn from this?
5. Take a well-known speech and work on how you would deliver it. Don’t do it as the original speaker did, but how you interpret it. What would you do vocally? What would you do with body language? What are the key words that you need to emphasize? What method of delivery would served you best?
6. Deliver a portion of this speech to the class and ask for feedback. How effective were you?



## CHAPTER 7

### USING VISUAL AIDS:

### UNDERLINING YOUR MESSAGE

It is clear that listeners respond to the value of visual aids given sayings such as “A picture is worth a thousand words” or “Seeing is believing.” A visual aid is any object that the audience can see that allows them to better understand your message. These may take a number of forms, such as charts, graphs, photographs, posters, drawings, slides, overhead projections, handouts, movies, computer-generated multi-media presentations, or any other physical object that underscores the point you are trying to make.

Think of a visual aid as clarity that you can add to your presentation because it allows the audience more than just the spoken word to understand your message from. Educational psychologists agree that the more senses that are involved in learning, the more is learned. By adding sight to sound, you increase your chances of having the audience more completely understand what you want them to know.

Think about how important the video tape of Rodney King’s beating at the hands of some members of the Los Angeles Police Department became to America. When the Berlin Wall came down, most people went to their television sets so they could see and what they had already heard about. Many in America responded to the televised court sessions during the O.J. Simpson murder trial by using the visual images of Simpson’s face to judge his guilt or innocence. We still watch videos of man’s first steps on the moon and of most anything else that has been recorded in picture form since mankind began drawing images on the inside of caves.

TV has become the primary medium of information in this country, offering sights as well as sounds to those eager for news and entertainment. So it is easy to accept the idea that pictures are extremely important and beneficial to any speaker and audience member. If you recall, the discussion of language involved picking words that would allow the listener to “see” representations of what you are speaking about. This sends another clear signal about the power

of visual aids. What better way to enhance that language than with visual images that support your message.

Therein lies a key to understanding how visual aids *should* work: They are **support** for the information contained in any presentation. They are not, however, the primary information itself. Do you remember the discussion of how no two people interpret words the same way? That is also true for pictures, unless they are accompanied by a body of information that the visual aid is used to strengthen. Don't let pictures speak for themselves without explanation because your message could be misinterpreted. For example, think about the Rodney King tape again. If you had seen that without any verbal information, you might have interpreted it as a criminal being arrested for some terrible crime. The way you looked at it changed once you understood what it was. Another example might be the video footage of night air attacks of SCUD missiles during Desert Storm. While they looked close enough to destroy everything visible on the TV screen, they were actually quite a distance from the camera site. The pictures misled the viewer into thinking many people were getting badly hurt. Without the commentator, the interpretation would have been more frightening than it was.

One more example of how visual aids work is the ever-present charts and graphs that 1992 presidential hopeful Ross Perot used so successfully to demonstrate his political plan for America. When asked, many people reported that the thing they remembered most about any of his televised speeches was the use of those aids. And let us not forget the impact of the visual on a buying public that is hooked on TV shopping networks and infomercials, both of which entice the public into spending many millions of dollars yearly on products that look appealing to the consumer.

Keep in mind the issue of credibility once again. A speaker who utilizes visual aids is considered by the audience to be better prepared, more dynamic, more professional, and more credible than one who does not use visuals. Visual aids also increase the level of persuasiveness of a presentation greatly. Think about the last really good speaker you heard. Did he or she use visual aids? Were those aids helpful in understanding the message? Also think about this: What class do you seem to take the best notes and get the best scores in? Is it one whose instructor uses visual aids to explain difficult concepts or ideas?

## *Using Visuals Effectively*

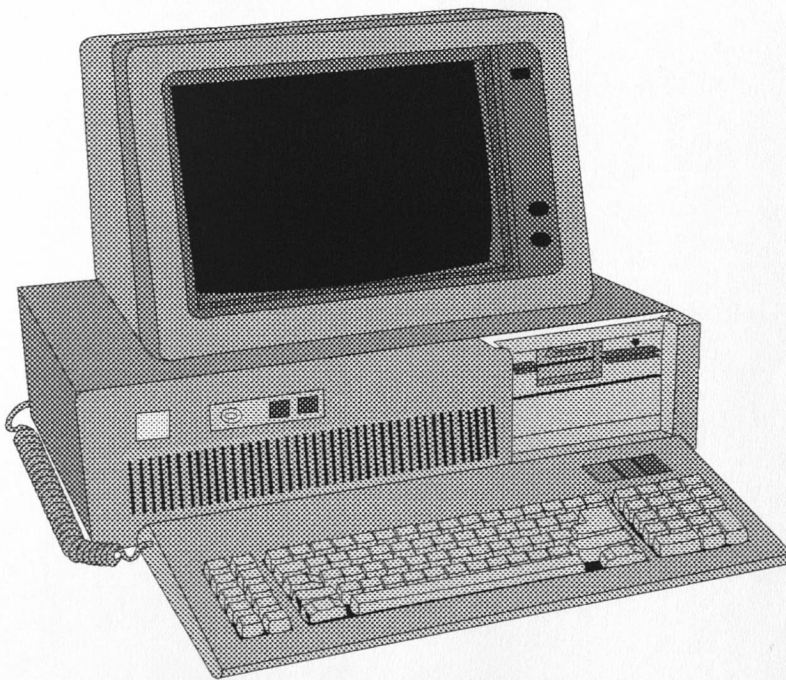
You may not realize it, but since your earliest encounters with books your parents read to you, you have been affected by visual aids. When they read bedtime stories, did you “read” along by looking at the pictures? Do you still do that? When you get a new textbook, do you thumb through it to see if there are any pictures? If so, you are a strong example of a visual learner.

There are numerous visual aids that can be used to clarify, energize, emphasize, and add interest to your presentation, whether it be in class or in a meeting of some kind.

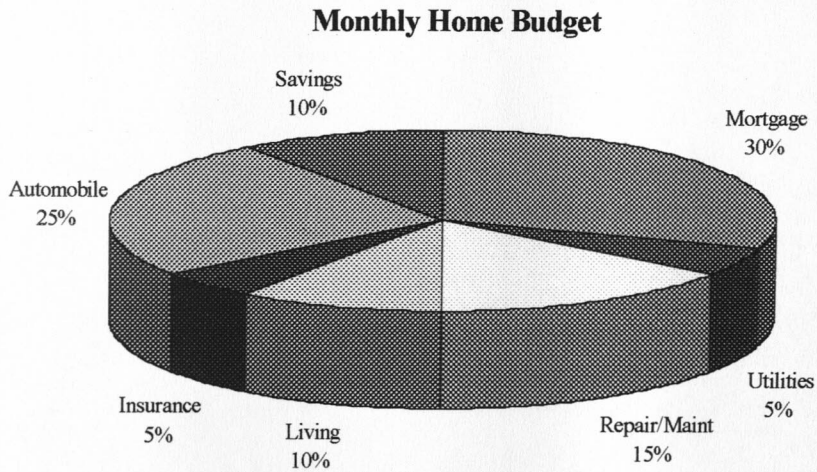
- ◆ **Objects.** Depending upon what you are talking about, you can include an object that demonstrates your point. For example, if you’re speaking on tennis or skiing, you might include equipment from the sport. If your topic is Japanese paper folding, you could offer examples of finished work to make your point. Any object that displays exactly what you mean will only serve to help with the audience’s interpretation.
- ◆ **Models.** If you are discussing the space program and want to explain how a shuttle craft works, a model is a great source of clarity for the audience who may have no idea what one looks like or how it operates. If you recall, most TV networks use models, some of which are computer generated, to demonstrate hard-to-understand devices or equipment. Even dummies for CPR demonstrations fall into this category. However, you must be aware of the size of any model in relation to where your audience is seated. It is possible that you can compromise your presentation by attempting to use a model that can’t be seen by the entire audience. They will actually be very confused because you will be describing things that you assume they can see.
- ◆ **Photographs.** Since the camera was invented, it has been the most trusted means by which to capture images and to record events. But photos do have one drawback where public speaking is concerned: their size. Unless they can be seen by everyone at the same time, they are a waste of time and energy. There are several ways to handle this. First, you could have photos enlarged, making sure the enlargement is enough to be seen in the back of the room in which you use them. Second, you could have them made into posters at a photo shop, or you could have them put onto transparencies and use them on an overhead projector. The drawback to any of these, however, is that they could be somewhat expensive.



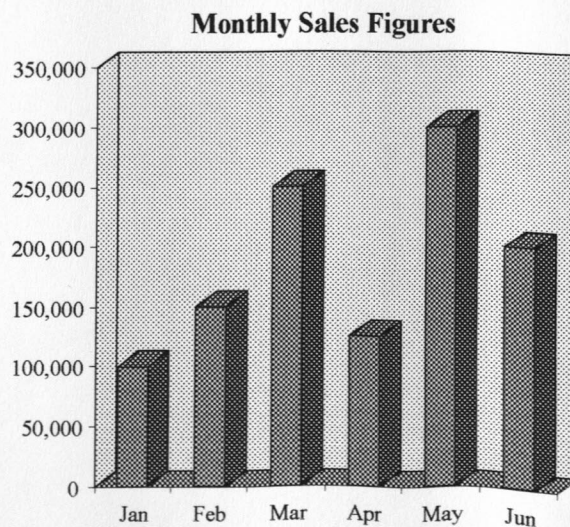
- ◆ **Drawings.** These are a great alternative to photos because they can be made to be any size, in any color, and at very little expense. Depending upon your topic, you can use them very effectively. For instance, if you are speaking on how to design a kite, you could easily draw a set of steps that would clearly explain the process. Another example might involve showing how a lake looks; you have been using drawings all of your life if you have drawn maps of land and bodies of water or drawings of familiar objects such as computers.



- ◆ **Graphs.** These offer the opportunity to clarify statistical information. The two most common forms are pie graphs and bar graphs. The pie graph is used to demonstrate relationships among the parts of a whole.

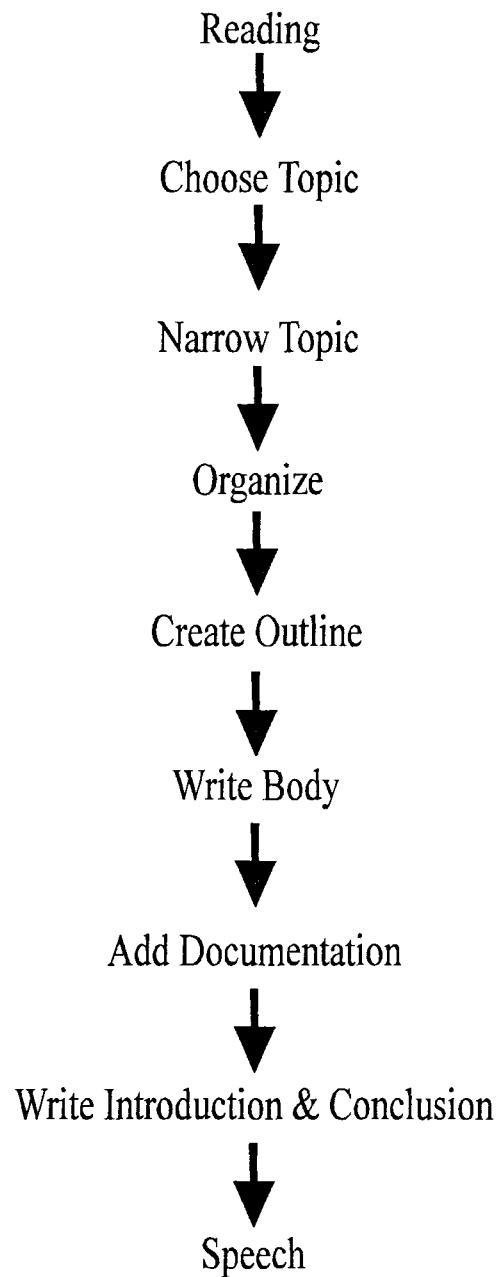


The bar graph is used to show comparisons between two or more items.



Both of these graphs have an advantage of being read and understood easily by people who have no experience reading graphs.

- ◆ **Charts.** These are generally very useful in condensing large amounts of information. They are also extremely useful in demonstrating a step-by-step process, such as a flow chart.



- ◆ **Videotape.** This is a visual form that can include anything from showing a trip through Africa to building a garage. It is an extremely useful tool for those who want to discuss long, complicated issues, although it can also be used for quick explanations. Video is one form that adds a great deal of credibility to any presentation. There is a potential problem with it, however. The quality must be good enough that everyone can see clearly and with ease. Jumpy camera work or poor lighting can ruin your effort and ruin the advantage you might have for using the video in the first place.
- ◆ **Computer-generated illustrations.** In this day of high-tech equipment and home computers, nearly everyone can have professional looking graphic visual aids in just a few minutes. Be aware that most of these computer aids will need to be put on transparencies and shown through an overhead projector to best utilize them.
- ◆ **An audience volunteer.** Don't overlook the benefit of asking someone from the audience to be a visual aid for you. Suppose you want to demonstrate emergency medical assistance for someone who suffers a broken leg in an accident. The most effective way to do that is to use a human model. If you want to show how to protect yourself from an attacker, you can do that with another person as well. Just be sure that when you do use a volunteer that you position the person in such a way that you as the speaker are not blocked from the audience.
- ◆ **Yourself.** You can also be a viable visual aid because you too can show how something is done. You can demonstrate how to rewire an old lamp or how to make a casserole. And again, you will find that by moving around and doing something during your presentation, you can get rid of stress and add energy to your delivery.

### *Thinking About Visual Aids*

There are some very important things to remember when choosing to use visual aids. They will not be at all helpful unless you keep these considerations in mind as you prepare for your presentation.

## DO

- ◇ **Do** know ahead of time about the physical layout of the place you will be speaking so you know where to place your visual aid and how large to make it. If you can do so ahead of time, walk to the back of the audience to see how large lettering and figures have to be in order to be read by everyone. If not, contact someone who can tell you how large the facility is. Then you can measure off a similar distance and check it yourself. Sadly, many people have spent hours working on posters, charts, and graphs that could not be seen by anyone past the first row. As a result, the visual was wasted, and its impact was lost.
- ◇ **Do** prepare the visual ahead of time. This gives you the opportunity to make mistakes and have the time to redo anything that you need to. Let's face it; getting a visual aid ready the night before a speech in class or a big meeting increases your chance of having an unsteady hand as you draw a line. Fatigue could cause you to misspell a word. Keep in mind what was mentioned before: The more professional looking the visual, the more professional and credible you appear. Another reason to get the visual done early is that then you will have the freedom of practicing your presentation with it. Many a speaker has found himself lost, not knowing how to stand, how to move around a visual aid, or even how to use it because he or she did not rehearse with it beforehand.
- ◇ **Do** be aware of sight lines. Walk around the audience prior to your presentation to see if there is any one place that the visual cannot be seen. Or, if time does not permit, stand directly beside the visual to see if you can detect any potentially problematic areas.
- ◇ **Do** use the visual aids only when you need them. The rest of the time keep them out of sight of the audience. This is for two reasons: It allows the impact of the visual when the audience first sees, and it keeps the audience from wandering away mentally, still studying it, while you have moved on to another part of the presentation.
- ◇ **Do** explain your visual aids completely. Many beginning speakers make the mistake of putting up a visual aid and then just assuming that the audience will make whatever connection he or she intended to the speech. When the time is appropriate in the presentation, refer directly to the visual aid and explain its relevance to the topic.

- ◇ **Do** try to position visuals so that they can be on the same plane as where you are standing. This will keep you from having to turn your back. If you need to, you can use a tripod stand or a table to display your aid. Try to avoid hanging aids on walls or blackboards behind you.

## **DON'T**

- ◇ **Don't** speak with your back turned to the audience. When you turn to a visual aid, be sure to either position yourself beside it so you can at least have a three-quarter profile to the audience or speak, turn to the visual, point, then turn back, and speak again. Not only will the audience not be able to hear you when your back is turned, they will not have your eye contact or be able to see the entire visual aid because you will be blocking some of it. Try to stand on the side of the visual aid that offers the most open view of your face as you speak.
- ◇ **Don't** do a visual on a blackboard or a sketch pad as you are speaking. Not only will it not look very professional, it will also not be complete or clear.
- ◇ **Don't** select a color of posterboard until you have found out what kind of lighting is in the room in which you will be speaking. If the lighting is overhead fluorescent, don't use neon colors such as pink, yellow or green. The lighting will cause a glare that will leave the visual unreadable to the audience. In almost any circumstance you are better off with subdued colors for paper or poster materials. Use light gray or tan if you must, but white or pale yellow and blue are the easiest on the eyes.
- ◇ **Don't** begin a presentation without first having checked any electrically powered equipment. It is impossible to know how many speakers have been embarrassed beyond belief because an overhead or a VCR did not work when it was time for the crucial information from the visual to be shown. This also goes for audio equipment, should you be using it.
- ◇ **Don't** pass objects around the audience. If you only have one picture or some small objects, tell the audience they can see them up close at the end of the presentation. If you let them be passed around the audience as you speak, you can plan on at least half the audience not paying attention to your presentation at any one time.
- ◇ **Don't** pass out handouts until the exact moment you refer to them. If you pass them out ahead of time, people will be reading them while you speak. If you wait until the end, they will not have an impact on the listener because what they were designed to emphasize has passed



and may have already been forgotten by the audience. Instead, when the time comes, ask a volunteer to hand them out as you are speaking about them. When you have finished referring to them, simply tell the audience that you now want to put them aside and move on to another point.

- ◇ **Don't** fail to have everything at your fingertips when you begin to speak. If you leave something in a box or a bag so you can keep it out of sight until later, you can almost plan on not being able to find it when you need it, you could also drop it while trying to get it out of the bag. That is not only disruptive, but time consuming as well. Have all of your visuals ready. If there is something you want to keep hidden, put a covering such as a towel or a table cloth over it until the moment you need it. This is especially important when you are demonstrating something that has a number of materials involved.

### **The Last Word**

When dealing with visual aids, keep Murphy's Law in mind: Unless you plan ahead, whatever can go wrong will.

## **LEARNING THROUGH THINKING**

1. Bring a video of a TV newscast to class. Ask the class to turn their chairs to face the back wall so they cannot see the screen. Run the video so only the sound can be heard by the class. Then, turn the students around and run the same video. How much more did you understand by seeing the images than by just listening?
2. Run another video, perhaps the same one later in the broadcast. This time turn the sound down so only the images are left. How much could you understand of what was going on by simply seeing the pictures? What does this tell you about the nature of information and visual aids?
3. Bring in some typical visual aids such as graphs, charts and objects. Stand at the front of the room where you would normally be speaking. Present the visuals and then remove

them. Ask the class to briefly describe the information contained in the graphs and charts and what the objects looked like. You might get a sense of what size objects need to be and what colors and sizes graphs and charts should be for them to be effective.

4. Discuss some professions that use visual aids to enhance presentation and to make subject matter more understandable. How are the aids used? What types are used? When are they used? How would visual aids help you in presenting a speech related to your career choice? Make a list of topics that could be easily explained without visual aids. Now make a new list of topics that could not be explained without visuals? How do they differ?
5. When have you seen ineffective use of visual aids? What was done incorrectly? What could have made the visual more useful? What plans do you have to make in advance to ensure that your visual will be a benefit to your presentation?

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Work with a partner. Deliver two minutes of a speech to him or her that does not involve visual aids. Then go back and use aids the next time. Ask the listener how the use of the aids improved or detracted from the information. How did you decide on which types of aids to use? Was there another that could have been more effective?
2. Work again with a partner. Write two paragraphs on a topic that you know a great deal about and let your partner read it. Then decide together which form of visual aid would best suit your needs. Discuss it with your partner and ask for feedback about which would be the most useful and understandable. Then ask your partner to write and do the same exercise with you. What did you learn? Are there some visual aids that might be more beneficial than others in certain circumstances?



3. Using the same paragraphs, this time find one place that needs a visual aid. Challenge yourself to take the information from that particular part of the paragraph and make four different types of visual aids to demonstrate the same information. Which one was the most useful? Why?
4. Pick another partner for this exercise. Prepare a one-minute presentation for the class. Use correct information that is understandable and clear. Then use visual aids that mislead or misinterpret the information. How does the class respond? Did they understand the spoken word or the visual? Which message was more important to them? Discuss your findings with the class.

## CHAPTER 8

### INFORMATION, DEMONSTRATION, PERSUASION: THE BASIC SPEECH STRATEGIES

Well, here you are. You've made it to the point at which you're now ready to give those speeches you read about in the syllabus. The cornerstones of any college-level speech class are the **informative**, **demonstrative** and **persuasive** speeches because they mirror just about any kind of presentation you will be called upon to make, no matter what the occasion. Each offers a different approach to the sharing of information with an audience, whether you are talking to one person or two several hundred. And each builds on the next. The first level is information, the backbone of all speeches. The next is demonstration, which incorporates both information and the demonstration of how to do something, how something works or even how you apply your knowledge. The final form is persuasion, which provides information and demonstrates how it may be used to change a listener's point of view.

When you have mastered these three types of speeches and the elements that make them up, you will be an excellent communicator who is comfortable, confident and successful in just about any speaking situation.

#### *Giving The Informative Speech*

The first major speech type is **informative**, which is also the foundation for both demonstration and persuasion. An information speech is specifically aimed at making a message clear, factual, colorful and above all else, interesting. The point is to explain your topic so well to the audience that when they are finished listening to you, they will know what you know about the it. That may sound easy at first, but think about it a moment. How many times have you struggled with explaining yourself to a friend? How well have you fared when you have tried to tutor another student in a subject that was difficult for him or her? If you were the one being

tutored, how easy was it for you to understand? At times, the urge to run screaming from the room was probably overwhelming at times.

As you can see from what has been discussed so far, there is a great deal involved in making an informative speech interesting and clear. However, armed with your understanding of what an audience needs and responds to, how language works and how organization and good logic help clarity, you can more confidently craft a speech that brings understanding to your listeners.

There are several different types of informative presentations that include speaking about ideas, objects, procedures, people and events. All of them are basically designed to do the same thing: tell the audience something that they may know little or nothing about. Make no mistake, though; if you don't know what you're talking about, even if they know nothing in advance, the audience will realize you're just making noise and will respond to you accordingly. Don't take the chance that so many in speech class have the urge to take: don't try to bluff your way through a speech.

## **Get Started**

So what is the best way to begin? Pick a topic, which you now know how to do, and ask yourself both what the audience might want to know about it and what intrigues you about it. When you can answer these questions, you are well on your way to a solid informative speech. Think of the presentation as simply answering questions that you anticipate the listeners asking. Take those answers and organize them logically and coherently after you have done some reading and research, and you will have a solid informative speech.

Here are some quick reminders that might help you as you work on your presentation.

- ◆ Pick a topic that interests you and the audience.
- ◆ Remember to deal with who, what, where, when, why and how.
- ◆ Don't get bogged down in trying to explain everything about the topic; narrow it to a manageable size so that you can deal with no more than four or five main points.
- ◆ Grab the audience's attention immediately.
- ◆ Remind the audience how knowing about this topic will benefit them.
- ◆ Keep the order logical and easy to follow.

- ◆ Include transitions between major and minor support ideas.
- ◆ Include solid support and documentation.
- ◆ Make sure any visual aids are easy to see and to understand.
- ◆ Be specific, detailed, clear and concise.
- ◆ Go through a checklist that includes clarity, conciseness, appropriateness, delivery, and logic.

It might surprise you that even though this is one of the most important exercises you will do in this course, this is a relatively small chapter dealing with it. That's common sense, too. You've already got the building blocks in place by the time you get to this point. That makes this experience so much easier because you're aware of what is needed and prepared to take on this presentation. You've done your homework; now is the time to reap the rewards.

## *Giving The Demonstration Speech*

The primary purpose of a demonstration speech is getting an audience to know how to do what you know how to do by the time they have seen the end of your presentation. Whether it be how to make an omelet or how to wire a house, your aim is to show and instruct the listeners so clearly that they will be able to complete the same task later. Just make sure you know clearly how to do it so you don't run the risk of flipping an omelet onto the person in the front row or knocking out all the power in the building by trying to act like a wiring specialist when you aren't.

Some of you might be thinking, "That's an easy type of speech. I can do that in my sleep." Well, you probably can. But can you explain how you do it in such a clear and organized manner that someone else can do it too? That's the challenge. Many students pick topics for demonstration speeches that involve processes or acts that they are extremely familiar with, thinking they will be very effective. But there is a built-in problem with that: You can know something so well that you take short cuts. Computer geniuses are a perfect example of this situation. They can understand how to move around in a program so well that they jump from point A to point D without going through B and C. However, you as a novice may not be as well

versed on the subject, so when one of these wizards begins to show you how to do a task, you may well get lost right away. Keep that in mind as you develop your demonstration speech. Approach it as if the audience knew nothing about it ahead of time. You will have to go through the process you are demonstrating one careful and fully explained step at a time.

### **Build On The Information Foundation**

As was mentioned earlier, demonstration speeches are founded in information, so the same elements apply here that apply to an informative speech: who, what, where, when, why and how. For instance, if you were going to demonstrate how to make a terrarium, you would include the step-by-step process involved in making one, what it costs to make it, why terrariums are useful, who can make one, where they can be used, where the materials can be purchased, how long it will last and many more questions like these. Again, imagine you are in a conversation with friends; think about what questions they might ask if they know nothing about terrariums. Then, simply answer those questions when you are preparing your speech.

There is another bit of advice that is useful here. Keep in mind a device called the **so-whats**. When you are explaining a point about your demonstration topic, add in why that particular point is beneficial for the audience. For example, if you were demonstrating bread making and told the audience that the flour you were using was cracked wheat, you could almost anticipate someone in the audience saying, “So what?” Explain that cracked wheat flour is more healthful for the body and longer lasting on the shelf than bleached flour. One more example might help. Let’s say you are demonstrating how to make a tie-dyed shirt. You might begin by telling the audience that anyone could create a beautiful shirt right at home. So what? You could explain that it is an inexpensive way to give gifts that they might not otherwise be able to afford, that it is something family members could do together, that specific colors could be used that are favorites and that the shirts would be a great gift because it was done personally. It is this kind of attention to audience questions that is persuasive in a demonstration presentation.

Here is a checklist of hints that will help you stay focused on your presentation.

- Pick a topic that you can easily and clearly explain.
- Understand what the audience wants to know about it.

- Pick your words carefully.
- Define terms clearly.
- Explain why you are qualified to instruct someone in this process.
- Explain how the audience will benefit from knowing how to do this.
- Grab the audience's attention immediately.
- Present the information in a logical sequence.
- Pay attention to your time; it is easy to get caught up in doing something and lose track of the clock.
- Don't leave long silences while you are busy with the task; speak to the audience at all times.
- Be conscious of sight lines. Ask the audience if they can see what you are doing clearly; if they can't, make an adjustment.
- Have all of your materials out and ready to go.
- Don't overlook the benefit of asking the audience to come closer or moving your presentation closer to them.
- Pick your visual aids wisely and be aware of audience needs.
- Use handouts or other visual aids only when they are referred to in the presentation.
- Never assume the audience knows anything about the topic.
- Never speak with your back turned to the audience.
- Check all electronic and electrical equipment before you begin to speak.
- Watch for body language to see if the audience is understanding what you are doing.

**Delivery Hint:** While practice is crucial in every kind of speech, it is especially important in a demonstration speech because you will be doing something as you speak. Don't take for granted that you will be able to do this easily even if it is something you are very familiar with. Rehearse your presentation thoroughly, doing it exactly as you will do it in class. And be sure to practice with visual aids.

**Delivery Hint:** Careful rehearsal also helps with the problem that many have with time.

When you have a specific time in which to give your speech, be aware that demonstration speeches always take longer than you anticipate because you are busy doing something physical while you are speaking. Factor in the time it takes to actually do the process you are speaking about in your practice; don't just rehearse the speaking part.

**Delivery Hint:** Don't fall into the trap of mentally rehearsing just part of a speech. Many students begin it, get far enough into it that they feel they know it and then stop. It is at that point that their presentation will likely become ragged when they deliver the speech in class because only the first part has actually been rehearsed. Once you begin to rehearse the speech orally or mentally, do the entire speech to ensure continuity and smoothness.

## ***Giving The Persuasive Speech***

Persuasion is actually a part of every speech you give, no matter what the circumstances. You are persuading an audience to listen to you, to accept you as a credible source of information and to convince them that your point of view is right. It's here that the earlier discussion of the ethical use of logic and language comes into play. Persuasion also involves asking people to change their minds or to accept a perspective other than their own based on your use of logic and support. This is sometimes tough and sometimes tricky, but it is also often the most rewarding to you as a speaker when you've successfully completed it.

### **Get The Audience Motivated**

Think back to one of the first exercises you did that asked you to make a list of good and bad speakers. Which ones did you think were particularly persuasive? They had to be persuasive, or you wouldn't have responded to them. Remember the different elements of persuasion that have been discussed so far: character, effective use of language, dynamic delivery, logic and

awareness of audience needs. All of these might be called **motivators**, things that grab a listener and make him or her want to continue to listen.

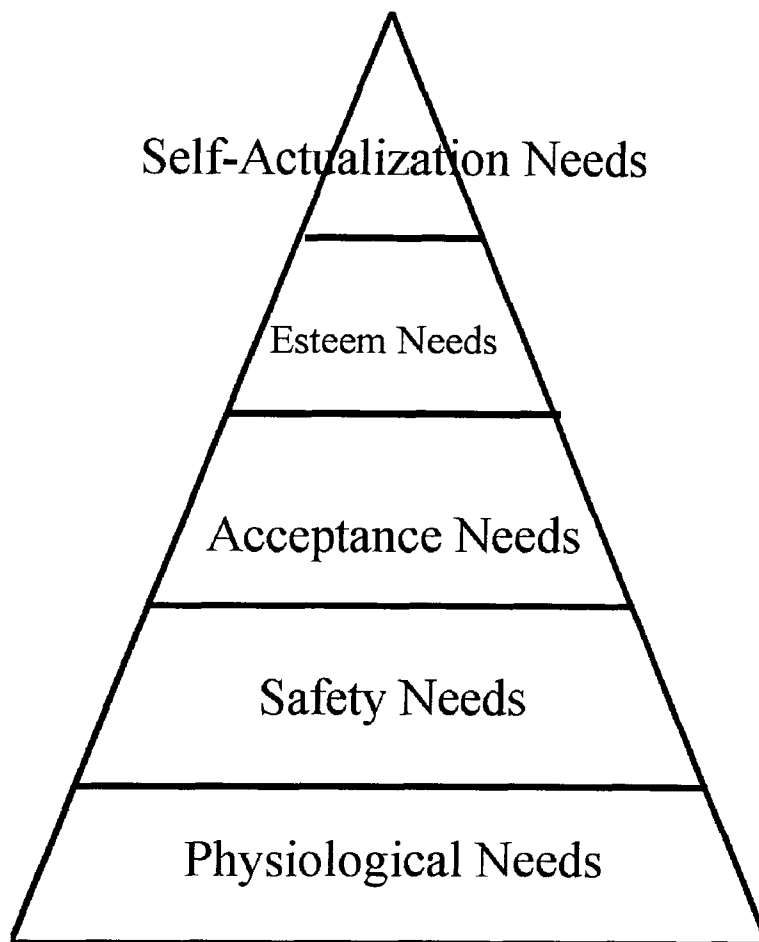
You already know a number of persuasive motivators, but there are others that are rooted in psychology that also have a bearing on how an audience responds to a speaker. Psychologists and behaviorists have long understood that some speakers are able to address some of the specific emotional and psychological needs of an audience better than others because they understand human behavior. The field of psychological motivation is broad and complicated, and there are many different theories that explain why people are persuaded. Let's look at just one example of how this kind of motivation works. Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a theory that he called the Hierarchy of Needs.

### **Understanding Maslow**

Maslow considered human need to be the most compelling tool of emotional motivation, and he broke the needs into levels and put them in a hierarchy. This means that the needs of each level must be completely satisfied before moving on to the next. And the higher the level, the more difficult the need is to achieve.

Maslow's first level, **physiological needs**, deals with the necessity for food, sleep, water and sex. When these needs are met, then a human thinks about his **safety needs**, the need for not only physical safety, but also security and stability. The next level is **acceptance needs** that are demonstrated by a person's need for belonging and love. Once those are in place, he next is driven by **esteem needs**, which are self-esteem and reputation. The final and most difficult level to achieve is **self-actualization needs**, which involves the attainment of goals and the move toward perfection.





### Using Psychological Motivation

Why should you know about what persuades an audience? That answer is simple: People can be persuaded to think or do just about anything by a skilled speaker who understands what “buttons” to push in them. Think about how Adolf Hitler came to power. If you listen to his speeches and understand the historical context in which he spoke, you will see clearly how Maslow’s theory works.

At the end of World War I, Germany was in complete chaos. The economy had collapsed, and the government was in upheaval as the communist party began to grow in the country. People were literally starving to death and rioting in the streets out of desperation.

When Hitler first appeared, he began to speak about jobs, about rebuilding Germany to the point that it offered everyone an opportunity to have the basic **physiological needs**. This began to

happen with the establishment of the National Socialist Labor Party, the Nazi Party. He appealed next to the country's **need for safety** when he called for Germany to stand united against its enemies, which started with the demise of labor unions and the opening of concentration camps. The third level, **acceptance**, was dealt with when he appealed to the young people first and then the nation later to belong to the most important and elite group of people in the world: the Nazis. **Self-esteem** was addressed by telling the masses that only they could make Germany's return to its former greatness happen, which spoke to their need to feel prestige and pride. Finally, Hitler spoke eloquently about reaching the goal of making Germany the most respected and revered country in the world, something he said was God's will -- **self-actualization**.

Hitler clearly understood how to appeal to the needs of his countrymen. And he might have been successful had he not, as history reports, indulged in the unethical use of language and logic to justify his actions. Eventually his deceptions caught up with him, but not before millions of lives were lost.

Think about how products are marketed in this country. You can clearly see that TV commercials are aimed straight at consumers whose hierarchy of needs is understood by marketing strategists. For example, think of the kinds of products that are aimed at each level of needs. At the first level, food products are presented so successfully that you might not be able to resist the urge to run frantically from your house in the middle of the night to get a pizza or a snack cake.

As you climb higher in the levels, you might think of the tire company that features an infant sitting in the middle of a tire while a voice-overs tells you that "You have a lot riding on this tire." Safety and security? You bet. Even if you don't have children you might want to get the tires because the commercial offered a compelling reason to trust the product. And what about belonging? What commercial plugs into your sense of belonging? It could be anything from a sports team to a religious affiliation, from a political party to the ownership of a particular kind of car that only "special" people drive.

You can even find strong examples of appealing to the upper-most level. The Army urges you to "Be all that you can be." Now there is a fine example of self-actualization. Look around you. Now that you know about these motivational levels, try to spot some commercials or advertisements that deal with one or more of the levels.

## More Motivators

There are more motivational factors that are capable of moving an audience toward action that include:

- Adventure - appeal to the audience's sense of adventure and willingness to try new things.
- Fear - appeal to the inherent fear an audience has of an idea or a fact.
- Gender - appeal to the specific needs and attitudes displayed by either gender.
- Guilt - appeal to the audience's sense of guilt regarding an issue or act.
- Humor - appeal to the audience's sense of self and their willingness to laugh.
- Loyalty - appeal to the audience's sense of identification with a person, institution or culture.
- Revulsion - appeal to the audience's sense of disgust over an issue, event or situation.
- Sympathy - appeal to the audience's personal connection and feelings about an issue, event or situation.

By now you might also see that these psychological motivators are related to that question that audiences ask right away: What's in it for me? Keep that question in the front of your mind as you develop any persuasive presentation, as well as this list of other considerations.

- Believe strongly in your topic and in the position you take.
- Be ethical and honest in your use of information and logic.
- Analyze the audience carefully.
- Write the most powerful introduction you can.
- Find the most inspiring and poignant support information available.
- Use only credible and reliable sources for your research.
- Use examples, details, definitions, statistics, expert testimony and illustrations to explain your position.
- Organize your speech clearly using solid reasoning such as inductive (arguing your claim from examples), deductive (arguing your claim from generalizations), cause and effect (arguing your claim by showing relationships between major points) or symptoms (arguing your claim from evidence).
- Use transitions often.

- Refresh your memory of the types of fallacies of logic often so you may avoid them.
- Choose expressive, vivid, clear, concrete language to make your points.
- Use visual aids.
- Don't plagiarize. Credit the sources of your information.
- Think about audience needs and motivators.

## **Build The Structure**

More than any other type of speech, persuasive presentations require that the speaker move the audience to commit to an action or to change their minds about something. The most common structure is what is called the **problem-solution** method. This involves a strategy that is inductive. Here is a sample outline:

### II. Body

- A. Identify what is wrong.
- B. Identify what has to be changed.
- C. Name the possible solutions.
- D. Test the possible solutions.
  1. Can the solution solve the problem?
  2. Can the solution cause a bigger problem?
  3. Can the solution be accomplished?
- E. Recommend the best solution.

With these ideas solidly in mind, you can build a well-developed, credible and successful argument that is understandable and reasonable, qualities that the audience responds to.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. Break into groups of five or six and brainstorm topics. What are you and your classmates interested in? What are you and they curious about? What do all of you want to know more about? Make a list of the topics all of you discuss.  
Next, take one topic and discuss it in depth. What questions do you and your group members have about it? What do you want to know or want clarified?  
What kinds of questions are asked about the topic? Use this experience as a guide when you begin to write your own informative speech.
2. When you have picked a topic for the informative speech you will deliver to your classmates, ask members of the class to write down questions they have about it so you may refer to them when you begin to develop your presentation.
3. Watch or listen to an informative speech with the class. List organizational elements such as thesis statement, main points and support. Were there definitions that were clear? Were there process descriptions that were completely understandable?
4. Write out a set of instructions for how to change a tire for someone who has no idea how to do this. Include every step needed to successfully change a flat and get back on the road. At first glance, this may seem simple. But think about all of the information necessary. For instance, the first step is not getting a good tire out of the trunk; it is making sure the vehicle is safely parked, the engine is off, the parking brake is on, and if the car is on a roadside, the flashers are on. What happens next? What terms are you going to have to define? This is always a fun exercise that is also an eye opener.
5. Watch a speaker demonstrate a process. How effective was he? What did he do that made the presentation understandable? If you are watching a video or a TV show, what can you learn about sight lines from where the camera is positioned and from what the audience needs to see?
6. Analyze a persuasive speaker. What qualities do you respond to in the person and in the speech? What examples of logic can you spot? What method of reasoning is used? What support is evident? What kind of language is used? What elements of a strong delivery can

support is evident? What kind of language is used? What elements of a strong delivery can you identify? How effective is the organization of the speech? What motivators does the speaker use?

7. Bring in some TV commercials to discuss in class. What persuasive method is used to sell the commercial's message to the audience? What motivators were obvious? Which ones were subtle? At whom is each commercial aimed? What kind of motivational language is used to sway the listeners?

## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Give a five- to six-minute informative speech that includes at least one major visual aid. Use at least three documented resources. Plan for at least a two-minute question and answer period at the end of your presentation. Turn in an outline with your presentation.
2. Give a five- to six-minute speech demonstrating how to do something. Use at least two visual aids. Turn in an outline before you begin.
3. Give a six- to eight-minute persuasive speech in which you use at least three documented resources, two visual aids and strong examples of logic, reasoning and motivational elements. Hand in an outline with a bibliography before you begin.

### What's A Group?

A group is a joining of forces of people of like mind to solve a problem. You may have already recognized that there is a qualification to that definition -- the people are of like mind. The



## CHAPTER 9

### **APPLYING THE PRINCIPALS IN CONTEXT: DISCUSSION GROUPS, GROUP MEDIATION AND INTERVIEWS**

**There** This is it: the place where you put all of what you have learned to work for you outside of the classroom. This is what you have worked toward the entire semester as you added one single skill at a time. Now you can get ready to make your newly acquired skills useful in starting and maintaining a career, as well as being an effective oral communicator in your personal life.

#### ***Participating In Groups***

**Declare** You are going to be a part of groups in the workforce, no matter what your chosen career is. But you'll also deal with them in your private life almost daily. Everywhere you look, people are conducting meetings about something. There are citizens on juries; workers in quality circles; and groups discussing issues, ideas and problems. All of these different groups basically adhere to the same behaviors. Whether it is a panel discussion in your class or an executive board for a major business, the groups are engaged in finding ways to communicate efficiently with people who are unfamiliar and who have differing perspectives on the issues being discussed. And realistically, this is going to be one of the most difficult communication situations you might ever have to deal with. As you are about to discover, however, applying the knowledge you have gained so far and adding some more to come will help you be effective in any group situation.

#### **What's A Group?**

A group is a joining of forces of people of like mind to solve a problem. You may have already recognized that there is a qualification to that definition -- the people are of like mind. The

point of being in a group is actually two fold: to gain insight and experience through the collaboration of a number of people who share a common goal and to enhance the abilities of the individuals in the group as the result of learning from the whole. Now that sounds easy, doesn't it? Think again. When was the last time a group of your friends got together to do something fun on the weekend? Did you all agree on what to do and where to go? Were there hard feelings if there was one person who held out to have his or her own way? Did some have to give in to the majority? If that was your experience, you already have an abbreviated understanding of how group dynamics work.

### **There's Power In Assembly**

Small groups are directly affected by components of interpersonal communication such as understanding the self and perception, as well as language, listening and interpretation skills. When these groups work cohesively, they are an outstanding tool for discovering and solving problems that could go unchanged if left to only one person to deal with. There is power in group activity that does not exist for an individual. Americans have known that since the country's inception when a group of knowledgeable and dedicated men gathered together to write the Declaration of Independence. That idea continues today when you examine how the government works through the Senate and the House of Representatives, both clearly defined groups. And the Supreme Court examines and administers the law as a positive group effort. However, just as with individuals, groups may also abuse the power they have and become dangerous.

There is another characteristic that is part of group activity, and that is the sense of belonging an individual can feel when working with others. Think again about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. People have long understood that they need to be a part of a greater body and not just be an individual. How many organizations do you belong to? Fraternities or sororities? Planning committees? Sports teams? The debate team? Campus political groups? Think about how you feel about participating in them. Does the experience give you a sense of belonging and a feeling of self worth? If you answered yes, you have discovered why people want to be a part of a group.



There are other benefits:

- ◆ Two heads are better than one, and many heads are better than two.
- ◆ People are more willing to carry out ideas and plans they have helped to develop.
- ◆ Discussion can change individual attitudes and beliefs.
- ◆ One can learn more when working with others than when working alone.
- ◆ Discussion can often help develop the individual.
- ◆ Groups have more knowledge and experience than an individual.
- ◆ Groups are often more willing to be creative with solving problems.

### **What's The Down Side?**

There are also several disadvantages to working with a group. They include:

- ◆ Discussion takes a great deal of time.
- ◆ Discussion calls for shared responsibility.
- ◆ Discussion can breed tension because of conflicting value systems.
- ◆ Emergencies could prevent discussion.
- ◆ Status differences between group members may hamper open discussion and decision making.
- ◆ Pressure from the majority could compromise discussion.
- ◆ One person could dominate the discussion.
- ◆ Some group members may not participate equally and let others do the bulk of the work.

### **Identify The Problem**

If problem solving is the purpose of being in a group, then the first thing a group needs to do is identify the problem. You might ask some relevant questions to help you pinpoint what it is that needs to be dealt with.

- \* What is the specific problem to be dealt with?
- \* What needs to be understood before the problem can be solved?

- \* What are the risks?
- \* Who or what is at risk?

### **Examine The Problem Carefully**

You might recognize this next step, analysis, as causal or cause and effect reasoning. It is here that your group will assess and examine the history of the problem and what causes led to what effects so that you may better understand the extent of the problem. Here, too, you can identify any other potential problems that may show up in the future. There are some solid questions that need to be asked in this step, too.

- \* What is the background of the problem?
- \* What is the scope?
- \* Can the problem be broken down into smaller areas to examine more fully?
- \* What are the causes, effects and symptoms of the problem?
- \* What methods exist already for solving the problem?
- \* How effective could they be?
- \* Are there new methods that would be more efficient?
- \* What are the barriers that would keep the problem from being solved?

### **Find The Solutions**

The third step in problem solving involves discussing possible solutions. Brainstorm with the group and mention any possibility, no matter how outrageous it may seem at first. What is unacceptable to one person may be the grain of insight another needs to begin to develop a solution. There is a procedure in this section that will help your group to discover possible solutions. They are:

- \* Avoid judgmentalism and criticism.
- \* Think of as many solutions as you can.
- \* Feed off each other's ideas to create new ones.
- \* Keep a record of everything mentioned.

## **Choose The One That Works**

The next step in the process involves choosing the best possible solution to the problem after careful and complete analysis of its benefits and limitations. Ask questions such as:

- \* Which of the solutions deals best with the obstacles?
- \* What would the short- and long-term effects be if this solution were to be implemented?
- \* Are there advantages and disadvantages to this solution?
- \* What is necessary to begin the solution process?
- \* When can it be done and how long will it take?
- \* What specifically will need to happen to demonstrate success with this solution?

## **Decide On How Successful It Is**

The final step for the group to discuss is whether or not the solution is successful. It might be necessary to develop a plan that offers a plan for implementing the solution and that monitors each step of its progress. What tasks will be required to fully implement the solution? Who will be involved? What is the time frame for completion? What rate of success can be expected?

By taking all of these steps, you can more reasonably define expectations and potential success. As you can see, it is time consuming, but discussing such problem solving in a group setting is extremely beneficial.

## **Be A Team Player**

When working with a group, you need to understand there are some requirements that need to be met before the group can be successful. You are a part of a whole, and as such, you need to be aware of what is expected of you and what is not acceptable.

- ⇒ Analyze the problem carefully before offering any solutions.
- ⇒ Don't come to a meeting with your mind made up.
- ⇒ Listen to the opinions and ideas of others.

⇒ Be courteous.

⇒ Help avoid disagreements, but if they should arise, help manage them.

## *Understanding Mediation*

If the idea of managing disagreements mentioned in the last chapter sounds difficult, you're right. It is easily one of the most important areas involved in group discussion. How can you go about heading off a potential conflict. Even more difficult, how can you stop one once it begins? There are some useful hints that should aid in getting your group back on track.

- Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Deal with facts as evidence, not unsupported opinions.
- Find way to compromise.
- Clarify misunderstandings in meanings when they crop up.
- Don't be judgmental or critical.
- Leave your emotions at home.

Working together is absolutely essential to the success of any group. If you remember in the discussion of fallacies in logic, the either/or dichotomy is a problem. That kind of thinking can also show up in a group situation. It's possible for group members to take a position and for subgroups to keep a solution from being found. These subgroups pit one solution against another, basically saying it is our way or no way. How many times have you heard someone say, "If you don't do it this way, I'm leaving"? From children's playgrounds to the grandest halls of government, that sentiment is present. But there are ways to deal with that kind of behavior.

### **Group Behavior**

To help keep a group on track, you need to understand the nature of how groups work. There are five basic behaviors demonstrated by group members when they are faced with conflict within the group:

- **Competition** involves putting your concerns over those of the others.

- **Collaboration** involves working toward new goals that will best benefit everyone.
- **Compromise** involves asking each party in conflict to give up something in order to reach an agreement.
- **Avoidance** involves a group member or members withdrawing from participation when conflict arises.
- **Accommodation** involves one person putting aside his concerns for the concerns of another group member.

Each of these conflict styles can have benefits, but the one that seems to be of greatest benefit to a group situation is collaboration.

### **Be An Effective Leader**

You need to understand leadership styles when dealing with groups. What kind of leader are you? Do you try to influence others to agree with your position? Do sit back and let everyone around get involved in conflict because you are afraid to speak up? Do you ask everyone to work together and delegate authority within the group? Each of these is a different form of leadership, and each has a tremendous impact on how successful the group ultimately is. There are three basic leadership styles:

- 1. Authoritative.** With this style, everyone must adhere to the will of the leader, such as policy and responsibility for each member. This kind of leader doesn't always participate fully in discussion and problem solving, but keeps an eye on the direction of activities.
- 2. Passive.** This style of leadership offers little in the way of guidance to the group members. A passive leader lets the group work at its own pace and only offers advice or opinions when asked by group members. He or she takes no position in the discussion and does not try to control the discussion at any point.
- 3. Democratic.** A democratic leader makes sure that everyone feels equal and that all matters are discussed within the group. The group members are free to make suggestions, offer ideas and challenge solutions. The leader is open-minded and willing to act as a group member.

At first it might seem that a democratic leader is always preferable, but some groups work better when not offered direction; others are more successful when a strong hand leads them. Understanding your group is essential before you can choose a useful leadership style.

### **One Of The Team**

If you're not the leader of your group, you still have an extremely important job: You have to participate in the problem solving by taking the steps discussed earlier. But how do you do that efficiently? By analyzing your audience.

- Be organized.
- Speak only when what you have to say is relevant to the current topic.
- Avoid confusing the group by dealing with only one point at a time.
- Speak with the same skill that you would display before an audience.
- Offer evidence, not just opinions.
- Listen carefully and actively.
- Be aware what non-verbal messages you are sending the group.

By now it's probably clearer that groups have behaviors that need to be understood and dealt with before any group can be successful and effective. If you keep all of this in mind the next time you're talked into being the leader or a member of the group that must come up with a way to raise funds for new fraternity or sorority house, you'll hopefully have fewer problems deciding on what to do.

### **Decide On The Type Of Group**

Whether you have been in a group solving the parking problem near your business, the situation involved when books are returned to the bookstore on your campus, or the dilemma of whether or not to vote for a bond issue in your community, your group will ultimately have to report its findings to a larger group. That could be the executives who run your business, the administration at your college or university, or the general public who need to know the outcome of your work. These reports take three basic forms: symposiums, form discussions, and panel discussions.

A **symposium** is designed to allow group members to deliver short speeches to an audience. The group members share responsibility for presenting the information and speak directly to the audience. They are usually seated at a table or on a dais, and each takes a turn explaining one part of the report so no repetition occurs. At the end, a moderator generally summarizes the points made in the speeches.

A **forum** allows the audience to direct questions to the members of a symposium panel or panel discussion. The group members are also seated in front of the audience and may be addressed individually by audience members.

A **panel discussion** involves group members and a moderator who address a problem, an issue or a recommendation. The moderator keeps the discussion moving in an organized fashion and identifies the topic. Then panel members speak from notes, which makes this form less formal than a symposium format. The discussion asks that all members of the panel participate. At the end, panel discussions are usually followed by a question and answer for the audience.

### **Use It Anywhere**

No matter what your purpose, you can use the techniques involved in group discussion to aid you in discovering problems and their solutions. How often do you use them now? When you have a major dilemma in your life, you probably ask the opinion of just one person, or do you seek out several whose opinions you respect. Do you weigh what each of them has to say before making a decision? If you answered yes, you are already a solid group participant. There is no doubt that when you enter your chosen career that you'll be called upon to deal with group discussion, whether it is attending a department meeting where you teach, participating in a discussion of union concerns in your business, examining situations and offering advice to your boss for how to speed up production in your department, or having a power lunch at an expensive restaurant with several other moguls. Those of you who enter politics may as well plan now for endless group discussions about nearly everything known to man.

## *Understanding The Interview Process*

There is more to utilizing good communication skills than speaking to an audience or working in a group. The very fact you that will have a career ultimately could hinge on how you communicate when it comes time to sell yourself to a potential employer.

### **Good Credentials Are Just Part Of It**

Equally as important as training and preparing for a job is understanding how to deal with an interview. Having the opportunity to speak directly to a potential employer has been found to be of tremendous advantage to those who are well spoken, collected, and able to represent themselves and their value to a company during a conversation with an interviewer. For most companies, an interview may be considered to be the mining of gems from a cavern filled with unusable human ore.

### **The Big Step**

The interview is looked at by a great number of businesses and prospective employees alike as the most important step in the search for employment. Imagine this scenario, so familiar to many who seek good jobs: The newspaper announces 100 new jobs at a business that is considered to be one of the best employers in the area. The qualifications for the job are clearly spelled out, so no one without the required level of experience and education need apply. On the morning applications are to be offered, more than 5,000 eager people line up, hoping to be among the few who have the opportunity to work for the company. If all of them have similar credentials, what will be the quality that allows 100 of these equally qualified thousands to be singled out? That's right. They will most likely be the ones who display the strongest communication skills during the interview. Remember that businesses want employees who not only know how to perform tasks, but who are also able to report on them, to explain decisions clearly, to give directions, and to understand information given to them. Today, the words *business* and *communication* cannot be separated. So the person who is better able to demonstrate that he is a capable communicator is the one who will likely be the greatest asset to any company.



## **Where's Carnegie Hall?**

How do you go about putting your best foot forward in an interview? The answer here is just like the one that is given in the old joke that poses the question about how one gets to Carnegie Hall: practice, practice, practice. Be prepared. Take some time to think about how you can best represent yourself and what you are capable of bringing to any work situation. Take a personal inventory first so you can make some decisions before questions are posed to you in an interview environment. Don't let the interviewer surprise you with questions that you either can't or aren't willing to answer. How can you do that? Practice does not necessarily mean conducting a mock interview with a friend or family member, although that might help relax you. It means doing your homework.

## **Ask Myself What?**

When preparing for an interview, find out first about yourself and then about the company. What do you want from a job? Does this company offer it? These are revealing questions that will keep you from the frustration of finding out too late that the job you seek is not what you want or what you could ever be comfortable with. Take a personal inventory. Ask yourself some questions that are designed to give you insight into your own feelings and needs. If you go to an interview thinking only of the perks that a paycheck will bring to your life, not thinking about how much you might not like the job, you are setting yourself up for failure. No amount of money will make a job you hate less problematic, so know going in what you want and if you can do it long term. Ask yourself some questions like these:

- What kind of job do I want? Do I want to be a supervisor or a laborer? Do I want a creative, thinking job or a hands-on, task-oriented position? Do I want both?
- Which shift do I want to work? Am I better suited to inside or outside work?
- Am I more interested in straight salary, or do benefits mean more to me than a weekly paycheck?
- Am I willing to take a job initially that is not exactly what I want or that carries a lower salary than I expect so I may work into the position I want eventually?
- Am I willing to travel? To relocate? If so, is there any place I won't go?

- Am I better suited to working alone or with a group of co-workers?
- Do I want one specific job, or do I want the opportunity to change positions in the future?
- If it is necessary for advancement, am I willing to further my education?
- What is the most important asset I can bring to this job? This company?

The last thing you want to do in an interview is blurt out an answer you can't live with later or one that misrepresents you because you didn't prepare ahead of time. How many times have you had a conversation and later asked yourself, "Why did I say that?" You can avoid that kind of compromising experience with some prior of thought.

### **What Are These People All About?**

Next you need to do some homework on the potential employer. Find out if this is really where you want to work. Get information from current employees and the Better Business Bureau, check reference books in the library that list companies and their employees' job descriptions, read newspapers, check with your school's job placement center or with employment agencies, send letters of inquiry directly to companies, or conduct research interviews with companies you wish to find out about. Then when you have decided that a company and what it offers are what you seek and what you are qualified to do, prepare yourself for an interview when you get one. Look at this as even more practice for the big event.

**Research Hint:** More than 30 percent of job placement takes place from what is called the **hidden job market**. This involves networking through people in companies who know about upcoming job opportunities that have yet to be advertised. This also happens when someone who knows that your qualifications and abilities would be an asset to the company recommends you to a supervisor who finds a place for you. Don't overlook the opportunities of this job-hunt style.

### **Leave That Attitude At Home**

Remember that your attitude throughout the interview tells as much about you as your answers. One of the biggest problems a potential employer has when dealing with an interviewee is that the person may be unresponsive. Giving one-syllable answers is the equivalent of grunting

for someone to pass the mashed potatoes at the dinner table. That doesn't make a positive impression on anyone, especially someone looking for a verbal communicator. Speak clearly and thoughtfully.

### **Be An Interviewee And Interviewer**

Part of the reason many interviewees seem so unresponsive is that they are intimidated by the experience. They think that the interviewer is in complete control and that a small gaff will keep them from getting the job they may desperately want. Keep another thought in mind, however. **A potential employee is also interviewing the company, just as he or she is being interviewed by the company's representative.** Both parties must be satisfied with the answers, not just the interviewer. You are not a victim here, but an equal participant.

### **Marching Toward The Job**

It's now time to think about how to have a successful interview. What should you do to best demonstrate your qualities and capabilities? First, be relaxed when you are in an interview. If that sounds impossible, think about this for a moment: There are specific things you can do to ensure your comfort level before you meet the interviewer.

- Be at least 15 minutes early for your appointment so you can gather your thoughts and catch your breath. Also, if the interviews are running ahead of schedule, you won't be frazzled when you meet the interviewer. Don't arrive much earlier than 15 minutes early because there may be no room for you in an already crowded waiting area.
- Dress in a manner that is appropriate to the environment in which you are interviewing. Most interviews take place in some corporate office or meeting room, so dress as those in the office dress. That way you can avoid feeling uncomfortable. For men, a jacket and tie are generally suitable. For women, a suit or dress are reasonable should you be unsure ahead of time what others in the office wear.

**Remember: first impressions carry over to the end of the interview and on to a recommendation.** You could easily miscommunicate what might be interpreted as disrespect or disregard for company image should you not consider your appearance as part of your responsibility as an employee.

- Bring with you a copy of your resume and be prepared to discuss it. Interviewers need to speak to many candidates, so your particular resume may not be subject to immediate recall by the interviewer. Also, you might be able to enhance some rather static entries on the resume through explanations. Don't, however, bring along lots of extras such as brief cases, cellular phones, umbrellas, and the like. These are items that can be left behind and that would disturb the next interview should you go back to retrieve it. That kind of action can speak clearly of disorganization, an impression you don't want to give.
- Another item you should have with you is a list of questions that you want to ask the interviewer when it is your turn. Remember: You are interviewing the company just as it is interviewing you. What kinds of questions should you include? Here are some areas you might want to investigate:

What are you looking for in an employee?

Do you encourage in-company promotions?

How long have you been in business? Do you see future growth in this area?

Do you encourage or subsidize further education?

When could I expect my first evaluation? Who would administer it?

Why did the person I am replacing leave? How long had he been with the company?

Are employees encouraged to offer suggestions or ideas?

Let the interviewer know that you are interested in being an asset to the company, not just a recipient of a paycheck. Also, asking these kinds of questions will allow you to discover if this is the environment in which you will be most effective and comfortable as an employee.

## **What Do I Do Now?**

So how do you go about being in an interview?

- ⇒ Take a few deep breaths to clear your head and to relax you. Knock and enter the room when invited. Offer your hand to shake the interviewer's, no matter what gender you are the interviewer is. Wait to be invited to sit.
- ⇒ Once seated, adopt a posture that is relaxed but not casual. Remember that body language speaks volumes about you. Also remember that not everyone is adept at reading it, so don't give clues that could be misinterpreted. Sit so that you may be attentive and maintain eye contact at all times.
- ⇒ Let the interviewer establish the tone of the interview and begin it. Answer questions carefully and with a strong, calm voice. It is perfectly fine to take a moment to think through a question, but don't ponder it so long that the interviewer could misinterpret your hesitation. People who are indecisive may be misread as people who are hiding something or who are unable to make decisions.
- ⇒ Don't bring up salary and benefits at the beginning of the interview. If the interviewer gets the idea that money is the only reason you have for wanting the job, you might not fare well in the long run. He or she might think that you will leave the company's employ the next chance you get to earn 25 cents more per hour. It is impossible to underscore enough the idea that first impressions can make or break a potentially satisfying and lucrative opportunity.
- ⇒ Now and then sit forward in your seat so that you may close the distance between you and the interviewer. This allows for complete attention, and it also shows that you are interested in what he or she has to say. Don't forget the power of eye contact.
- ⇒ At some point the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions. That is the time you may address anything that has not been dealt with prior to this, including salary and benefits. It is also the time to ask the questions you prepared earlier. This lets the interviewer know that you are interested in the company for the long term and that you have some critical thinking skills, another invaluable asset in today's job applicants.
- ⇒ When it is clear that the interview is over, stand, shake the interviewer's hand again and leave, making sure you have left nothing behind. And remember to thank him or her for the opportunity to learn about the company and to have the interview.

### **Delivery Hint:**

- \* Never wear heavy perfumes or colognes. Most interviews are conducted in small rooms, and some interviewers or other interviewees who follow you may be extremely sensitive or even allergic to perfume or anything with a scent. This might again signal disregard for others on your part. Remember that companies are looking for team players, so get the team spirit early.
- \* Don't smoke or drink anything during the interview, even if the opportunity is offered to you. This too may communicate something about you -- disrespect, lack of discipline, or even the potential for poor health.
- \* Don't wear noisy jewelry such as chains or bracelets that could annoy and keep an interviewer from listening to you carefully.
- \* Make sure chewing gum doesn't accompany you to the interview, even if it is there to mask bad breath. Avoid anything that could keep you from being clearly understood or that could make you seem discourteous in the situation.
- \* Make sure you never say anything disparaging about a former employer, even if asked directly. There are a number of reasons for this, chief among which is that you might give the impression that you would do the same thing about this company should you leave it in the future. Also, because the business community is rather small in most areas, it is completely possible that a person you have chosen to complain about is an acquaintance or even a friend of the interviewer or of the employer, not an auspicious beginning for those seeking employment.
- \* Remember that all interviewers are not going to be either well trained or experienced in the interviewing process, so be patient and tolerant. If you sense that this is the case, you can gently lead the interview without seeming to take control of it by carefully asking questions about issues that the interviewer might normally address. These might include asking about what is required of the potential employee, what background is necessary and what experience would be needed.
- \* Don't make the mistake of thinking that an interviewer's personality reflects that of the company. It may or may not, so don't indulge in a snap judgment if you're not impressed with the interviewer or even if you are. A nasty or inept interviewer does not mean that the company is filled with people like this, nor does it mean that a kind, personable interviewer is

reflective of that attitude company wide. Find out more about the nature of the company and how it treats its employees before you get to this point.

- \* Remember to follow up any interview with a letter acknowledging the interview and your thanks for the opportunity within a week.

**Delivery Hint:** Know what questions are reasonable for an interviewer to ask, such as about willingness to relocate, education, and experience. There are, however, some questions you do not have to answer, questions that deal with religious or political affiliation, sexual preferences, age, ethnic heritage, financial status, health problems, or marital status and children.

This is a gray area for interviewees. While it is not really legal for companies to ask such questions, an interviewer may interpret your unwillingness to answer them as a reason to question whether or not you have something to hide. Weigh carefully the risks and benefits of offering information like this. One way to deal with it is to shift the balance of power. Simply ask the interviewer calmly and without attitude why this information is relevant to your working for this company. That may help avert a potentially tough situation.

**Delivery Hint:** There are a number of different kinds of interviews, not just those associated with getting a job. You might have a conference with your instructor, a meeting with a committee to decide on your qualifications for graduate school, an evaluation interview for your job, an interview involving joining an organization, or many more like this. Each one follows the same strategies discussed earlier. Remember to keep your attitude out of the way and listen carefully, watch body language closely, be concise and honest. Dishonesty is the quickest way to be shown the door. And don't think it won't be detected ultimately; it will.

### **You Can Do This**

Let's face it -- interviews are really once again a matter of common sense. Do you remember an earlier reference to The Golden Rule? It applies here, too. Treat interviewers as you would have them treat you, and more than likely, you will be able to successfully circumvent most of the problem areas of any interview.

## LEARNING THROUGH THINKING

1. What problems have you experienced when working with groups? What were the circumstances? What style of leadership was involved? What method of participation was used to come to an effective solution: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance or accommodation? What would have been a better way to deal with problem if the solution was ineffective? Discuss this in class.
2. With the class, discuss what experiences and problems you have had on interviews. Were you asked inappropriate questions? What was the interviewer's attitude? Skill? Level of interest? What was your first impression of the company? Did you feel ill at ease or comfortable?
3. How would you answer questions such as these in an interview?  
How old are you?  
How many children do you have?  
Would you take a lie detector test?  
Would you take a drug screen test?  
Would you travel with a boss of the opposite sex if that is required?  
If you saw someone stealing from the company, would you alert your supervisor?  
Do you have a criminal arrest record?
4. What would you have to know about the makeup of a group before you could be an effective leader? Discuss this with the class.
5. What experiences have you had in an interview? Have they been positive or negative? What did you learn from either or both? How would you deal with a poor interviewer who had little skill or patience when conducting your interview? How would you deal with someone who is mean or who has already made up his or her mind about your ability based on your resume alone? Discuss this with the class.
6. Describe to the class what you think the ideal interview would be like. What can you as the interviewee to ensure that happening?



## LEARNING THROUGH DOING

1. Do a panel discussion in class that examines a problem that your group has identified on campus. Analyze the problem and offer recommendations for solutions to the problem. Allow a question and answer period at the end of the exercise. Make sure everyone has the opportunity to be on a panel. Several days may be involved in this assignment.
2. Conduct a mock interview with a partner that includes all of the elements you anticipate finding in a real job search. Include questions that are not necessarily those you might wish to answer in a real job interview. How will your partner handle them? What does the class think is the best way to deal with questions of that kind?
4. Visit the placement office at your school. Talk to the staff and find out what they recommend as the best places to work in your field. Find out about the company. What is it looking for in potential employees?
5. Visit the library and do some research on a company that you would like to work for.
6. Choose a personal subject that you think would be inappropriate to discuss with an interviewer. Discuss with the class how you would deal with this delicate situation if the interviewer brought up the issue.
7. How would you deal with being asked about your former employer? What if your experience with that company had been bad? How would you explain the situation? Discuss this with the class.

## A FINAL THOUGHT

It's not difficult to see why public speaking is problematic for many people. It's a complicated process that requires great respect and care from the speaker, a tremendous amount of work from the listener, and an enormous amount of understanding from both. But it is also a remarkably powerful skill that is mostly a matter of common sense.

The difficulties with being a good speaker do not lie in the process itself; as you have seen, it can all be learned in small, related, sequential steps. The reason most people are not good oral communicators is that they don't bother breaking the process down to its most basic parts and then understanding and learning them. As a result, they are overwhelmed with what seems to be the enormity of it all or they take for granted that they can be good speakers just because they have always spoken. By now, you know better. Look what you have accomplished. Through this course, you have discovered one of the most important tools available to an individual. Now take this and skill and use it to accomplish anything you wish in life.

**If all my talents and powers were to be taken from me by some inscrutable Providence, and I had my choice of keeping but one, I would unhesitatingly ask to be allowed to keep the Power of Speaking, for through it I would quickly recover all the rest.**

**--Daniel Webster**

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