

Fall 2020
Fourth Edition

Presentations That *Matter*

Melanie Morgan,
Jennifer Hall &
Lindsey B. Anderson

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Presentations That Matter

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Van-Griner Learning
Cincinnati, Ohio
www.van-griner.com

President: Dreis Van Landuyt
Project Manager: Brenda Schwieterman
Customer Care Lead: Lauren Houseworth

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Chapter 1

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Introduction

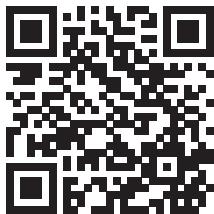
Objectives

After this chapter you will be able to:

- ✓ Articulate the importance of communication in your everyday life.
- ✓ Define communication.
- ✓ Understand the different communication models.
- ✓ Understand how ethical communication impacts message effectiveness.
- ✓ Explain presentational speaking.
- ✓ Discuss various types of plagiarism.

Featured Example

C-SPAN



<https://cs.pn/2IxzRVt>

You have probably seen the movies *Deep Impact* starring Robert Duvall and *Armageddon* starring Ben Affleck and Bruce Willis. In each of these movies, an asteroid or meteorite is headed for Earth, and civilization is threatened unless great heroics are performed by the movies' protagonists. These plot lines may seem like science fiction. However, according to NASA astronauts, these scenarios aren't so far-fetched. Watch Dr. Lu, a former U.S. astronaut and Executive Director of the Asteroid Institute at B612, persuade congress on the imminent threat of meteorites and methods for response.

As Dr. Lu demonstrates in the opening clip, explaining complex information to a diverse audience while persuading them to make a decision in line with your goals is a difficult task. With his combination of expertise, evidence, and visuals, he makes it look easy. However, we all know it is more complex than that.

- ↘ Do you think Dr. Lu was effective in making his point? Why or why not?
- ↘ What strategies did he use to explain his ideas?
- ↘ How did Dr. Lu reveal what the real problem is in this area?
- ↘ What role did his visual aid play in making his point?



The Importance of Communication

Just think about how many decisions individuals have to make on a daily basis. Some of these decisions are personal regarding health issues (e.g., which procedure to have, which diet to follow), some may be related to finances (e.g., where to invest, which type of loan to purchase), and other decisions are related to our day-to-day living (e.g., where to send your children to school, which car to buy). Other decisions we must make are part of our professional lives and related to our job. Will you decide to fund a project? Which employee do you hire? Which strategic initiative should be prioritized?

While we live during a time when a great deal of information is available to help us make these complex decisions, the sheer amount of this information can actually be overwhelming. It has been reported that “the amount of information being created every two days is equivalent to that created from the dawn of civilization until year 2003.”¹ That scope is difficult to even imagine.

The abundance of information we face is called information overload, and it is problematic for a couple of reasons. First, it causes stress at the individual, organizational, and societal levels.² This stress actually costs the U.S. 900 billion dollars each year in medical care costs and costs related to burnout and turnover in organizations. Secondly, the way we interact with information is changing. In the past, we were able to dive in and deeply process information available to use. Now, because of this overload, we skim and scroll quickly through information. This skimming strategy has been labeled **horizontal information seeking**, and when we are engaged in this type of processing, we only partially pay attention.³ This information overload and poor processing can lead to **decision paralysis**, or an inability to make a decision, which can also lead to low-quality decisions.

As experts in a particular domain, you have an obligation to help society sift through all of the information out there so that we can all be informed and make good decisions. We can't rely on people to access the information they need and hope they will make a good decision. There is simply too much of it, and it can negatively impact the quality of decision making. We have to be advocates in sharing our expertise in ways that will help individuals and society be better equipped to make informed decisions.

Part of society's success in wading through all of this information rests on your ability as a future professional and knowledge expert to be an effective communicator. How can we help our audiences cut through the noise of all of this information to hone in on what is actually important and essential? This book will focus on the skills you need to be a strong public speaker and the explanatory skills that will enable you to communicate complex information to individuals who may not be as familiar with content as you are.

We can't over emphasize the importance of clearly explaining our ideas and expertise. An inability to do so can result in policy decisions that impact our society negatively (e.g. failure to adopt beneficial health behaviors, costly financial decisions, and inefficiency at work).

All of us are experts at something. We all have a unique set of knowledge about a particular topic that sets us apart from the rest of the people in our class, on our block, or even in our social circles. Your expertise, whether it is related to music, teaching methodologies, particle physics, tax codes, or biological markers, is important. This information shapes policy that guides our decision making regarding medical practice, local school district initiatives, public transportation policies, and so much more. People who lack your expertise will often find your information complex and even confusing. It is your task to convey your knowledge in a way that makes the information understandable and accessible to your audience. That sounds easy, right? Well, actually it is more difficult than it seems.

So, **communication** is a difficult concept to define because it is so pervasive and appears to be automatic. We constantly interact with others (both verbally and non-verbally); thus, there

is an assumption that it is easy to communicate well. But this is not the case. In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of communication in your everyday life, define key terms like communication, presentational speaking, and plagiarism, and preview the remainder of the textbook.

Other people have recognized that it is difficult to communicate well and that it is critical to gain skills to help us become better communicators. For example, Warren Buffett, a successful American business tycoon, argued that learning to communicate well—specifically gaining the ability to speak in front of people—is the most important skill to master to help your career and increase your value in the workplace.⁴

While speaking to a class of business students at Columbia University, Buffett underscored the value of being able to communicate orally. He said:

Right now, I would pay a hundred thousand dollars for 10 percent of the future earnings of any of you ... If that's true, you're a million dollar asset right now, right? If 10 percent of you is worth a hundred thousand? [However] You could improve on that, many of you, and I certainly could have when I got out, just in terms of learning communication skills. ... It's not something that's taught, I actually went to a Dale Carnegie course later on in terms of public speaking. But if you improve your value 50 percent by having better communication skills, it's another 500-thousand dollars in terms of capital value. See me after the class and I'll pay you 150-thousand.

Through this quotation, Buffett puts a monetary value on the process of learning and subsequently honing the skills needed to speak in public.

Chris Anderson, the head of TED Talks, also emphasized the importance of learning how to communicate well in a variety of situations in your everyday life. He explained, “As a leader—or as an advocate—public speaking is the key to unlocking empathy, stirring excitement, sharing knowledge and insights, and promoting a shared dream.”⁵

As Buffett and Anderson noted through their comments, being able to speak well can help you effectively share your message with a variety of people (investors, customers, colleagues, managers, and friends) and will allow you to make your point in everyday life situations, such as those that take place at school, work, home, and your larger community.⁶

Definition of Communication

So what exactly is communication and how is it enacted? According to the National Communication Association (NCA), “communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, and is the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.”⁷

At the heart of this definition of communication is the idea that people intentionally create messages. This means that communication is not accidental or automatic, but rather intentional and strategic.

The NCA definition also claims that these messages are used to create meanings that are plural rather than singular because they are context-specific. For instance, you could give the “okay” hand gesture in the United States to show approval, while the same gesture in Japan would signify money and in France would mean zero.⁸

Moreover, communication is enacted in a variety of ways. Think about how you communicate every day—in-person, electronically, text, and symbols. The variety of ways that communication can take place has also been noted. In fact, “communication involves transmission of verbal and non-verbal messages. It consists of a sender, a receiver and a channel of communication. In the process of transmitting messages, the clarity of the message may be interfered or distorted by what is often referred to as barriers.”⁹

With that said, the actual communication process includes a variety of factors. The above definition that covers how communication is enacted highlights key aspects of the communication

process—sender, receiver, channel, message, interference, encoding, and decoding. These factors lead us to the models of communication.

Communication Models

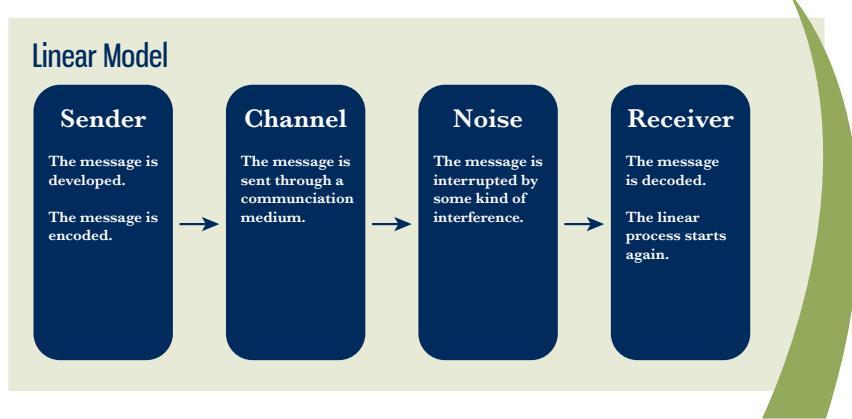
The process or enactment of communication is commonly conceptualized as either (1) linear, (2) interactive, or (3) transactional. These models are used to explain the act of communication using the factors previously discussed, like sender, receiver, and channel. These models will be presented in order of increasing complexity.

Let's talk about each of the three types of communication models. The linear model¹⁰ of communication is the most simplistic. It takes a transmission perspective, where the message is moved down a line until it reaches the intended audience. The model includes seven factors: (1) the **sender**/information source (this is the person who creates the message) (2) **encodes** a message, which is the act of taking abstract thoughts and turning them into a coherent message. (3) A **message** is the information or content that the sender wants to communicate to the receiver. This message is communicated through (4) a **channel** or the selected medium of communication (e.g., phone, email, television) to (5) a **receiver** who is the intended target/audience for the message. The receiver then (6) **decodes** or interprets the sent content in order to understand the sender's message. This process can be derailed by the presence of (7) **noise**, which is any interference with the transmission of the message (e.g., construction outside of a classroom or bustling traffic during a coffee date). Noise can also be more complex. For example, context and culture could impact encoding a message.

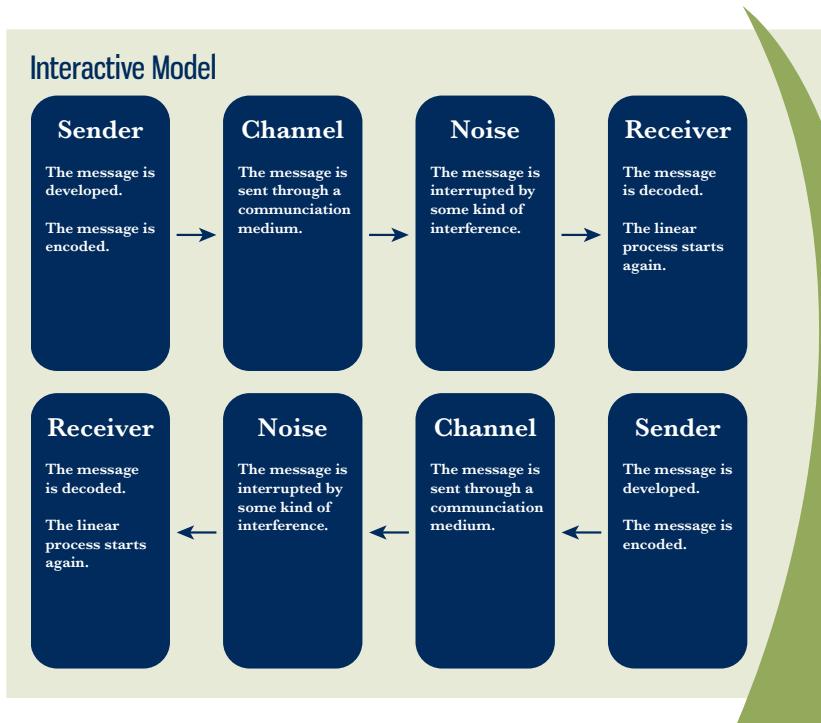
Sometimes cultural differences can lead to noise that makes it difficult to encode and decode a message. The situation may be so novel that it makes it difficult for the actors to understand each other in the interaction. Recently, some students who were studying abroad shared the following example. The students reported having great difficulty understanding a train conductor as he was punching tickets. This conductor did not speak fluent English, and the students did not speak fluent Italian. He was

trying to explain that they did not get their train tickets validated at a machine before boarding the train and therefore had to pay a fine. The students had properly purchased tickets, so they did not understand what had gone wrong. They went back and forth with the conductor until someone on the train came over and explained in English that all local train tickets had to be validated before use.

As you can imagine, the act of communication in the linear model is a one-way process that limits feedback and ultimately repeats itself until the interaction is complete. It assumes that you are a sender and then a receiver. It does not take into account that we can be senders and receivers simultaneously.



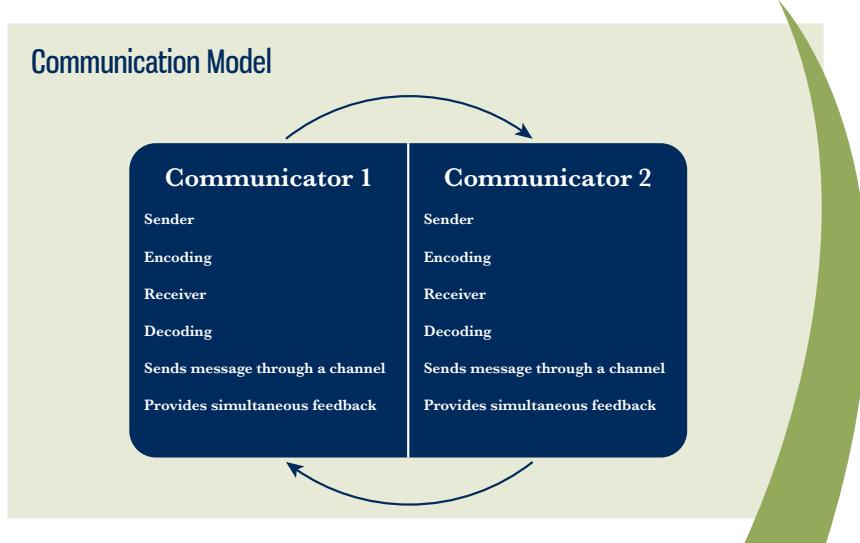
The interactive model extends the linear model by recognizing that in order for the communication process to be complete, the linear model has to be reversed. By this we mean that the receiver is expected to respond to the sender's message. As such, it allows for feedback, albeit in a procedural manner, that is delayed. This model can be seen in communication that takes place over the phone, through emails, or via text-messages or other “lean” channels.¹¹ (See discussion on rich and lean mediums or channels below.)



The transactional model builds on the linear and interactive models by recognizing that in many communicative interactions, the speaker and listener are simultaneously encoding and decoding messages within an environment that includes the context of the situation as well as the personal and cultural backgrounds of each communicator. Thus, there is not a delay in acting as a sender or receiver, but rather, both parties communicate (provide feedback, encode, and decode messages) simultaneously.

This model also accounts for a more nuanced understanding of noise, which can be environmental (the construction and traffic examples) as well as physiological (a sick audience member) and psychological (studying for a test in the next class).

As you can see, the transactional model has the most complex view of communication because it allows for overlapping feedback and, as such, is positioned as a two-way model of communication.¹²



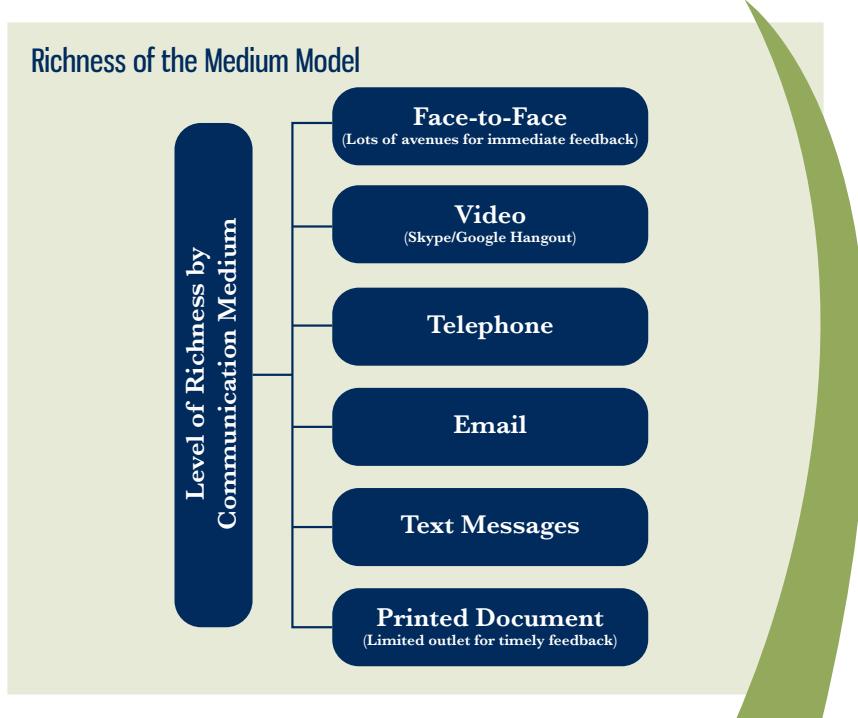
The models also introduce the idea of “rich” and “lean” communication mediums, which stems from the theory of media richness. This theory “advances the notion that communication richness (or leanness) is an objective property of communication media, and defines media richness as the ability to facilitate shared understanding within a time interval.”¹³ In other words, the theory examines how mediums can enhance or detract from an intended message/meaning as well as encourage or discourage two-way communication (feedback). For example, imagine the difference in communicating face-to-face vs. email. Sometimes when reading an email, we may think someone is angry with us because we cannot interpret their nonverbal communication such as tone or facial expression. The medium of email constrains the type of communication that can occur.

The level of richness is determined by the following criteria:¹⁴

- ↘ **Capacity for immediate feedback:** A rich medium allows for quick/immediate feedback. For example, in face-to-face communication a conversational partner could express confusion by making a quizzical facial expression.
- ↘ **Capacity to transmit multiple cues:** A rich medium allows for multiple avenues to express understanding or provide nonverbal and/or verbal feedback. A text message does not allow you to insert tone into the content of the text.
- ↘ **Language variety:** A rich medium allows for multiple types of nonverbal and/or verbal language to be used. For example, a report about company profits may be written in a formal, precise style, but this does not allow for informal, common language that could enhance the reader's understanding.
- ↘ **Capacity of the medium to have a personal focus:** A rich medium allows for the expression of emotions and feelings by all communicative partners. For example, it is hard to convey emotion over email.

In addition to richness of the medium, the content of the message matters in terms of the appropriate channel. For example, you wouldn't break up with a romantic partner using a lean medium (like text messaging) because these channels do not allow for the expression of emotion or feeling. In fact, the selection of the wrong type of medium has been used in popular media for laughs, like Berger breaking up with Carrie through a Post-It note (a la *Sex and the City*). However, if you wanted to share a detailed list of tasks that one of your employees needed to complete by the end of the week, you would want to use a lean medium that conveys the information in a succinct and precise manner and does not allow for much ambiguity.

In addition to the richness of the medium and content of your message, think about how technology has influenced the importance of choosing the right medium (either lean or rich).¹⁵ Also think about how technological advancements impact the effectiveness of the communication models (linear, interactive, and transactional). The information presented here matters as you choose mediums for the communication messages/narratives you want to share.



Presentational Speaking

This book is focused on a specific type of communication—**presentational speaking**. At this point you may be wondering what exactly presentational speaking is. We conceptualize presentational speaking as a form of communication that is used in daily interactions—from talking in class, to updating colleagues about a project, to speaking at a municipal meeting.

Presentational speaking is often confused with **public speaking**, but the two terms refer to different types of speaking. Presentational speaking is less formal than public speaking that

takes place with a smaller audience and uses an extemporaneous style of delivery (see Chapter 3). It is useful to think of presentational speaking as “mini-presentations” that you will use more often than formal, public speaking events.¹⁵ In other words, you will give a variety of informal presentations throughout a given day—away from “public,” stiff, and overly formal settings. For example, you might provide an update at work or at an internship about a project you have been working on, or attempt to persuade your roommate that it is his turn to clean the kitchen.

Most people assume any presentation you prepare for that has an audience is public speaking, but this is not the case. Public speaking is much more formal and often requires precise language using a memorized or manuscript style of delivery (see Chapter 3). Public speaking also does not allow for in-time audience feedback. When you think of public speaking, imagine one person presenting to a large, unknown audience without synchronous audience feedback. Examples of traditional public speaking include the president giving the State of the Union Address or a news anchor reading the day’s top stories from a teleprompter. As you can see, these instances of communication are vastly different from what you are expected to do in this class, even during the larger presentation assignments.

However, both presentational and public speaking use the same basic skills including audience analysis, organization, and research.¹⁵

So why is presentational speaking an important skill to develop? As previously noted, it is a valuable skill that you will use throughout your lives in school, work, home, and community settings. In fact, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) has also recognized this imperative for college students and new graduates and echoes the importance of learning how to speak well while in college.¹⁶

Over the course of the semester, we will address each of the learning outcomes/skills that was recognized as important by employers and AACU using some of the following examples:

- Oral communication skills will be taught during daily class activities and larger speaking assignments.
- Teamwork skills in diverse groups will be developed as you work on the group presentation project.

- ↘ Written communication skills will be honed during the process of preparing and organizing your presentations (e.g., outlining).
- ↘ You will demonstrate critical thinking and analytical reasoning while developing your message and deciding on supporting evidence.
- ↘ Ethical judgment will be practiced as you decide how to present information accurately and honestly (e.g., plagiarism).
- ↘ Real-world applications will be emphasized as we show the practicality of the content covered in this course and ask you to think about how often you communicate and how important these skills are to your academic, professional, home, and community lives.
- ↘ Information literacy skills will be practiced as you learn how to research and select credible information that supports your message.

Employer Priorities for Most Important College learning Outcomes

Adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities 2015 National Survey of Business and Nonprofit Leaders and Current College Students.

Learning Outcome (LO) or Skill	Percent of Employers Rating the LO/Skill as Important
Oral communication skills	85%
Teamwork skills in diverse groups	83%
Written communication skills	82%
Critical thinking and analytic reasoning	81%
Ethical judgment and decision making	81%
Ability to apply knowledge to real-world settings	80%
Information literacy	68%

Ethical Communication

One of the key take-aways from the AACU report is that ethics are important. **Ethics** are the framework we use to determine what is morally right or wrong. However, this is a difficult term to define since ethical standards and perspectives vary among individuals, cultures, and contexts. This definition highlights how ethical standards can be interpreted differently based on culture and context, which is an important point to make since culture impacts communication choices.

Overview of Ethics

NCA has developed a more comprehensive definition of ethics using U.S. standards.¹⁷

This credo for ethical communication states,

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

We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.

- ❖ *We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision-making fundamental to a civil society.*

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

The Role of Ethics in Presentational Speaking

Ethics is at the forefront of presentational speaking—from audience analysis and topic choice to research and the accurate presentation of information.

Audience analysis (see Chapter 4) involves ethical decision making as you start to evaluate who you will be speaking to during your presentation. It is important to be thoughtful about the information you collect and ethical in the way you use the

information. For example, if you are preparing a presentation to support the idea that climate change is real and discover that only one of your audience members does not believe in climate change, then you may want to rethink your presentation



**Ethics is at
the heart of
the research
process.**

topic. If you decide to go forward with your climate change topic, then it is unfair to single that audience member out during your presentation.

As a speaker or communicator, it is important that we respect our audience or communicative partner. We need to ensure that we listen and try and take the perspective of the other. Thinking about what we are going to say next or how we are going to cut off our communication partner is unethical and will lead to hostility and negatively impact understanding.

Ethics, including civility in our presentations, is an important issue. Watch the following clip where senators in the Kavanaugh hearing fail to respect each other as communicators.

- ✓ Do you think the exchange that occurred between the two senators was civil?
- ✓ We all know that this was a contentious hearing. Do you think this exchange helped or hindered communication?
- ✓ How could this have played out differently?



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Ethics is also at the heart of the research process (see Chapter 5). As a communicator you must be credible and unbiased. The onus is on the speaker to evaluate potential sources and determine their accuracy. Ethics in the research process also extends to presenting the gathered information correctly (not fudging the data, sharing the source of information, or citing the source correctly). This point leads us to the concept of plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a vague concept that has multiple interpretations of what counts as plagiarized work.¹⁸ A common definition of plagiarism states that it

is the act of using someone else's words, ideas, organization, drawings, designs, illustrations, statistical data, computer programs, inventions or any creative work as if it were new and original to you; this includes real and intellectual property and public domain material. It is the buying or procuring of papers, cutting and pasting from works on the internet, not using quotation marks around direct quotes, paraphrasing and not citing original works, and it is having someone else write your paper or a substantial part of your paper and turning it in as if it were new and original to you. To avoid plagiarism, one must internalize, understand and reorganize material and make it one's own.¹⁸

As evidenced by this definition, the act of plagiarism takes many forms. For example, plagiarism includes (1) not using quotations correctly, (2) copying someone else's work, (3) forgetting to cite sources in your paper or on the reference page, (4) deliberately doing so, (5) excessively helping someone on a paper, outline, or speech, or (6) recycling your old work.

When you are preparing for a presentation, it is important to know what the different types of plagiarism are so you can avoid them. The first type of plagiarism, **cloning**, is what typically comes to mind when we think about plagiarism. Cloning is when a person takes another's work and claims it as his own. Turning in a friend's term paper from the previous semester or purchasing a term paper online are both examples of cloning. This type of plagiarism is most common in academic settings, though it does occur in other situations. Mixed Martial Artist (MMA) fighter Kenny Florian found himself in trouble after it was discovered that the majority of an article he wrote for FoxSports.com had been taken word for word from another MMA analyst's YouTube video. Florian apologized to the public after the plagiarism was discovered and was quickly suspended from the network.¹⁹

Probably the most common type of plagiarism is known as **copy and paste** plagiarism. This is when a person takes parts of another's work or parts of multiple works and does not give appropriate credit for them. This can include not giving a citation for directly copied work or not putting quotation marks around a direct quote. When John Walsh, the former junior senator from Minnesota, was running for reelection in a hotly contested race, his opponents discovered that the majority of his

Master's thesis had been plagiarized. In his thesis paper, he either failed to provide correct citations for material or did not put material he had copied word for word in quotation marks. The negative publicity this discovery generated forced Walsh to withdraw from the race and led his alma mater, the Army War College, to revoke his Master's degree.²⁰

One way that people try to avoid copy and paste plagiarism is to paraphrase material rather than directly quoting it. **Ineffective paraphrasing** occurs when the paraphrase is too close to the original text and is not presented as a direct quote, or the paraphrase is not cited. Changing a few words, or the order of words, does not mean that you have now created original material. You must always give credit when you have taken another person's ideas or work. This issue of paraphrasing and plagiarism gained national attention in 2016 when Melania Trump addressed the Republican National Convention to support her husband and the Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump. Shortly after her speech ended, footage of Michelle Obama's speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention began to circulate and journalists identified several sections of Melania's speech that were nearly identical. These accusations of plagiarism both reflected poorly on the future first lady and were a source of embarrassment to the Trump campaign.²¹

Another form of plagiarism that people do not often consider is **excessive collaboration**. Excessive collaboration occurs when someone works collaboratively with another person, but then represents the work as his or her own. If you are assigned to prepare and deliver a final design presentation for class, it would not be acceptable for you to work with a student in a different section to prepare almost the same presentation and then each present it as your own. This does not mean that you cannot and should not seek out feedback and advice from other classmates and colleagues. It does mean that any work you represent as your own should be a result of your own research, work, and ideas.



Changing a few words, or the order of words, does not mean that you have now created original material.

Another thing to be aware of is **copyright infringement**. Copyright infringement is different from plagiarism and is often unintentional, but it can have steep financial consequences. “Copyright is the right of authors to control the use of their work for a limited period of time.”²² The work must be original to the author and a “tangible medium of expression.”²² In presentations, copyright infringement is often related to the use of graphics and videos in a slide show. Most of the uses of graphics and videos in this course will fall under the fair use category, meaning that you can use the work without paying for it. However, the creative work (photo, video, etc.) must be appropriately cited.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policies

Each university has its own policy regarding plagiarism. Search your university’s website for academic integrity and plagiarism policies.

Another type of plagiarism is **self-plagiarism**. It may sound counterintuitive, but it is possible to plagiarize yourself. Self-plagiarism occurs when you turn in work that was previously used for the same course or another course. For example, if you gave a presentation about the benefits of adopting a vegetarian diet for a nutrition class and then you use the same presentation in this class, then you just plagiarized yourself. You need to make sure to always create new work for each of your classes or to give background about how the material you are submitting was previously used.

With all types of plagiarism, it is important to remember that you do not have to intentionally misrepresent other’s work as your own to plagiarize something. **Accidental plagiarism** occurs when someone intentionally improperly cites or forgets to cite work taken from another source. This is why it is important to know how to cite direct quotes



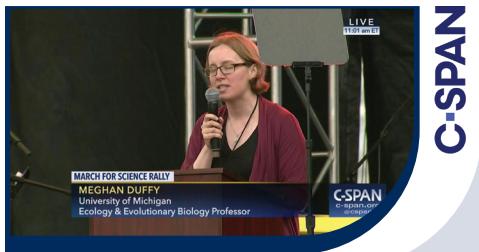
and how to properly cite work that has been paraphrased. Just because you did not mean to plagiarize, does not mean that you did not do it. If you ever have a question about whether or not something needs to be cited, it is always a good idea to err on the side of caution.

Did you know that 1.5 million people die from fungal infections each year? That is 3 times the number of people who die from breast cancer each year. Listen as Dr. Meghan Duffy from the University of Michigan describes her research.

- ✓ How did feedback operate in this example?
- ✓ What is some of the noise that was evident in this speaking situation?
- ✓ What strategies did Dr. Duffy use to encode her message so that it was easier for her audience to decode?



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Chapter Summary

In this chapter we introduced the general purpose of this book. Specifically, we discussed the importance of communication in your everyday life, defined key terms like communication, presentational speaking, and plagiarism. After reading this chapter, you should be more aware of the important and complex role that communication, generally, and presentational speaking, specifically, play in your everyday life.

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Chapter 2



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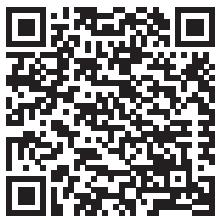
Presenting with Confidence

Objectives

After this chapter you will be able to:

- › Identify the reasons for public speaking anxiety.
- › Apply strategies for managing public speaking anxiety.
- › Assess your level of public speaking anxiety.
- › Identify symptoms of public speaking anxiety.

Featured Example



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When you hear the name Seth Rogen, what comes to mind? Do you think about his somewhat off color comedy or his movies like *Knocked Up* or *Super Bad*? Maybe you thought about marijuana and his vocal support of legalizing pot. We're guessing you did not think about him testifying as an expert witness before Congress about Alzheimer's disease, but that is exactly what he did. How do you think this comedian handled such a formal situation? As you watch this clip of his 2015 Congressional testimony, consider the following:

- › How was this situation different than what Rogen typically does?
- › Were there any indications that Rogen was nervous?
- › What strategies did Rogen use to cope with his nerves?
- › How would you rate the overall effectiveness of his message?



Introduction

For many people, the mere thought of giving a presentation is anxiety provoking. Getting up and speaking in front of a group makes people nervous. Public speaking anxiety often manifests itself in poor delivery techniques such as nervous movements, poor eye contact, or rapid speech rate. In this chapter you will learn more about what public speaking anxiety is, why people experience public speaking anxiety, types of anxiety, and techniques for managing your anxiety and nerves.

Public Speaking Anxiety

If you are someone who gets nervous just even thinking about public speaking, you are not alone. Each year, Chapman University conducts a survey to learn about people's fears. In 2016, public speaking was the most commonly identified personal fear, outranking snakes, heights, bugs, and drowning.¹ It is estimated that up to 75 percent of people suffer from some level of communication apprehension.² Some famous people who you might be surprised to learn suffered from an almost debilitating fear of public speaking include Warren Buffet, Ghandi, Harrison Ford, Barbra Streisand, and Leonardo DiCaprio. DiCaprio's fear was so bad that he once admitted in an interview that he used to hope he would not win any awards so he would not have to get up and give an acceptance speech.³

This fear is so common that comedian Jerry Seinfeld once did a bit about the fear of public speaking outranking death, meaning that many people would rather be in the casket than delivering the eulogy at a funeral. The official term for an extreme fear of public speaking is **glossophobia** which comes from the Greek words meaning “glass tongue.” The good news is that this fear can be managed and even the most apprehensive speakers can learn to deliver a successful presentation.

Communication apprehension is the formal term used to describe the anxiety one experiences as the result of actual or anticipated communication. Communication apprehension

Stage fright is not the only form of communication-related anxiety people experience.

includes the anxiety one experiences while in a speaking situation, as well as the anxiety that comes from thinking about being in a situation. In 1970, James McCroskey, a communication professor, introduced the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) which is a scale that measures the

level of anxiety associated with public speaking. This scale contains items designed to assess how much anxiety a person experiences when facing public speaking situations.

McCroskey and his colleagues also worked to develop the broader Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Scale (PRCA).⁴ The 24-item scale (PRCA-24) measures an individual’s level of anxiety when it comes to four communication situations: interpersonal, small group, meetings, and public speaking. It can be helpful to know that people have varying levels of comfort and anxiety associated with different speaking situations. For example, a student named José may be perfectly comfortable in a public speaking situation but experiences a lot of anxiety when in a meeting. Another student, Renee, may enjoy having one-on-one conversations, but dreads the thought of giving a presentation to a group. Recognizing situations where you are more comfortable can help you to identify your existing communication skills so you can build on those skills.

When talking about any type of communication apprehension, there are two distinct types of anxiety: **trait** and

situational. **Trait anxiety** refers to anxiety that is caused by an individual's personality or physical makeup. For example, people who have been diagnosed with Social Anxiety Disorder often have a high level of communication apprehension. Trait anxiety is a result of the chemical makeup of the brain and involves the biological response to a perceived or actual speaking situation. Because of individual differences, some people are more likely to be anxious before a public speaking situation than others.⁵ In contrast, **situational anxiety** is anxiety that results from situational factors such as having an audience, being in a high-pressure situation such as a job interview, or being unprepared for a speaking situation. Even the most outgoing and extroverted person will likely experience some anxiety before a major presentation at work that the boss is attending that could affect a performance review. Depending on the type of anxiety trait or state, the strategies for managing that anxiety will differ.

Another interesting distinction among those who experience public speaking anxiety is whether their anxiety falls into a habituation pattern or sensitization pattern. **Habituation** is

when there is a decrease in anxiety level after beginning to engage in the feared activity whereas **sensitization**

is an increase in anxiety while engaging in the activity. For a speaker who leans towards habituation, there might be a lot of nerves and anxiety leading up to the speaking situation, but as the presentation begins, the speaker becomes less anxious and more comfortable. In contrast, those who lean toward sensitization have anxiety leading up to the speaking situation that increases as the speaking begins and continues to rise until the presentation is ending.

The theory is that sensitizers are more sensitive to changes in their bodies, and stress symptoms such as increased heart rate or sweaty palms lead to even more anxiety.⁶ It may comfort you to know that

The majority of people are habituators; once they stand up and start speaking, their anxiety levels will decrease.⁶



Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA)

Directions: This instrument is composed of 34 statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Indicate the degree to which the statements apply to you by marking whether you (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) are undecided, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree with each statement. Work quickly; just record your first impression.

1. While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous.
2. I feel tense when I see the words “speech” and “public speech” on a course outline when studying.
3. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
4. Right after giving a speech, I feel that I have had a pleasant experience.
5. I get anxious when I think about a speech coming up.
6. I have no fear of giving a speech.
7. Although I am nervous just before starting a speech, I soon settle down after starting and feel calm and comfortable.
8. I look forward to giving a speech.
9. When the instructor announces a speaking assignment in class, I can feel myself getting tense.
10. My hands tremble when I am giving a speech.
11. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
12. I enjoy preparing for a speech.
13. I am in constant fear of forgetting what I prepared to say.
14. I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic that I do not know.
15. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
16. I feel that I am in complete possession of myself while giving a speech.
17. My mind is clear when giving a speech.
18. I do not dread giving a speech.
19. I perspire just before starting a speech.
20. My heart beats very fast just as I start a speech.
21. I experience considerable anxiety while sitting in the room just before my speech starts.
22. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
23. Realizing that only a little time remains in a speech makes me very tense and anxious.

Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) Continued

- 24. _____ While giving a speech, I know I can control my feelings of tension and stress.
- 25. _____ I breathe faster just before starting a speech.
- 26. _____ I feel comfortable and relaxed in the hour or so just before giving a speech.
- 27. _____ I do poorer on speeches because I am anxious.
- 28. _____ I feel anxious when the teacher announces the date of a speaking assignment.
- 29. _____ When I make a mistake while giving a speech, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow.
- 30. _____ During an important speech, I experience a feeling of helplessness building up inside me.
- 31. _____ I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech.
- 32. _____ My heart beats very fast while I present a speech.
- 33. _____ I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech.
- 34. _____ While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

To determine your score on the PRPSA, complete the following steps:

- ✓ **Step 1:** Add the scores for items 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34.
- ✓ **Step 2:** Add the scores for items 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, and 26.

Complete the following formula: $\text{PRPSA} = 72 - \text{Total from Step 2} + \text{Total from Step 1}$. Your score on the PRPSA can range between 34 and 170:

- ✓ **34–84** indicates a very low anxiety about public speaking.
- ✓ **85–92** indicates a moderately low level of anxiety about public speaking.
- ✓ **93–110** suggests moderate anxiety in most public speaking situations but not so severe that the individual cannot cope and be a successful speaker.
- ✓ **111–119** suggests a moderately high anxiety about public speaking. People with such scores will tend to avoid public speaking.
- ✓ **120–170** indicates a very high anxiety about public speaking. People with these scores will go to considerable lengths to avoid all types of public speaking situations.

You can also take the assessment online at: http://www.wadsworth.com/communication_d/templates/student_resources/053455170X_sellnow/psa/main_frame.htm.

You may have noticed that the previous section mentions managing public speaking anxiety, not curing or overcoming it. The reality is that many people do get nervous about public speaking. Additionally, many occasions that require public speaking have situational factors that provoke anxiety. Imagine, for example, that you are giving a sales pitch at work to a potential client. The high-stakes nature of this situation may lead to anxiety even if you typically have no problem with public speaking. Because of trait and situational anxiety, it is likely that you will continue to experience some level of anxiety at one time or another. This is why we focus on managing your anxiety so that it does not become debilitating.

Situational Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety

There are several situational factors that can lead to increased public speaking anxiety. By recognizing what these situational factors are, when you are facing them, you can develop better strategies for either minimizing or making the best of these factors. The following are some of the major situational reasons people may experience public speaking anxiety.

- ❖ **Fear of failure:** When asked why they are nervous to speak in public, many people will respond that they are afraid they will do a terrible job and fail miserably. Asked to describe their worst case scenario for giving a presentation, people are quick to describe scenes of completely forgetting what to say, tripping on stage, or making absolutely no sense. Because presentational speaking occurs in public, not only is there a fear of not doing well, but the failure will be visible to the entire audience. When the stakes of a presentation are high, people will often experience an increased level of anxiety.
- ❖ **Fear of judgment:** This fear is similar to that of fear of failure but arises from anxiety over what people in the audience will think of you as a speaker. A common reason students give for why a public speaking class such as this one makes them nervous is that they are being graded and assessed by the instructor.⁷ Some worry that audience members will deem them as incompetent, boring, or unskilled. The fear of judgment often correlates with who is the audience. A presentation

for superiors at work might cause more anxiety than a presentation to a group of peers. A toast at a wedding where several of your close friends and family are in attendance might be more nerve-wracking than a toast at an event full of strangers. In both of these cases, the judgment of certain audience members has greater weight than others.

- ▶ **Lack of preparation:** Imagine that you are taking guitar lessons and you are scheduled to perform in your first recital. Rather than spending the weeks leading up to the recital practicing and perfecting your piece, you wait until the night before and try to learn the song as quickly as you can. There is a high likelihood that when you walk on stage to perform the next day, you will be even more nervous than you normally would be because you do not know your song well. If you had spent the weeks before practicing diligently and had mastery over the song, you would most likely still be nervous about playing for an audience, but at least you would have confidence that you have practiced and know your piece. Public speaking is no different. If you do not adequately prepare and give yourself enough time to plan a compelling message and practice it until you know the content well, you are going to be more anxious when you stand up to present.

A helpful tip to manage your speaking anxiety and improve your presentation is to practice in front of an audience. When Actress Ruth Livier was asked to speak to the Senate Judiciary Committee, she was incredibly nervous. She was used to being on camera, but delivering live testimony to some of the most powerful lawmakers in the country was not a situation she had ever experienced. To help cope with her nerves, she actually practiced her presentation for her cab driver on the way to the Capital building. Do you think her practice helped? How would you rate her performance?



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- **Lack of experience:** When we are just learning how to do something or are doing it for the first time, we are often anxious. We are hyper-aware of the limitations of our skills. If you do not have a lot of experience in standing up in front of people or in delivering formal presentations, you are more likely to be anxious when you are asked to do so. Going back to our guitar example, someone who has been playing for over 15 years is much less likely to have anxiety about performing than someone who has only been taking lessons for six months.

When we see someone who is a skilled speaker, it is easy to assume that they are naturally talented or have always been that way. In reality, they most likely had to work on becoming an accomplished speaker and probably suffered from a bit of speaking anxiety themselves when they first started to deliver presentations. Watch these two clips of former President Barack Obama. The first clip from 1998 is when Obama was an Illinois State Senator and spoke at a State of the Cities panel. The second, from 2019, 21 years later, is from his speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma March. What differences do you notice between Obama's two presentations? How did time and experience change his presentation style?



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Symptoms of Public Speaking Anxiety

When you start to feel nervous about a presentation, speaking anxiety is often accompanied by physical symptoms. This is because of the phenomena known as **fight-or-flight** response, or heightened arousal. When humans are confronted with a perceived threat, the brain floods the body with stress hormones including adrenaline and cortisol that increase a person's heart rate and blood pressure and provide a burst of energy to smooth muscle tissues. These hormones prepare the body to either flee from the threat or confront it head on. As a person springs into action to alleviate the threat, the hormones are used to get the person to engage in the activity that will be most beneficial to their survival. Once the threat is gone, he or she is able to return to a calmer state of being because the hormone levels return to normal.

From an evolutionary perspective, this is a great adaptation. When a caveman faced a threat, it was usually something life threatening such as a wild animal, and the only options for survival were to either escape the threat or to fight it. In modern times, the threats we face are rarely life threatening, such as giving a speech in public, but the body's reaction is the same. This means that if you are getting ready to give a presentation, your flight-or-fight response kicks in. Your body is literally preparing to either run away or engage in a physical altercation. Because neither of these is an option in the case of giving a presentation, you are left with a lot of stress hormones surging through your body. Because you are not doing anything to physically alleviate the effect of those hormones, you may experience jitteriness, shortness of breath, and dry mouth.

Common Physical Symptoms of Public Speaking Anxiety

- Dry mouth
- Red face
- Sweating
- Feeling jittery
- Upset stomach
- Shaking
- Shortness of breath
- Increased heart rate

These symptoms may start to arise as soon as one starts to even think about an upcoming speaking event, and symptoms may intensify up until and during the actual presentation. In addition to the physical symptoms listed in the previous box, some mental symptoms may include feelings of panic, an increase of negative thoughts, or difficulty focusing. Because blood is rushing to your limbs to help you physically avert the threat, your brain may not feel like it is operating optimally.

Strategies for Coping with Public Speaking Anxiety

Even though public speaking anxiety is a very real and common thing, there are numerous strategies and techniques that have been proven to reduce overall feelings of anxiety.

The first set of strategies focuses on alleviating or minimizing some of the specific symptoms. Since the majority of the symptoms are caused by having too many stress hormones in the blood stream, any sort of physical activity you can do to use them up is helpful. Before your presentation, a quick walk down the hall or standing up to get a drink can release some of your built up energy. If you are feeling jittery when you stand up to present, be sure that you are not holding a sheet of paper or a pen that will magnify the movement of your hands. Incorporating movement into your presentation, if appropriate, is another way to release energy while speaking.

When we are stressed, we tend to take short, rapid breaths. This is your body's attempt to actually take in more air than it needs, and this can leave you feeling light-headed. If you feel yourself getting short of breath, you should consciously slow down your breathing by counting to five as you inhale, holding your breath for a count of seven, and then slowly exhaling. Be sure as you are breathing that you can feel your stomach expanding as this indicates you are taking full breaths. Not only is deep breathing



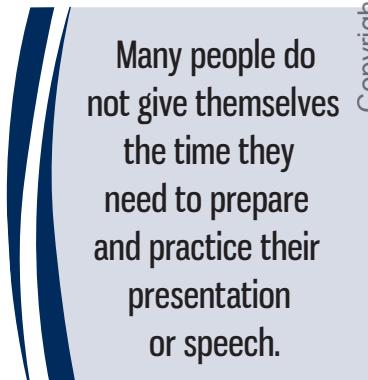
calming and proven to reduce physical symptoms of arousal such as an increased heartrate, but also a fully oxygenated brain will function better.

During a period of extreme stress, your body diverts blood flow from your digestive system, as these are considered less essential survival functions. This is why you may experience dry mouth or an upset stomach when you are nervous. If you know you are prone to dry mouth when you get nervous, be sure to keep a bottle of water nearby, and take small sips throughout your presentation.

The next set of strategies goes beyond just dealing with specific symptoms and is designed to combat the underlying communication apprehension you feel so you are more comfortable when faced with a public speaking situation. Utilizing one or a combination of the following strategies can help you manage both your trait and situational anxiety.

Prepare and Practice

This strategy is so simple and straightforward that you might wonder why it is even included. It is included because, as we learned earlier, even though lack of preparation is one of the leading causes of public speaking anxiety, many people do not give themselves the time they need to prepare and practice their presentation or speech. A 2006 study of college students found that the majority of students procrastinated when it came to prepping for a presentation for speech class, and many reported cramming the night before to try and learn the material. This same study found that there was a direct correlation between the amount of time students spent preparing for their presentations and their grades.⁸ Preparation can be especially helpful in dealing with the anxiety that arises when there is a lot riding on a presentation, such as earning a grade in class or trying to secure a new client at work. If you wait until the night



Many people do not give themselves the time they need to prepare and practice their presentation or speech.

before a big presentation to write and practice, it is likely that you will not know your material as well as you should, and this can lead to additional stress and anxiety.

When it comes to practice, though, not all practice is equally helpful. The most effective practice sessions are those that most closely simulate the actual speaking situation. Sitting at your desk reading through your presentation silently may help you to learn your message, but giving a great presentation involves far more than simply being able to remember the words you want to say. The more you act as you will in the actual speaking situation, the more comfortable you will be when it is time to present, as your body and mind will feel as if you have been there before. In sports, trainers often talk about muscle memory which is the concept that the more your body engages in a physical activity, the more easily it can do that activity, as your muscles remember the training and can do the required movements almost mindlessly. Similarly, in speaking situations, if you have physically walked through your presentation, your body will be more likely to remember what it should do.⁹

When practicing for a presentation, there are a few best practices to keep in mind. Practice saying your speech aloud so that you can practice your tone and speaking rate. Rather than sitting in a chair, stand like you would during a presentation and practice using your visual aids to help you remember when to use them. Practice with the notecards you plan to use during your presentation instead of practicing with your full outline or manuscript. This will help you to more effectively learn your presentation, and your note cards will serve as adequate reminders while you are speaking. Consider practicing where you are giving your presentation if possible, so you are familiar with the space. If at all possible, it is always good to practice before a small audience. Even if it is just a roommate or friend, practicing in front of people is the best way to help you get comfortable having an audience look at you and allows you to practice things such as eye contact. Again, even though this is a simple strategy, it is incredibly effective at not only reducing speech anxiety, but in elevating the quality of your presentation.^{10,11}

Skills Training

A primary reason that people feel anxious about public speaking is they fear that they will not be good at it and will fail at their attempts. **Skills training** in the form of workshops, coaching, and courses like the one you are in now have been proven to reduce speakers' overall anxiety, as well as improve their public speaking abilities. By developing the skills required to give an effective presentation such as message composition and delivery skills, you can feel more confident and less fearful of failure and negative judgment.^{12,13} Skills training is so valuable that many people will spend a lot of money and time on it. In 2016, executives could enroll in a two day public speaking workshop offered by the Dale Carnegie Training Center for \$1,800. Toastmasters, a group that members join to develop their communication and speaking skills, is a global organization with chapters in over 142 countries. Professionals who recognize the importance of excellent speaking skills often join Toastmasters to gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their career fields. This requires a weekly commitment to attend meetings and includes a hefty membership fee.

Systematic Desensitization/Exposure

A common technique therapists and psychologists use when patients have an extreme fear of something, such as flying or spiders, is exposure therapy, or **systematic desensitization**. Patients are slowly exposed to low levels of the threat with the first exposures being as non-threatening as possible. A person terrified of flying, for example, might first watch videos of people flying or even just view pictures of airplanes. As the patient gets better able to cope with the threat, the exposure level increases until the person is able to get on a plane and fly. Similarly, people with a high level of public speaking anxiety can slowly work their way up to a public presentation. Take, for example, Damion, a student enrolled in a public speaking class who feels sick to his stomach at the thought of being asked to answer a question in front of the class. First, he might be asked to just imagine himself giving a presentation and be encouraged to try calming techniques such as deep breathing while doing so. The next step might be answering questions in class while seated at his desk.

Exposure would progress to standing up in front of a group and introducing himself and then to presenting to a smaller group of two to three classmates rather than the entire class. Eventually, with repeated exposure to the threat and the recognition that he survived the threat, Damion will be able to get up and give a formal presentation to an audience. Studies have repeatedly found that systematic desensitization is a highly effective treatment for public speaking anxiety^{14,15,16} which lends credence to the advice that the more you do it, the easier it will become.

A recent development in treating public speaking anxiety with systematic desensitization is the use of virtual reality and virtual audiences. Instead of practicing or presenting in front of an actual audience, speakers present in front of video footage of an audience or to computer-generated avatars. Some audience simulators are so advanced that the computer-generated avatars will change their reactions based on what the speaker is saying and how the speaker is saying it. Studies have found that virtual audiences can arouse similar stress reactions to an actual audience, and practicing in front of a virtual audience can greatly reduce the anxiety speakers feel when later addressing a live audience.^{17,18}

Visualization

Visualization is a technique used by many elite performers, from athletes to musicians, in which they repeatedly imagine themselves going through a performance successfully. Three-time Olympic gold medal winners, Misty May-Treanor and Kerri



The secret
to successful
visualization is
imagining yourself
going through all
of the steps for
your presentation.

Walsh Jennings, who dominated the beach volleyball scene, credit visualization as a key factor in their success as visualization helps them to be calm in the moment and stay focused on their play.¹⁹ The secret to successful visualization is imagining yourself going through all of the steps for your presentation, from approaching the front of the room, to going through the main points of your presentation,

to your presentation ending well. The second key is to visualize yourself being successful. When nerves kick in, it is easy to visualize yourself making a mistake, but effective visualization focuses on seeing yourself at peak performance.^{10,20,21}

Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is similar to visualization in that it relies on positive thoughts, but instead of visualizing the speaking situation, this technique involves replacing the negative thoughts a person has about public speaking and his or her public speaking skills with more positive thoughts. For example, Chen knows that she will be giving an update on her team's marketing plan at the next staff meeting. Chen is very nervous about public speaking in general and especially presentations like this one where her superiors and coworkers are present. In the days leading up to the presentation, she repeatedly says things to herself like, "I hate giving presentations," "I am sure I will screw this up," and "I am a terrible speaker." When using cognitive restructuring, she would replace those negative thoughts with more positive ones such as, "Presentations are an important part of my job," "I will do a good job," and "I know what I am talking about and will give a great presentation." The theory behind this method is that the way we think and talk to ourselves greatly influences our mental state and our behavior.^{22,23}

Another useful trick is to reframe the way you think about your public speaking anxiety. In general, we tend to perceive public speaking anxiety as a negative thing, and the desire is often to rid ourselves of that anxiety. As we learned earlier in our discussion of fight-or-flight syndrome, your body's response to a perceived threat is intended to make you more capable of effectively handling that threat. The increased adrenaline can be used to your advantage when you are anxious before giving a presentation by giving you a boost of energy that can make your delivery more intense and engaging. Studies have found that acute stress, the kind of stress often experienced when going into a presentation, actually enhances memory and learning.²⁴ Many athletes and performers will tell you that if they are not feeling anxious before a game or show, something is off, and

their subsequent performance will be flat and not up to par. One way to frame your anxiety is as excitement rather than nerves.²⁵ Although many of the symptoms of excitement, such as jitteriness, increased heart rate, and butterflies in the stomach, are similar to anxiety, excitement has positive rather than negative connotations. The way we think about stress is referred to as stress mindset. People who view stress as being beneficial and performance enhancing versus being harmful and debilitating not only perform better on work-related tasks but also have fewer negative physical side effects.²⁶

Another form of cognitive restructuring is changing how you think about your audience and the purpose of your presentation. Because you are the one speaking, and you are the one in front of the group, it is easy to focus on yourself and your performance. When focusing on yourself, it is easy to get nervous about how you will look, what mistakes you might make, or how your audience will perceive you. Instead of thinking about your audience as an entity that is there to judge and evaluate you, think about your audience as being there because they need something from you. Before your presentation, think about what your audience needs. Do they need information from you, do they need to be entertained, do they need to learn something? By shifting your focus on to your audience and what you can do for them, you have less mental space to worry about your performance.

Present More Frequently

If speaking in public makes you nervous, this tip may not be your favorite, but it is a great way to get more comfortable. As we discussed earlier in the section on systematic desensitization, repeated exposure to a perceived threat can minimize your anxiety. The more opportunities you have to speak in front of a group, the more opportunities you have to develop your skills and to recognize that you can survive presenting to people. Instead of trying to avoid presentations, look for ways that you can practice your presentational skills.

Using any or a combination of the above techniques is a great way to manage your public speaking anxiety, whether it is pervasive and you have trait anxiety, or you occasionally feel anxious when faced with certain speaking situations. Even if you

are feeling anxious about speaking, it is important to deliver your presentation in a way that conveys confidence and comfort to the audience, even if you are not feeling entirely confident and at ease. In the next chapter, we will look at the many factors that comprise speech delivery and tips for optimizing these components.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter we looked at the prominence of the fear of public speaking, some reasons for this fear, and more importantly, several strategies for managing this fear so that it does not interfere with your ability to deliver a great presentation.

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3

Chapter



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Delivering with Skill

Objectives

After this chapter you will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the key elements of effective speech delivery.
- ✓ Explain the four main delivery styles.
- ✓ Demonstrate effective delivery techniques for presentational speaking.
- ✓ Understand verbal and nonverbal aspects of delivery.

C-SPAN



<https://cs.pn/2ZgYywb>

What is the most important quality in a presidential candidate? Is it their political savvy, their understanding of foreign affairs, their domestic agenda, or their speaking ability and charisma? This is a question that has multiple answers, as it depends on who you are asking. When Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination for president, she made history for being the first female nominee for a major political party. Her acceptance speech received mixed reviews. As you watch a portion, consider the following questions:

- › What do you think of her delivery style?
- › What were positive aspects of her delivery?
- › Were there any areas you would suggest for her to improve her delivery style?
- › Do you think a person's gender influences the expectations of an audience regarding their delivery style?



Delivery Styles

Whenever you are in a speaking situation, whether it is a formal presentation in class, a project update at work, or a casual conversation about something funny that happened at last week's football game, the ultimate goal is to tell your story in a way that connects with your audience. As important as your words are, in some ways, the way you tell your story is even more important. The delivery of your message, the tone of your voice, the gestures you use, and even the way you stand influence your audience's perception of your credibility, your likeability, and your trustworthiness.

When you consider figures throughout history who have been considered great orators, in addition to their skill in crafting messages that resonated with the audiences, they were extremely skilled at presenting their messages in ways that were engaging and captivating. Former President Ronald Reagan, nicknamed the "great communicator," was able to use his acting skills to speak to large crowds in a way that both entertained and conveyed confidence and skill. Renowned civil rights activist, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., is remembered not only for his poetic and inspiring words but also his distinct delivery style which included a southern rhythm and cadence that connected him to his audience.¹

Former President Barack Obama was catapulted to the national spotlight after giving a public address at the Democratic National Convention when he was a new Senator from Illinois. Like other great speakers, he was considered a wordsmith, but additionally, his delivery style was one that connected him with the audience and helped the nation feel hopeful and encouraged² at a time when many Americans were struggling.

Even if you never become a famous orator or address a nation or crowd of thousands, the way you deliver a presentation is critical because your language choice is only one component of communication. You may have the most interesting story to share, but if you stumble as you tell it, sound bored, or use distracting hand gestures, your story will lose its impact. Nonverbal messages including tone, facial expressions, gestures, and posture are essential for helping message receivers fully understand what is being communicated. One often cited statistic is that over 90 percent of a message is conveyed nonverbally.³ While the number has been somewhat debunked as it is difficult to quantify the impact of nonverbal messages, communication scholars agree that nonverbal communication serves several functions in the communication situation. Because nonverbal communication serves so many functions, your delivery skills can influence audience perceptions of your credibility, help you develop rapport with your audience, and impact the assessment of your overall message.^{4,5}

Before we look at the specific elements of speech delivery, we will first discuss the four primary delivery styles used for presentations: memorized, manuscript, impromptu, and extemporaneous. Each of these styles has its own strengths, challenges, and limitations, and the situation in which you are speaking will often dictate which style you will use.

Memorized

When using **memorized delivery**, you use the same techniques you would use if you were in a play and had to memorize your lines. Although it may be tempting to memorize your presentation so you can be sure to include all of your wanted points

and not have to worry about looking at notes, speaking from memory can be very challenging. The negatives of this style usually outweigh the benefits. Memorized speeches lack spontaneity and adaptability, which makes them sound rehearsed rather



Memorized speeches lack spontaneity and adaptability.

than conversational. One of the major risks of memorizing a presentation is forgetting a line and not being able to regain your place in the presentation. Because of these drawbacks, this technique is rarely recommended, but when you are giving a short toast or introduction, this style can be useful.

Manuscript

Manuscript delivery is when you write out your presentation word for word and read from your script when giving your presentation. This style is most commonly used for formal speeches when it is important for a speaker to say the exact words that were written. When a politician gives a public address such as the State of the Union or the State of the State, often he or she will use a teleprompter and read the prepared speech. Other occasions that might call for a manuscript include commencement addresses, official testimony in front of a legislative body, or any time that your words will be recorded as part of an official record. While it might be tempting to use this style, as many people are nervous about forgetting a part of the presentation, it is very challenging to read from a script without sounding like you are reading to the audience rather than speaking to them. Eye contact is also challenging for those who do not have the benefit of a teleprompter. When using a paper manuscript, the speaker needs to look down to read the text. With limited eye contact and a vocal tone that does not sound like genuine conversation, it can be difficult for speakers to connect with the audience. If you are in a situation where you will be delivering from a manuscript, here are a few tips to improve your presentation:

- Make sure your manuscript is legible and easy to read.
- Use a large font and extra spacing between lines.
- Use wider side margins so your eyes do not have to travel as far when you move to the next line.



- ↘ Practice varying your tone and rhythm.
- ↘ Look up at the audience at the end of sentences and between paragraphs.
- ↘ Mark your spot in the manuscript when you look up so you do not lose your place.

Impromptu

In many ways, impromptu speaking is the complete opposite of speaking from a manuscript. **Impromptu speaking** is when you are asked to speak before a group without any notice or time to prepare. Situations like this are more common than you may think. Take, for example, a recent reception for a group of graduate students from the communication department at a large university. Each graduate was asked to introduce themselves to the group and share a little bit about their research interests. It was not a high-pressure presentation, but it did require each person to stand up and talk for a minute to a group of about 50 people. Other situations where your impromptu speaking skills might be called upon include giving a project update at work, sharing a story at a family gathering, or discussing your experiences on a relevant topic at a community meeting. For many people, impromptu situations are especially nerve-wracking as they do not like being put on the spot. Their nerves often make it difficult to put together their thoughts, and this can lead to a disorganized and rambling presentation, as it can be hard to think of something to say.

Here are some tips for successfully delivering an impromptu presentation:

- ↘ Anticipate situations when you might be asked to speak such as staff meetings or at organization meetings.
- ↘ Take a minute to breathe and gather your thoughts before you speak.
- ↘ Determine two or three key points you want to convey.
- ↘ Keep it short.
- ↘ Have a clear conclusion even if it is as simple as saying thank you.

Extemporaneous



This last delivery style, **extemporaneous speaking**, is when you spend time practicing, but you have not memorized what you are going to say, and you do not speak from a manuscript. Instead, you prepare an outline or notes with your main ideas and supporting examples and work from that to develop and practice your presentation. Because you are not speaking from memory or a script, your presentation is more flexible, and you will sound more conversational and natural while presenting. Because you are not bound to a set script, you can respond to audience feedback and adapt your message as needed. This is a very common delivery style, and it is frequently used in business presentations, where you prepare your material and message but do not go into the meeting with a word-for-word script or a memorized monologue. The way that many of your instructors lecture during class is another example of extemporaneous speaking.

Here are some tips for successfully delivering an extemporaneous presentation:

- Organize your thoughts and ideas ahead of time.
- Limit the amount of writing on your notes so you are not tempted to read.
- Practice so you are familiar and comfortable with your material.

No matter what delivery style you are using, there are common elements of delivery that will either enhance or detract from your message. These elements can be broken down into three categories: physical, verbal, and general delivery. In the following section, we will look at the components of each of these categories and discover tricks and tips for using these components to enhance your presentation.

Physical Delivery

When you present in front of an audience or tell a story to a group of friends over dinner, there is a high likelihood that the people you are speaking to can see you, which is why the way you stand, your facial expressions, and your gestures are such a critical component of your delivery style. Imagine for a moment that you are attending a workshop focused on developing your leadership skills. As you sit waiting for the session to begin, you notice the session leader is at the front of the room wearing clothes that are slightly wrinkled, has a frown on her face, repeatedly twirls her hair with her finger, and shuffles through a messy stack of papers with her other hand. Before she has even spoken a word, and before you have had a chance to read her bio, you have started to form an impression of her based on her nonverbal communication, and it is quite likely that your impression is less than positive. Maybe you think she is unorganized, unprofessional, anxious, or unfriendly. Your impression may be completely wrong, but it is important to remember that your nonverbals start communicating as soon as people can see you, even if you haven't uttered a word. This means you need to be aware of what your body and face are doing as soon as you enter the speaking situation. In the following sections we will look at different components of physical delivery and discuss tips for effective physical delivery.

Eye Contact

A traditional English proverb states, “The eyes are the windows to the soul.” In many Western cultures, including the United States, a high value is placed on looking people in the eye when speaking. When a person avoids eye contact, it can be perceived as being dishonest, rude, or uncomfortable.^{4,6} Additionally, eye

contact is a way to indicate to a person that you are engaged in the conversation. A study from the University of Miami found that when we are listening to someone, 43.4 percent of our attention is focused on the eyes. Researchers at Cornell University found that shoppers were much more likely to purchase a box of Trix cereal when the rabbit on the box was drawn with the eyes looking directly at the consumer than when the eyes were drawn looking down. Clearly, eye contact is a central component of communicating with your audience.

Because of its importance, when you are speaking to a Western audience, it is essential that you not only look at your audience but that you engage in meaningful eye contact with them. There are, however, some barriers to making eye contact. If you are relying too heavily on your notes and have to read the majority of your presentation, it will be difficult to look at your audience. Another barrier is nerves. Making eye contact can make you more aware of your audience, which can increase anxiety. To overcome these barriers, you may have been given the advice to pick a spot on the wall and stare at it or to look at people's foreheads instead of their eyes. This advice, while well intentioned, is not effective. People are very aware of eye contact, and if you are staring at their foreheads instead of looking into their eyes, they will know. Another strategy people will use is to pick one person in the audience, usually someone they know, and look at that person throughout the presentation. Again, this is not a great strategy, as other members of the audience will feel as if you are ignoring them.

When speaking to a group, you need to scan the room and be sure you are looking at all places in the room. For a very large group it will be impossible to actually look each individual person in the eye, but you can spend extended time looking at each area around the room. Former President Bill Clinton explained that whenever he is addressing a large crowd, he does not think about talking to hundreds or thousands but instead focuses on talking to one person at a time. For each thought or sentence he says, he picks one person in the room, talks to him or her for that



A traditional English proverb states, "The eyes are the windows to the soul."

thought, and then moves to the next person. This strategy allows him to have meaningful and extended eye contact around the room and, as a bonus, alleviates some of the stress that comes with trying to speak to such a large group.⁷

An important thing to understand about delivery is that it influences your audience's reception of your message. You may have interesting information and a compelling message, but if it is presented poorly, the strength of your message may be lost. As you watch this clip of Representative Corrine Brown, consider how her delivery style influences your reception of her message? What, if any, advice would you give her on her delivery?



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C-SPAN

It is important to recognize that the norms and expectations regarding eye contact are culturally based. In many Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and African cultures, direct eye contact is perceived as being rude or disrespectful, especially when someone with less power is addressing a superior. If you are giving a presentation in another country or to a group from another culture, you should be aware of these norms. Additionally, if you are listening to a speaker from a different culture, be careful about making judgments about his or her honesty, credibility, and trustworthiness based on his or her eye contact.

Posture

Good **posture** is not only good for your spine and alignment, but the way you stand can convey confidence, power, or lack thereof. If you are slouching with your hands in your pockets, you may come across as being disinterested or bored, whereas if you stand up with your legs spread widely apart with your arms crossed, you might be perceived as angry or aggressive. One



thing to consider when you are standing and speaking is whether you are using **open posture** or **closed posture**. The two previous examples of slouching and crossed arms are both closed poses; closed poses cut off your connection to the audience. Open postures, on the other hand, are those with your arms at your sides, your shoulders held back and relaxed, and your head held high.

Whether or not you realize it, the way that you stand influences how people perceive your capability and credibility, and your posture can send a subtle message to others about your approachability and your willingness to engage in conversation. If you were lost when visiting a new city, who would you approach to ask for directions: A man waiting at the bus stop who is leaning forward with his arms crossed and staring at his feet, or the man sitting next to him on the bench with his hands resting in his lap looking at the passing cars? You would probably choose the second man because his overall posture is more open and more inviting.



So you may be wondering how you should stand in a way that is both open and professional. The first thing to consider is your spine. You want to hold your backbone as straight as possible, extending from your lower back up through your head. Push your shoulders slightly back while keeping them relaxed. When feeling anxious or uncomfortable, many people hunch their shoulders inward. Pushing your shoulders back will open up your chest and prevent you from closing yourself off or looking like you are trying to hide yourself from the audience. Another important thing to consider is how you are distributing your weight on your feet. Avoid resting all of your weight on one leg and standing with your hip cocked or standing with your legs crossed.

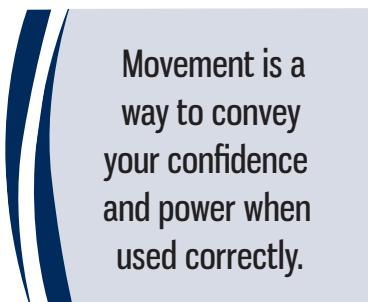
Instead, stand with your feet slightly apart and your weight evenly distributed. Be sure not to lock your knees, as this can cut off your blood flow and lead to you feeling light-headed.

Another interesting idea about posture that has become more popular in the last few years is the work of social psychologist Amy Cuddy on what she terms *power poses*. Her work posits that there are certain poses, including what she calls the *superman pose* where you stand tall with your arms straight in front of you, that actually increase your confidence and calm your nerves.⁸ She does not recommend using these poses on stage—it might look strange to your audience if you were to stand with your arms and legs out in an X shape—but instead, stand in a power pose for a minute or two prior to your presentation to help you feel more confident. Her original research found that standing in power poses actually increased levels of testosterone in the body, thus boosting confidence. More recently, additional research has failed to replicate this finding, but even without the hormonal changes, those who use power poses report a positive mental change in their levels of confidence and a reduction in anxiety.⁹ In addition to striking a power pose before you speak, you can apply these concepts to the way you stand on stage. One similarity among the power poses is that the body is standing tall and taking up a large amount of space. By standing tall as you are speaking, keeping your shoulders open and broad, and gesturing widely, you can help increase your physical feelings of confidence.

Movement

Depending on the speaking situation and the physical environment in which you are speaking, movement may be more or less a part of your delivery style. Movement is another way to convey your confidence and power when used correctly. One reason that movement works as a delivery tool is because in many situations,

the people who have the most power or control in a situation are those who are able to move. Think about a traditional classroom. Who is free to get up and move, the instructor or the students? The answer is the instructor. When you are speaking in front of a group, you can use movement to demonstrate your power, to take up



Movement is a way to convey your confidence and power when used correctly.

space in the room, and to add visual interest. Not all movement is positive, however. Many people will pace back and forth, cross and uncross their legs, or sway from side to side when speaking because of nerves. This type of movement is distracting and annoying to the audience. So how can you use movement to your advantage? One strategy is to walk or move as you transition from point to point. When you are making a key point, moving towards the audience can add emphasis. Moving to explain and highlight key features of your visual aids is another way to incorporate movement that is purposeful into your presentation.

Gestures

When you are speaking, you may find that you naturally move your hands without even thinking about it. This is because gestures are a fundamental way that we communicate. Gestures are beneficial in conversation and presentations because they are a visual component and engage the audience with the message both auditorily and visually.¹⁰ In 2015, a behavior consultancy firm, the Science of People, conducted a study to determine what factors of delivery style contributed to a TED Talk going viral. After analyzing the different communication factors used by the speakers, both verbal and nonverbal, the consultants found that talks in which the speakers used more hand gestures were rated more highly by observers and were more likely to have more views. One of the theories for this connection is that use of hand gestures makes a speaker seem more charismatic and engaged. In addition, gestures help us think. In fact, the use of gestures has been shown to improve memory since they serve as a connection between physical movements and words—making recall easier.¹¹

The categories of gestures used in communication include the following:

- **Emblems:** These are gestures that have a specific meaning such as thumbs up for good or thumbs down for bad. It is important to note that emblematic gestures are culturally based, and some gestures have different meanings around the world.

- › **Adaptors:** These are gestures that people use when they feel anxious or uncomfortable such as fiddling with a pencil, rubbing an arm, or tapping a finger.
- › **Descriptors:** These gestures are used to visually convey the words that are being spoken such as indicating the size of something with your hands or holding up fingers to illustrate numbers.
- › **Emphatics:** These are gestures that add emphasis to your message or convey an emotion or mood such as shaking your fist when you are angry or hitting the table to emphasize a point.

Like many of the elements of physical delivery, the effective use of gestures can enhance your presentation by adding visual interest and increasing understanding, but the ineffective use, or lack of use, can harm your overall evaluation by the audience.

One challenge that many people face when standing up to speak or give a presentation is not knowing what to do with their hands, so they clasp them together behind their backs, shove them in their pockets, or hold their arms rigidly by their sides. The downfall to this strategy is that it limits your ability to gesture naturally, and the audience may perceive you as being stiff or robotic. Like we talked about in the above discussion of posture, when you are ready to speak, hold your arms comfortably at your sides so that you are free to move. If you feel uncomfortable or are not sure when to gesture or what types of gestures to use, start with the most basic movements such as pointing to something on your visual aid or using descriptive gestures to illustrate concepts such as size or length.

The opposite of speakers who never gesture are those who gesture too frequently without purpose. Many times out of habit or nerves, a person will make a certain gesture repeatedly such as moving a hand in a circular motion or making a chopping motion with an arm. There is no meaning attached to this gesture, and due to its repetition, it can easily distract your audience. You might



not be aware of using these types of repetitive motions, so a good way to get a handle on these is to either record yourself speaking or ask a friend, coworker, or instructor to give you feedback on how often you use certain movements. When you are speaking, concentrate on only using gestures that have meaning; use a gesture to illustrate a concept in your presentation and try to use emphatic gestures only once per main point so that the gestures will actually provide emphasis.

Another distracting type of gesture is an **adaptor** which is a form of self-soothing. When your body is stressed, which often happens during speaking situations as we discussed in the previous chapter, adaptors are a way for the body to restore equilibrium and calm itself. The problem with using adaptors is that the repetitive movements can be distracting to the audience and can also indicate to the audience that you are nervous or uncomfortable. To help yourself not use adaptors, there are two basic strategies you can employ. If your adaptors include fidgeting with something, such as a twirling a pen or twisting your hair, remove those things from your speaking situation. Don't hold any extra objects in your hand or pull your hair back. If your adaptive gestures involve touching, rubbing, or tapping, you can replace the distracting gesture with a smaller, less distracting movement that still provides a calming effect. For example, if you tend to rub your arms or hug yourself, try standing with just your thumb and pointer finger touching. The sensation of these fingers pushing together can be just as calming as tapping and is not at all noticeable to your audience.¹²

Here are a few tips for using gestures to your advantage:

- Imagine you have drawn a box around your torso from your shoulders to your waist. Make the majority of gestures within this square, as gestures outside of this box are seen as less in control.



- › Gesture with your palms facing upwards, as this is more open and welcoming.
- › Stand with your arms relaxed at your sides so you are free to gesture.
- › Practice using gestures in your presentation. While this might feel artificial at first, the more you practice, the more natural they will start to feel.

Facial Expressions

A fundamental way we communicate our mood and feelings is with our facial expressions. One of the interesting things about facial expressions, as compared to other aspects of communication, is that many expressions are universally understood regardless of culture and language. Charles Darwin was the first to write about this idea, and while there have been later studies that show slight variations among cultures, expressions such as a smile universally communicate happiness, whereas raised eyebrows communicate surprise.¹³

When presenting, there are two key things to remember in terms of your facial expressions. The first is that your facial expression should match the content of your presentation. If you are talking about something sad or tragic like a recent natural disaster, it would be inappropriate to smile broadly. On the other hand, if you are talking about how great and exciting a new product is while frowning, there is going to be a disconnect between your message and the emotion you are conveying. The second thing to consider is that you generally want to have a pleasant and welcoming expression unless you are talking about something negative. Smiling is not only the universal way to communicate happiness, but it also influences audience perceptions of your approachability, attractiveness, and credibility. People routinely evaluate smiling faces as more attractive, and more attractive speakers are seen as more credible and authoritative than less attractive individuals. Additionally, smiling people are viewed as more trustworthy,¹⁴ so it is always helpful to begin and end your presentation with a smile.

Appearance

You may have heard the expressions “you cannot judge a book by its cover” or “it is what is on the inside, not the outside, that counts.” While both of these sayings hold many elements of truth, the reality is that your audience is making judgments about you and your message based on not just your words but also on how you look. Even if audiences should not judge you based on what you are wearing or what you look like, it is very possible they will. You should consider your audience and what impression you would like to make when planning what to wear. Think back to the example of the guest speaker at the beginning of this section. Now imagine that instead of a slightly wrinkled shirt, the speaker is wearing a ripped pair of jeans and a faded sweatshirt. You might be surprised to learn that this is your speaker and not an employee at the workshop venue or an underdressed workshop attendee. Obviously, there is no connection between what the presenter is wearing and his or her qualifications or the quality of the presentation. People, however, make assumptions about someone based on their appearance. Studies have repeatedly shown that professional dress can increase audience perceptions of a speaker’s credibility, expertise, and professionalism.^{15,16} Two studies conducted on student assessments of graduate teaching assistants’ credibility and authority found that the more professional an instructor’s attire, the higher their ratings on course evaluations.¹⁷

So what should you wear for a presentation? The answer is that it depends on who your audience is and on the speaking occasion. A general guideline is to always be dressed as least as nicely and formally as your audience, and dressing slightly more formally can enhance your confidence and make a positive impression. If you are making a formal sales presentation at work, professional clothing such as a shirt and tie or dress pants and a blouse would be appropriate. You also need to consider your company or the company you are presenting to. If there is a more casual atmosphere, business casual may be more appropriate. Regardless of what level of clothing you wear, it is always

important for your clothing to be ironed, clean, and tailored. Also, be sure that your hair is not covering your face so that the audience can easily see your eyes and facial expressions.



Verbal Delivery

This category of delivery components includes things that can be heard and are related to the voice. They are not the actual words that are said but the way they are said. Verbal delivery is especially important to master, as it is a factor in all presentations including those where the audience cannot see you, such as podcasts, phone interviews, and some webinars. Like physical delivery, verbal delivery is something that you can work on and practice to develop your skills. In the following section, we will discuss the different elements of verbal delivery and techniques for using your voice more effectively.

Rate

When you listen to someone speak, they may be talking very quickly, making it difficult to follow and understand them. In other situations, the speaker may be talking so slowly that you find yourself getting impatient as you are waiting to hear the entire message. A speaker's rate is how quickly he or she speaks and is typically measured in words spoken per minute. In the United States, the average person speaks between 110 and 150 words per minute. A 2010 study conducted by researchers at University of Michigan analyzed the speaking rates of telemarketers and found that speakers who spoke at a more moderate rate were more persuasive than those with a faster or slower rate. Speakers with a faster rate were seen as trying to trick the listeners in some

way, and those with a slower rate were perceived as being either less intelligent or condescending to the listener.¹⁸ When people get nervous, they tend to speak more quickly, so you need to slow yourself down if this is your tendency.

Speed vs. Density of Different Languages

Have you ever wondered why some languages sound like they are being spoken far more quickly than others? You might attribute this to the words being unfamiliar to your ear, but there actually is a difference in the speed languages are spoken that is not due to variations in accent or speaking style, but instead is due to the information density of the language. Information density is measured by how much information is contained in an average syllable. In more information dense languages, fewer syllables are needed to convey information. Spanish, which is spoken at a faster rate than English, has a much lower information density; therefore, speakers need more syllables to convey the same amount of information as compared to other languages such as English or German. One of the most information dense languages is Mandarin, whereas the least information dense language is Japanese. Japanese is spoken at a much faster rate than most other languages while Mandarin is spoken at a much slower rate.^{19,20}

Volume

When speaking to a group or making a formal presentation, it is important that you are speaking loudly enough that everyone can hear you but not so loudly that it makes your audience feel as if you are shouting at them. The key to speaking loudly enough for your audience to hear when you are speaking to a larger audience or in a larger space is to project your voice. The human vocal cords work when air flows over them, so in order to speak loudly, you need to have enough air, which requires you to breathe deeply. When you are nervous, you might find yourself breathing more shallowly, so it is important to take deep breaths not only to calm yourself but also so your audience can hear you. In very large rooms you may need to use a microphone to amplify your voice. Another reason to use a microphone is for the

benefit of audience members who are hearing impaired. While you may feel you can speak loudly enough, those with hearing loss may need the extra amplification a microphone supplies.

Pronunciation and Enunciation

Pronunciation is the way a word sounds when it is spoken. In any language, words have a pronunciation that is considered correct, and errors can be embarrassing to the speaker or hurt the quality of the presentation. There are two primary reasons for mispronouncing a word. The first is because the word is unfamiliar to you, or you know the word but do not know how to pronounce it correctly. In this situation, your mispronunciation signifies to the audience a lack of knowledge and credibility. For example, I once had a student give a presentation about unique baby naming trends, and one of the names she talked about was Seamus, which had become very popular among celebrities. This was interesting information, but the problem was that she pronounced the name “see-mus,” the way it looks, but the Irish name is actually pronounced “shay-mus.” This minor error indicated to the audience that she had been reading up on this topic but did not really have a deep level of knowledge about it. If you are preparing for a presentation and come across a word you are not familiar with or are unsure how to pronounce correctly, you should always look it up or ask someone who knows.

Commonly Mispronounced Words in American Language

- | Word | Common Mispronunciation |
|------------|-------------------------|
| ✓ Across | ✓ Acrost |
| ✓ Arctic | ✓ Ark-tic |
| ✓ Espresso | ✓ Expresso |
| ✓ Nuclear | ✓ Nu-cu-lar |
| ✓ Escape | ✓ Excape |
| ✓ Jewelry | ✓ Jewel-er-y |
| ✓ Library | ✓ Li-barry |

The second reason for mispronouncing words is due to having an accent or speaking in a nonnative language. It can be difficult to articulate certain sounds and words because there are some sounds that do not exist in some languages. For example, the “th” sound that is so common in English is not found in German and many Slavic languages, which is why many native German speakers will substitute the “ze” sound for it. In Chinese, short vowel sounds do not exist, so it can be difficult for native Chinese speakers to articulate the words “pick” and “peek” differently. Because we learn to form and articulate sounds at a very young age, it can become almost impossible to learn how to pronounce new vowel and consonant sounds, and our accents are very much a part of ourselves. Even within the United States, there are a variety of regional accents, and someone from the southern part of the country will sound very different than someone raised, for example, in Boston.

While it may be difficult to pronounce certain words if you are not speaking in your native language or you have an accent, enunciation is something that anyone can work on as **enunciation** is saying words clearly. If you speak too quickly or mumble, it can be hard for your audience to distinguish the individual words you are saying. Part of enunciating effectively is speaking at a rate that is slow enough for you to clearly state each syllable and sound. You also need to be sure you are opening your mouth enough so that your tongue and lips can make the necessary movements to create clear sounds. If you have an accent, enunciating your words is a great way to help your audience understand what you are saying. Even if some of the letters’ sounds are slightly different, if they are clearly articulated, audiences will be more likely to comprehend the words.

Pitch and Tone

When thinking about your **pitch** and **tone**, think about the way your voice sounds to the audience. Pitch is where your voice falls on the musical scale. While some voices are naturally higher pitched and some are naturally lower pitched, we can all vary our pitch when speaking, just like we do when we are singing. As we speak, we naturally will raise and lower our pitch based

on what we are saying. When asking a question for example, the voice will naturally rise at the end, whereas if you are making a point or ending a sentence, your pitch tends to lower.

In general, your voice will be within a certain range such as high or low, with females having higher vocal registers than males. One thing to consider is that higher voices are sometimes perceived as being less credible than lower voices, as higher pitched voices can sound younger and less powerful.^{21,22} If you have a high pitched voice, this does not mean that you need to work to change it, but instead, focus your energies on making sure that your voice is full and that you are projecting your voice.

While pitch refers to how high or low the voice is, tone refers to the emotion or mood of the voice. The goal when speaking is for your tone to convey your personal enthusiasm, excitement, interest, or authority on your topic. The opposite of an enthusiastic tone is a bored tone that has little variation—often referred to as monotone. Perhaps one of the most notable examples of a monotone speaker can be found in the 1980s hit movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Whenever Ferris' economics teacher, played by Ben Stein, is on screen, he famously drones on with his monotone flat voice that easily puts his students to sleep. Audiences take their cues from the speaker, so a speaker who sounds bored and dull indicates to the audience that the presentation is boring and dull. On the flip side, if your tone is enthusiastic, audiences will pick up on that enthusiasm. Studies of audiences have found that speakers who use a confident and expressive tone are rated more credible and authoritative by audiences, regardless of the content of the message.^{23,24}

Because your tone has such an impact on audience perceptions, it is important to avoid speaking patterns that detract from your credibility and authority. In the early 1990s, linguists and speech pathologists identified a common speech pattern among primarily young females in which they end their phrases and sentences with a rising intonation, which they dubbed **upspeak** or **uptalk**. This vocal pattern, sometimes referred to as talking like a Valley Girl, is perceived negatively, as it sounds like the speaker is always asking a question and is unable to make a definitive statement. Not only can upspeak be annoying to the audience, but it also can make the speaker seem less intelligent

and capable.²⁵ While this pattern was first unique to young females, more recent studies have found that young men are also starting to speak with this rising intonation, and it is viewed negatively regardless of who is using it.

Another more recent vocal pattern that has emerged as a trend and has actually been labeled as a speech disorder by speech pathologists is **vocal fry**. Made infamous by celebrities such as the Kardashian sisters and actress Zoey Deschanel, vocal fry is the vibratory sound made when a person speaks in a lower register than normal. The voice often sounds creaky or raspy, and this can actually damage the vocal cords because of the strain it places on them. One theory for why some women started using this technique is that it does lower the voice, and as we learned previously, lower voices may make a person sound more credible. In general, vocal fry is perceived negatively except for when females are speaking to other females of the same age. Because of the potential damage to the voice and the likelihood that others will perceive users as more immature or less serious, it should be avoided.^{26, 27}

The following clip of Kim Kardashian demonstrates what vocal fry sounds like. Notice the low tones and sense of vibration in her voice at the ends of her sentences.



<https://cs.pn/2Kaudff>



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Vocal Fillers

Have you ever heard a speaker use a lot of filler words such as “like” or “um”? If you have, you most likely found that the longer you listened, the more focused you became on the filler words rather than what the speaker was saying. **Vocal fillers**, or more formally **vocal nonfluencies**, are words that are inserted into

natural speech that have no meaning. Filler words act as a pause so the speaker can gather his or her thoughts without interrupting the flow of speech. Used occasionally, phrases and words such as “um,” “you know,” or “like” are fine, but using vocal fillers can become habitual, and when used in excess, they become annoying to the listener and can make the speaker seem less intelligent.²⁸

**Using vocal fillers
can become
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to the listener.**

Eliminating vocal fillers from your speech can be difficult as they are used subconsciously, and many do not realize the frequency with which they are using them. The first step is to become aware of how often you include vocal fillers as you speak. The easiest way to do this is to record yourself and listen, or have a friend or acquaintance listen and record how

often you use vocal fillers. Once you are aware of the problem, here are some strategies for reducing your usage of filler words during a presentation:

- ✓ Break your information into main points and subpoints.
- ✓ Know your material.
- ✓ Practice pausing when you are thinking instead of throwing in a filler word.
- ✓ Plan for and practice your transitions so you are not struggling with what to say.
- ✓ Have a friend give you a signal each time you use a vocal filler while you are speaking.

Pauses

In the previous section we learned that vocal fillers are used in place of a pause in speaking. Pauses are important in speaking because they give us time to breathe, indicate that we have reached the end of a sentence or idea, and give the audience time to process what they have heard. Used effectively, a well timed pause can create emphasis and help with the pacing of your speech. Used ineffectively, however, or used because the speaker

has forgotten what to say or cannot gather his or her thoughts, long and frequent pauses can disrupt the flow of the presentation and signify to the audience that the speaker is unprepared or is struggling to present.

Overall Delivery

After reading through the prior sections, it is evident that speech delivery is comprised of multiple components. When these elements are combined, you create an overall impression on the audience. While more intangible and harder to define, the next two elements of presentation delivery, rapport and charisma, are what separates an average speaker from a great speaker.

Rapport

Rapport is the connection that a speaker has with an audience and implies some type of interaction. Even if the audience never speaks, an audience that laughs, sighs, and has an obvious interest in what the speaker is saying is one that is interacting with the speaker. When you have rapport with your audience, they are listening to what you are saying, and they want you to succeed. If you are trying to persuade them of something, you are more likely to be successful. Part of rapport building is based on the information you share, but your delivery style can also influence your connection with the audience. Maintaining eye contact, having an open posture, and smiling at your audience are all ways to bring them into what you are saying. Because rapport is a two-way relationship, you can gauge your level of rapport by noting how the audience is responding to you. If you are smiling and upbeat and your audience members are nodding off, you have not yet managed to establish rapport.

Sometimes, the best way to learn about and understand great speech delivery is to see it in action. As you watch Rebecca Mielwocki speak at the National Education Association Annual Meeting, consider how she presents using a warm, open, and engaging delivery style. What aspects of her style can you emulate when you are speaking?



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Charisma and Energy

If you think about some of the people we have talked about in the chapter as examples of great speakers, one thing they have in common is that they are charismatic. **Charisma** is an energy and magnetism that draws people in. A charismatic speaker is one who not only engages the audience but makes people want to listen. There is not a specific checklist for being charismatic as it is an overall trait, but there are things you can do to increase your charisma. The most important thing you can bring to any speaking situation is energy. If your audience can sense that you are alert and excited to be there and that you are speaking with interest and passion, they are more likely to be engaged in your presentation. Your nonverbals such as posture, tone, and facial expressions are all key ways to express your energy. Some people are naturally more low energy or high energy, so depending on your personal energy level, you may have to work to sound and act more animated while speaking.

An interesting study out of UCLA found that speakers who were rated as being more charismatic tended to vary the pitch of their voice more, going from their lowest to highest registers more frequently.²⁹ Another important component of charisma is appearing comfortable in the speaking situation. Nothing kills your charisma faster than appearing nervous or ill at ease in

your speaking situation. Combining confident, open posture and meaningful eye contact with your audience with some of the public speaking anxiety management strategies is a way to convey your comfort in front of a group.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we examined techniques for delivering a presentation with confidence. Specifically, we explored the physical and verbal components of delivery as well as the overall impression your delivery can make on an audience. While the information you present is critical, it is equally important that you present in a way that demonstrates your confidence and capabilities.

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Chapter

4



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Assessing the Speaking Situation

Objectives

After this chapter you will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the importance of assessing a public speaking situation.
- ✓ Distinguish between demographic, psychographic, and situational audience analysis.
- ✓ Utilize strategies for assessing a speaking situation.
- ✓ Identify ways to adapt your message in different speaking situations.

Featured Example

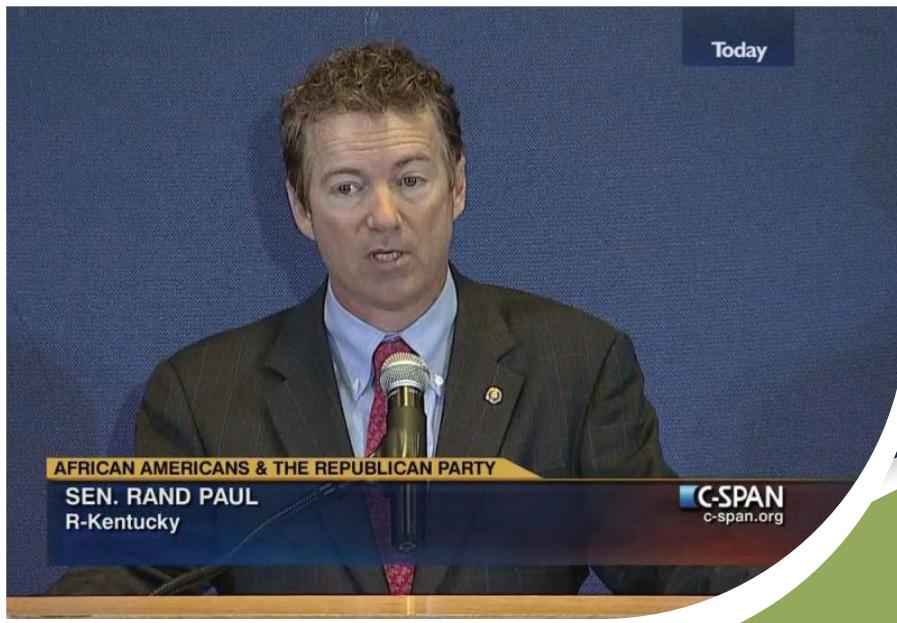
C-SPAN



<https://cs.pn/2Kjgx1u>

Imagine going into a presentation knowing you are going to be speaking to a room filled with people who already disagree with you and the ideas you represent. What concerns would you have? How would you try to appeal to this audience so they will at least listen to your message? This is the situation Republican Senator Rand Paul found himself in when he went to speak to students at Howard University, a historically black university. Watch to see how Paul tried to relate to his audience and how the audience responded to him. Specifically consider the following questions:

- › How did Paul's presentation show a lack of audience analysis?
- › How could Paul have better prepared for his presentation?
- › What impact did Paul's lack of analysis have on his audience?



Introduction

In any speaking situation, you will likely have a variety of goals. You might want to persuade your audience to make a lifestyle change, or your goal might be to let people know about a new volunteer opportunity within your organization. Another time you may be trying to get your audience to understand how a new technology works. Regardless of the situation, one goal you will always have is to present your information and share your story in a way that resonates and connects with your audience.

To reach this goal, you need to be an audience-centric vs. speaker-centric presenter. A speaker-centric presenter is focused on what his or her message is and what he or she wants to convey to the audience. An audience-centric presenter is also concerned with his or her message but is primarily concerned with how the audience will receive that message. An audience-centric speaker adapts the message in order to give the presentation its best chance to be successful. Being audience-centric does not mean that you pander to the audience or only tell them what they want to hear; instead, it means that you consider how your message may be received and choose a way to deliver the message that your audience will hear and understand.

If you want to be an audience-centric speaker, there are four basic questions you need to ask yourself before going into a speaking situation:

- ↘ Who is my audience?
- ↘ What is my audience like?
- ↘ Where am I presenting?
- ↘ Why am I presenting?

By answering these questions, you can get a better handle on the speaking situation and adapt your message and your presentation accordingly.

Who Is My Audience?

One commonality among any type of presentation is that there is an audience. Failing to determine who is going to be listening to you speak can have negative ramifications. Let's say, for example, that you work for your city's public health department, and you are asked to come to a local high school to talk about food preparation. As you are preparing for your presentation, your supervisor asks who you are speaking to, and you realize you are not sure. Are you speaking to cafeteria workers, teachers and staff, students, or some combination of these groups? Without knowing the answer to this basic question, it will be difficult to prepare a presentation that fits the needs of the audience.

Whenever you are going into a speaking situation, you always should determine who will be there. Sometimes the answer is obvious. If you are giving a presentation in a class, you know that your instructor and classmates will be the audience. If you call a meeting at work, you know who you have invited to attend. In other situations, though, if you are not sure, you should always ask the person who has asked you to come and present. In the above example, if someone else called the meeting, a quick phone call or email can easily answer the question of who the audience will be.

Another important question to answer is how large your audience will be. By nature, presentational speaking involves a smaller audience than traditional public speaking. At work you may give a presentation to a small team of 4–5 coworkers, or you may present to a larger group, such as your entire department



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