



Public Speaking ([Aminotes.com](https://aminotes.com))

Public speaking is one of the most feared things for many people – in fact, some public surveys show fear of public speaking as higher than fear of death. It boggles my mind that people are more afraid often minutes in front of a group of people than they are of the great unknown! But, then I'm a little weird in that I actually enjoy public speaking and being in front of an audience. It probably has to do with my love of theater and performance that makes me not afraid of being in front of an audience. Despite my lack of fear about public speaking situations, I have never been able to conquer the nerves and anxiety that come with almost any speech situation that I've been faced with. Communication instructors aren't here to make you excellent public speakers. Instructors try to take you from where you are and give you some skills to become a better public speaker – and hopefully eliminate some of the anxiety you may have about public speaking. It is my personal philosophy that anybody can give a speech if they know some basic techniques so let's get started on the components of a speech which will make you a successful public speaker.

4 P's of Public Speaking (Prepare, Practice, Present, Process)

1. Prepare/Planning

You must prepare for any spoken encounter, even if you only have seconds to do so. In the case of a "prepared speech," you are expected to think it through before you speak. The audience has a purpose for being there, and it is incumbent upon you to know the subject matter and be able to present it in an easy-to-follow manner.

There is an art to speaking to every single person in the audience. No matter how many people are in the room, your job is to make every one of them feel like the most important person there. You can do that by preparing your presentation as if it were a conversation with one other person.

Finally, visual aids can enrich your talk, or they can wreck it. If you are planning to use any, it's important to be very familiar with them, whether they include equipment, charts, handouts, or a blackboard. Do not leave your visual aids to chance.

2. Practice



There is no acceptable reason for not practicing, but there are consequences when you don't do it. For one thing, lack of practice shows. For another, it undermines your credibility as an expert. In addition, lack of practice reveals character flaws and sloppy work habits; it fails to meet the needs of your audience; and it casts doubt on how well you know your subject.

The first time you give a presentation in public should never be the first time. Go over the actual sequence again and again. Listen to yourself on a tape recorder. You may be shocked to hear how you sound to others. Pace your words so that you are not speaking too fast or too slowly. Breathe deeply, which will relax you and deepen the tonal quality of your voice. Use gestures and movements to add emphasis to the points you want people to remember.

If you can, videotape yourself or practice in front of people. Then, hard as this may be, ask for feedback.

3. Present/Performance

The heart of the matter, of course, is what you say and how you say it. Think of your talk as a package. Content is what is inside. It is your message, and it must be substantive and accurate. Delivery and appearance are the packaging. No one will bother with what you say if the way you say it or the way you look turns people off. Your posture makes an instant impression and influences your audience's perceptions throughout your presentation.

Before you begin your presentation, take a few moments to center yourself. Every person's centering technique is unique. If you don't already have one, take time to discover this valuable resource in yourself. You'll probably find many, many other times to use it besides public speaking. If you have done steps one and two, your presentation should be a piece of cake. The only element you can't control is your audience, but you can manage it.

Of course, you hope your audience is interested and attentive; but if you are plagued with challengers or talkers, there are diplomatic though firm ways to handle them. When



someone wants to tell you and everyone else everything he or she knows, treat that person with firmness, care, respect, and acceptance. Annoying as problem people can be, when you find yourself confronting one, don't lose sight of that person's feelings and your own need to deal with them in a constructive manner.

4. Process

Process doesn't mean how you perform, but rather how well you analyze your performance after the fact. Think of processing as the way you close the loop on your talk by helping you assess whether or not you met your own goals, revealing how you came across to others, and creating a roadmap for improvement.

After each presentation, it's important for you to evaluate your performance so that you can learn from it. Processing has two steps: self-evaluation and feedback. If you do receive evaluation forms, don't look at them until you have asked yourself these questions: What did I do today in my presentation that worked? ... What did I do today in my presentation that did not work? ... If I were to do the same presentation tomorrow, what would I change?

Successful presentations don't just happen. They are not the result of luck or innate talent. Presentation skills are learned and earned by those who prepare, practice, present, and process effectively.



Four Types of Speech Delivery

There are four types of speeches that most speakers utilize in delivering a speech.

1. **Extemporaneous speeches** are speeches that are carefully prepared and practiced by the speaker before the actual speaking time. A speaker will utilize notes or an outline as a guide while they are delivering the speech. The notes or outline will usually include any quotes and sources the speaker wants to cite in the presentation, as well as the order the information in the speech should be delivered in. The speech is delivered as if the speaker is having a conversation with the audience. Since the speaker is not reading the entire speech, the extemporaneous speaker uses the notes as a guide only – a sort of memory trigger – and the speaker will also be able to respond to the audience since her head isn't trapped by reading every word on a paper. This is the type of public speaking you should strive to use in Fundamentals of Oral Communication for your informative and persuasive speeches as this is most practical type of public speaking – the type you are most likely use in a real life situation when you might be asked to give a formal presentation. It used to be a pretty standard technique of putting your notes or outline on notecards – those 3" by 5" recipe cards. The idea was that the palm of your hand can hold 3 by 5 inch cards and they won't be distracting to an audience – in fact, if you hold them just right, an audience almost can't see what is in your hand. Since the cards are relatively small, you would need several note cards for a ten minute speech (probably around five at least). I tend to have a Murphy's Law sort of experience is I speak off of note cards – they can be in the right order when I'm at my seat but by the time I get to the podium to speak one will be in the wrong order or worse yet, it will be gone entirely – zapped into the ozone! With the advent of computers, I find it is easier for me to use a single sheet of computer paper with an outline or list of notes to speak off of. I recommend that students use what they are comfortable with to speak off of. So, for this course, use either note cards or a single sheet of computer paper for your presentations.

2. **Impromptu speeches** are speeches that are delivered without notes or a plan, and without any formal preparation – they are very spontaneously delivered. This is one of the most nerve wracking situations for most students to find themselves in because there isn't a plan or agenda to follow – they just have to get up and speak without any "thinking" time. They are afraid of not knowing what to say when they get up in front of the audience so they might make a fool of themselves. If this type of speaking situation makes you nervous, you are not alone! The reality is that this is the type of public speaking you are the MOST prepared for. Your daily life is filled with impromptu experiences and conversations. Every phone conversation, exchange between you and



a loved one, and discussion amongst friends is impromptu by its very nature – even if we “practice” our conversations, they are still impromptu in their delivery. So, while most students are nervous about impromptu speeches, they are the type they are the most prepared for from their daily experience.

3. **Manuscript speeches** are speeches that are delivered with a script of the exact words to be used. If they have to give a speech, most students prefer to have every single word in front of them so they can basically “read” the speech to the audience. While this is very reassuring for a speaker and they feel like they won’t “forget” anything if they have every word in front of them, manuscript speaking is one of the worst traps to fall into for a speaker. The speaker who utilizes a complete manuscript will often spend more time looking at the script than at the audience. By doing this, the speaker is unable to react to the audience or respond to the audience members questions. Therefore, the manuscript becomes a trap for the speaker.

4. **Memorized speeches** are speeches that are committed to memory. The speaker completely memorizes the text of a speech and then delivers the speech from memory without reliance on notes or an outline. This is a very fearful speaking situation for most people because they fear they will forget what they had planned on saying when they get in front of the group – and, they might make a fool of themselves in front of the audience if they forget what to say. This type of speaking is not very common to daily living unless you are in a profession like acting. Most of us memorize very little in our daily lives – we don’t even have to remember telephone numbers since we have cellular phones! I don’t require memorized speeches for Fundamentals of Oral Communication because I think they lead to bad experiences for some students and they are not something most people have to do in the course of their daily living. Unfortunately, public speaking tends to get a bad rap because some junior high and high school teachers require students to memorize speeches which can lead to some bad experiences in front of an audience for a student.

Vocal Aspects of Speech Delivery

There are **six aspects** of vocal delivery a speaker utilizes that influence an audience’s interpretation of the speaker’s message.

1. **Pitch** is the highness or lowness of a speaker’s voice. It is the natural upward and downward movement that happens when we speak – the melody. Pitch is a learned activity. When you were born, you didn’t have pitch but you learned it from the significant people in your life. When your mom or dad talked “baby talk” to you – all that



“ga, ga, goo, goo” stuff – they spoke using a variety of pitches. Your parent used quiet soft tones to bring about a soothing, calm response from you or happy, lively tones to bring about a smile or coo from you. As a baby you learned to mimic the melodies you heard from your parents. This is why family members often sound alike in their speech tones and patterns – children mimic those that they are around the most. For instance, if you heard my mom, and then myself on the phone, we sound exactly alike! If you were born without the ability to hear, you couldn’t learn pitch which is why a deaf person who has learned to speak tends to sound monotone – they can’t mimic because they can’t hear. When it comes to public speaking, don’t try to fight your natural pitch by sounding more “professional” or more “in charge.” Let your natural melody flow as you deliver a presentation.

2. **Rate** is how fast or slow you speak when delivering a speech. A common problem of nervous public speakers is speaking too quickly or feeling like you are rushing through a speech which can lead to a cotton mouth feeling. To counteract rushing the presentation, have a bottle of water on hand and take a drink when you feel like you are rushing – this should slow you down. Likewise, concentrating too much on slowing down can cause you to drag your presentation. Try to speak at a natural rate when you are delivering your presentation.

3. **Pauses** are intended silences during a speech. In conversation, we naturally pause at the end of sentences and at the end of a thought. We should keep up the same pausing pattern in our public speaking that we use in our natural conversation. We can also use pauses to control an audience that might not be paying attention to the presentation. By taking a little bit longer pause than normal, an audience member will notice the silence and usually stop chatting, whispering, or being disrespectful.

4. **Volume** is the relative loudness of your voice as you deliver a presentation. It shouldn’t come as much of a surprise that you need to match your volume to the size of the room you are speaking in. You should also pay attention to your audience – audience members are great about telling you when they can’t hear. They will tend to lean forward or look around confused if you are too quiet. They may even make verbal comments like “What did she say?” or “Can you hear him?” When you see or hear this happening in your audience, speak louder.

5. **Enunciation** is the pronunciation and articulation of words in your speech. Each word is composed of syllables which are the little parts of each word that combine together to make a particular sound. The word “sugar” is composed of two syllables – “Shu” and “gar.” When we don’t pronounce each syllable in a word, we sound mush-mouthed and



don't sound clear to an audience. As you give a presentation, concentrate on speaking very clearly and using your entire mouth to form each word. Most of us in our daily conversation are pretty sloppy in our talk – we rarely use our entire mouth to converse. In public speaking it is essential to use your entire mouth, speaking extremely clearly while making sure you say each syllable.

6. **Fluency** is the smoothness of your vocal delivery. Fluency is the flow of your words in the delivery of your speech. You should strive for a smooth delivery in your presentation but if your tongue gets tripped up, don't panic. Everyone gets tripped up at one point or another – even professional actors. That's why there are out-takes on movies! We all stumble over unfamiliar or new words or even old words we've said a thousand times. The trick is to not make a big deal out of the flub when it happens. Just maintain your professional tone and keep going. The biggest way to prevent stumbling over your words is to practice, practice, practice your presentation so your words are as natural sounding to you as possible.

Visual Aspects of Speech Delivery

There are **four aspects** of a speaker's body which impact an audience's interpretation of the speaker's message.

1. **Gestures** are movements of the speaker's head, arms, and hands. When you watch a great public speaker, you will notice that their entire body is into the presentation. They use their entire body to deliver the message – their arms gesture, their fingers point or accent important words, and their head even nods when they are talking about something important. Most people think of a podium as wonderful piece of furniture to have on hand when they give a presentation – usually, because it gives the speaker someplace to hide behind! A podium is designed for one thing and one thing only – to hold your notes. It is not meant to support your weight, to be leaned on, or to death grip with your hands. If you hang onto a podium or death grip it out of fear, you will not be able to gesture and you will simply be a talking head. Most of us gesture naturally in our daily conversation. Many of us are accused of talking with our hands. In fact, if you are asked to sit on your hands and have a conversation with someone, you will probably compensate for the lack of arm/hand gestures by nodding your head or shrugging your shoulders more than normal! If you have a podium to speak at, set your notes on the podium and take one step back from it so you can't hang onto it. This will help you to gesture naturally and you won't hang onto the podium. If you hold your notes in your hand, avoid gesturing with the notes because your audience will logically follow the notes if you wave them around.



2. **Facial expressions** are movements of the eyes, mouth, chin, etc. The best piece of advice about facial expressions is to make them match your subject. If your speaking about a serious subject, use a serious facial expression but if you are speaking about something funny, go ahead and smile or even laugh. You can ruin a serious presentation by laughing during it and you can ruin a light hearted speech by never cracking a smile. This is a good time to mention humor. Most of us love a good joke but few of us are genuinely funny by nature – just think about how few really great comedians there are in the world. You can certainly use humor in a presentation but if you are not naturally a funny person, don't go there because the audience will know if you are faking it. Likewise, if you are going to use humor, the humor should match the subject you are talking about. In other words, if you are going to use "Why did the chicken cross the road?" you better be speaking about chickens, roads, or what's on the other side of the road for the rest of the speech. The worst thing you can do is to deliver a joke at the beginning of a speech which doesn't match the content of your speech because it sets the audience up with an expectation about your presentation which you can't then fulfill. It is never a good idea to deceive an audience because you ruin the trust between a speaker and the audience.

3. **Eye contact** is sustained, meaningful contact with the eyes of audience members. This is the top reason most people hate public speaking – the thought of people looking at you and all the eyes on you is probably the most difficult part of public speaking. There are a whole lot of ways that people will tell you to get around the eye contact issue. Some of the most common myths about eye contact include: Look only at the back wall in the room, never at the people in the audience. The trouble with this approach is that you completely ignore the audience which makes audience members feel unconnected to the speaker. Pick three spots and only look at those three spots in the room. The trouble with this approach is that this takes a whole lot of work – you have to remember where your three spots are and where to look next. The audience will feel like you are watching a tennis match instead of looking like at them. Look only at the audience member's foreheads – not at their eyes. Have you ever tried to focus on someone's forehead? Unless there is some sort of strange growth on a forehead, we don't focus on this area of a person's head – we look in them in the eye. Look only at the audience member's chest – not at their eyes.

4. **Movement** is where the speaker's entire body moves. If you can avoid it, don't let yourself be trapped behind a podium or in one area. When you watch a really great speaker, you'll see that they are almost never trapped behind something. They move around the room as they talk and that may mean they are down the aisle or all across



the front of the room. The biggest place you can see this happen is by attending a newly constructed church. Most new churches are constructed to allow for personal interaction between a minister and the congregation which is different than most old churches where the minister or priest is isolated in a pulpit that is probably higher than everyone else in the room (giving the minister/priest the appearance of being closer to God than the congregation).

Organizing the Body

There are several ways to organize the main points of a presentation. You may choose any of these options or combine the options for a unique presentation. It is a good idea to choose an organizational pattern that makes sense for your speech topic.

Chronological Organization: This would be where the main points of the body are placed in order according to a timeline or sequence. This is a good choice for a speech that might be over a person's life, a famous event, or even a "how to" speech. Our sample speech body on the legislative process is in chronological order.

Body:

I. Drafting the bill

- A. sub point
- B. sub point
 - 1. evidence
 - 2. Evidence

II. Committee hearings

- A. sub point
 - 1. evidence
- B. sub point
- C. sub point

III. Floor debate on the bill

- A. sub point
- B. sub point



C. sub point

Spatial Organization: This is where the main points of the body are placed in the order you might see them on a map or in relationship to one another. This is good choice for a speech that might heavily involve using a map or diagram as a visual aid. For instance, I might chose this if my main points were showing where each of the concentration camps in WWII were located or if I wanted to show the path that blood travels through the body. A sample body for a spatially organized speech on weather patterns in the United States might look like:

Body:

- I. Weather on the west coast
- II. Weather on the east coast
- III. Weather in the south
- IV. Weather in the north
- V. Weather in the mid-west