

3 Listening



Listening Is Important

Listening and Critical Thinking

Four Causes of Poor Listening

Not Concentrating

Listening Too Hard

Jumping to Conclusions

Focusing on Delivery and Personal Appearance

How to Become a Better Listener

Take Listening Seriously

Be an Active Listener

Resist Distractions

Don't Be Diverted by Appearance or Delivery

Suspend Judgment

Focus Your Listening

Develop Note-Taking Skills



of critical thinking—separating fact from opinion, spotting weaknesses in reasoning, judging the soundness of evidence—are especially important in critical listening. When you engage in comprehensive listening or critical listening, you must use your mind as well as your ears. When your mind is not actively involved, you may be hearing, but you are not *listening*. In fact, listening and critical thinking are so closely allied that training in listening is also training in how to think.⁹

At the end of this chapter, we'll discuss steps you can take to improve your skills in comprehensive and critical listening. If you follow these steps, you may also become a better critical thinker.

Four Causes of Poor Listening

NOT CONCENTRATING

spare "brain time"

The difference between the rate at which most people talk (120 to 150 words a minute) and the rate at which the brain can process language (400 to 800 words a minute).

The brain is incredibly efficient. Although we talk at a rate of 120 to 150 words a minute, the brain can process 400 to 800 words a minute.¹⁰ This would seem to make listening very easy, but actually it has the opposite effect. Because we can process a speaker's words and still have plenty of spare "brain time," we are tempted to interrupt our listening by thinking about other things. Here's what happens:

Elena Kim works in the public communications department of a large financial services company. She attends regular staff meetings with the communications director. The meetings provide necessary information, but sometimes they seem to go on forever.

This morning the director is talking about tax-exempt college savings accounts and how to publicize them more effectively. "We've succeeded in reaching parents, so our next target market is grandparents who want to put away money for their grandchildren's education...."

"Grandparents," Elena thinks. "It was always great to see my grandparents when I was growing up. When I spoke to them over the weekend, Grandma didn't sound very good. I have to call them more often...."

Elena snaps herself back to the meeting. The director is talking about the company's new executive vice president, who has just moved to headquarters from a regional firm in Florida. "Mr. Fernandez has never worked in a company this size, but his experience in Florida..."

"Florida," Elena dreams. "Sun, endless beaches, and the club scene in South Beach. Maybe I can snatch a few days' vacation in January...."

Sternly, Elena pulls her attention back to the meeting. The communications director is now discussing the company's latest plan for public-service announcements. Elena is not involved in the plan, and her attention wanders once more.

That morning she had another argument with her roommate about cleaning the kitchen and taking out the garbage. Maybe it's time to decide if she can afford to live without a roommate. It sure would make for fewer hassles.

". . . an area Elena has researched extensively," the director is saying. Uh oh! What area does the director mean? Everyone looks at Elena, as she frantically tries to recall the last words said at the meeting.

It's not that Elena *meant* to lose track of the discussion. But there comes a point at which it's so easy to let your thoughts wander rather than to concentrate on what is being said. After all, concentrating is hard work. Louis Nizer, the famous trial lawyer, says, "So complete is this concentration that at the end

This is a typical example of losing the speaker's point by concentrating on details. Erik had fixed his mind on remembering all the statistics in Simone's presentation, but he blocked out the main message—that it is best to start saving now and that he would get help developing an individual plan.

Rather than trying to remember everything a speaker says, efficient listeners usually concentrate on main ideas and evidence. We'll discuss these things more thoroughly later in the chapter.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Renee Collins, a recent college graduate, took a job as an editorial assistant in the research department of a regional magazine. Shortly after Renee arrived, the editor in charge of the research department left the magazine for another job. For the next two months, Renee struggled to handle the work of the research department by herself. She often felt in over her head, but she knew this was a good opportunity to learn, and she hated to give up her new responsibilities.

One day Duane Perkins, the editor in chief of the magazine, comes into Renee's office to talk. The following conversation takes place:

- Duane: You've done a great job these last two months, Renee. But you know we really need a new editor. So we've decided to make some changes.
- Renee: I'm not surprised. I know I've made my share of mistakes.
- Duane: Everyone makes mistakes when they're starting out. And you've been carrying a lot of responsibility. Too much. That's why . . .
- Renee: That's okay. I'm grateful to have had a chance to try my hand at this. I know I'm inexperienced, and this is an important department.
- Duane: Yes, it is. And it's not an easy job. We really need an editor and an assistant to handle all the work. That's why I wanted to tell you . . .
- Renee: You're right, of course. I hope you've found somebody good to be the new editor.
- Duane: I think so. But, Renee, I don't think you understand . . .
- Renee: No, I understand. I knew all along that I was just filling in.
- Duane: Renee, you're not listening.
- Renee: Yes, I am. You're trying to be nice, but you're here to tell me that you've hired a new editor and I'll be going back to my old job.
- Duane: No, that's not it at all. I think you've done a fine job under difficult circumstances. You've proved yourself, and I intend to make you the editor. But I think you'll need an assistant to help you.

Why is there so much confusion here? Clearly, Renee is unsure about her future at the magazine. So when Duane starts to talk about making some changes, Renee jumps to a conclusion and assumes the worst. The misunderstanding could have been avoided if, when Duane had said, "We've decided to make some changes," Renee had asked, "What changes?"—and then *listened*.

This is one form of jumping to conclusions—putting words into a speaker's mouth. It is one reason why we sometimes communicate so poorly with people we are closest to. Because we're so sure we know what they mean, we don't listen to what they actually say.

Another way of jumping to conclusions is prematurely rejecting a speaker's ideas as boring or misguided. We may decide early on that a speaker has nothing valuable to say. Suppose you think fraternities and sororities are a valuable addition to a college's social and civic life, but a speaker's announced topic is "The Greek System: An Institution Whose Time Is Past?" You may decide in advance not to listen to the speaker. That would be a mistake. You might pick up information that could strengthen or modify your thinking. In another situation, you might jump to the conclusion that a topic is boring. Let's say the announced topic is "Architecture and History." It sounds dull. So you tune out—and miss a fascinating discussion filled with human-interest stories about buildings and other structures from the ancient pyramids to the latest skyscrapers.

Nearly every speech has something to offer you—whether it be information, point of view, or technique. You are cheating yourself if you prejudge and choose not to listen.

FOCUSING ON DELIVERY AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Avid readers of American history, Greg and Marissa were thrilled when they saw a poster at their local bookstore advertising a lecture by the author of a new book on the Battle of Gettysburg. The book had received good reviews, and Greg and Marissa made plans to attend the lecture.

Arriving at the bookstore, they took their seats and listened while the speaker discussed his research and major findings. "That was great," Marissa exclaimed when they got back to the car. But Greg was scowling. "What's wrong?" Marissa asked.

"I know you're going to think this is stupid," Greg began. "The guy was a decent speaker, and he seemed to know his stuff. But did you see the sport coat he was wearing? It's so retro—and his tie was atrocious. No matter how I tried, I couldn't stop thinking I was watching someone from *That 70s Show*."

This story illustrates a common problem. Sometimes we judge people by the way they look or speak and don't listen to what they say. It's easy to become distracted by a speaker's accent, personal appearance, or vocal mannerisms and lose sight of the message. Focusing on a speaker's delivery or personal appearance is one of the major sources of interference in the speech communication process, and it is something we always need to guard against.

How to Become a Better Listener

TAKE LISTENING SERIOUSLY

The first step toward becoming a better listener is to accord listening the seriousness it deserves. Good listeners are not born that way. They have worked at learning how to listen effectively. Good listening does not go hand in hand with intelligence, education, or social standing. Like any other skill, it comes from practice and self-discipline. Check your current skills as a listener by completing the Listening Self-Evaluation Worksheet on page 54 (Figure 3.1).¹² Once you have identified your shortcomings as a listener, make a serious effort to overcome them.

How to Become a Better Listener

88

99

LISTENING SELF-EVALUATION

How often do you indulge in the following 10 bad listening habits? Check yourself carefully in each one.

HABIT	FREQUENCY				SCORE
	Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	
1. Giving in to mental distractions	—	—	—	—	—
2. Giving in to physical distractions	—	—	—	—	—
3. Trying to recall everything a speaker says	—	—	—	—	—
4. Rejecting a topic as uninteresting before hearing the speaker	—	—	—	—	—
5. Faking paying attention	—	—	—	—	—
6. Jumping to conclusions about a speaker's meaning	—	—	—	—	—
7. Deciding a speaker is wrong before hearing everything she or he has to say	—	—	—	—	—
8. Judging a speaker on personal appearance	—	—	—	—	—
9. Not paying attention to a speaker's evidence	—	—	—	—	—
10. Focusing on delivery rather than on what the speaker says	—	—	—	—	—
					TOTAL _____

How to score:

- For every "almost always" checked, give yourself a score of 2
- For every "usually" checked, give yourself a score of 4
- For every "sometimes" checked, give yourself a score of 6
- For every "seldom" checked, give yourself a score of 8
- For every "almost never" checked, give yourself a score of 10

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|--|
| Total score Interpretation: | Below 70 | You need lots of training in listening |
| | From 71-90 | You listen well. |
| | Above 90 | You listen exceptionally well. |

• FIGURE 3.1



Effective listeners take their task seriously. If you approach listening as an active process, you will significantly sharpen your powers of concentration and comprehension.

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER

So many aspects of modern life encourage us to listen passively. We listen to our iPods while studying. Parents listen to their children while fixing dinner. Television reporters listen to a politician's speech while walking around the auditorium looking for their next interview.

This type of passive listening is a habit—but so is active listening. Active listeners give their undivided attention to the speaker in a genuine effort to understand his or her point of view. In conversation, they do not interrupt the speaker or finish his or her sentences. When listening to a speech, they do not allow themselves to be distracted by internal or external interference, and they do not prejudge the speaker. They take listening seriously and do the best they can to stay focused on the speaker and his or her message.

There are a number of steps you can take to improve your skills of active listening. They include resisting distractions, not allowing yourself to be diverted by a speaker's appearance or delivery, suspending judgment until you have heard the speaker out, focusing your listening, and developing note-taking skills. We'll discuss each of these in turn.

RESIST DISTRACTIONS

In an ideal world, we could eliminate all physical and mental distractions. In the real world, however, we cannot. Because we think so much faster than a speaker can talk, it's easy to let our attention wander. Sometimes it's very easy—when the room is too hot, when construction machinery is operating right outside the window, when the speaker is tedious. But our attention can stray even in the best of circumstances—if for no other reason than a failure to stay alert and make ourselves concentrate.

Whenever you find this happening, make a conscious effort to pull your mind back to what the speaker is saying. Then force it to stay there. One way to do this is to think ahead of the speaker—try to anticipate what will come next. This is not the same as jumping to conclusions. When you jump to conclusions, you put words into the speaker's mouth and don't listen to what is said. In this case you *will* listen—and measure what the speaker says against what you had anticipated.

active listening

Giving undivided attention to a speaker in a genuine effort to understand the speaker's point of view.



connectlucas.com
The Listening Self Evaluation Worksheet is available in the online SpeechTools for this chapter.

Another way to keep your mind on a speech is to review mentally what the speaker has already said and make sure you understand it. Yet another is to listen between the lines and assess what a speaker implies verbally or says nonverbally with body language. Suppose a speaker is introducing someone to an audience. The speaker says, "It gives me great pleasure to present to you my very dear friend, Nadine Zussman." But the speaker doesn't shake hands with Nadine. He doesn't even look at her—just turns his back and leaves the podium. Is Nadine really his "very dear friend"? Certainly not.

Attentive listeners can pick up all kinds of clues to a speaker's real message. At first you may find it difficult to listen so intently. If you work at it, however, your concentration is bound to improve.

DON'T BE DIVERTED BY APPEARANCE OR DELIVERY

If you had attended Abraham Lincoln's momentous Cooper Union speech of 1860, this is what you would have seen:

The long, ungainly figure upon which hung clothes that, while new for this trip, were evidently the work of an unskilled tailor; the large feet and clumsy hands, of which, at the outset, at least, the orator seemed to be unduly conscious; the long, gaunt head, capped by a shock of hair that seemed not to have been thoroughly brushed out, made a picture which did not fit in with New York's conception of a finished statesman.¹³

But although he seemed awkward and uncultivated, Lincoln had a powerful message about the moral evils of slavery. Fortunately, the audience at Cooper Union did not let his appearance stand in the way of his words.

Similarly, you must be willing to set aside preconceived judgments based on a person's looks or manner of speech. Gandhi was an unimpressive-looking man who often spoke dressed in a simple white cotton cloth. Renowned physicist Stephen Hawking is severely disabled and can speak only with the aid of a voice synthesizer. Yet imagine how much poorer the world would be if no one listened to them. Even though it may tax your tolerance, patience, and concentration, don't let negative feelings about a speaker's appearance or delivery keep you from listening to the message.

On the other hand, try not to be misled if the speaker has an unusually attractive appearance. It's all too easy to assume that because someone is good-looking and has a polished delivery, he or she is speaking eloquently. Some of the most unscrupulous speakers in history have been handsome people with hypnotic delivery skills. Again, be sure you respond to the message, not to the package it comes in.

SUSPEND JUDGMENT

Unless we listen only to people who think exactly as we do, we are going to hear things with which we disagree. When this happens, our natural inclination is to argue mentally with the speaker or to dismiss everything she or he says. But neither response is fair, and in both cases we blot out any chance of learning or being persuaded.

Does this mean you must agree with everything you hear? Not at all. It means you should hear people out *before* reaching a final judgment. Try to understand their point of view. Listen to their ideas, examine their evidence, assess their reasoning. Then make up your mind. The aim of active listening is to set aside "one's own prejudices, frames of reference and desires so as to experience as far as possible the speaker's world from the inside."¹⁴ It has been said more than once that a closed mind is an empty mind.

Just as there are organizations devoted to public speaking, so there is a major group devoted to the study of listening. It's called the International Listening Association, and you can visit its Web site at www.listen.org.

Do you wish you could listen to the words of historical figures such as Amelia Earhart, Winston Churchill, Mohandas Gandhi, and Malcolm X? You can by logging on to The History Channel at www.history.com/media.do and clicking on the Great Speeches tab.



Internet Connection

www.connectlucas.com

FOCUS YOUR LISTENING

As we have seen, skilled listeners do not try to absorb a speaker's every word. Rather, they focus on specific things in a speech. Here are three suggestions to help you focus your listening.

Listen for Main Points

Most speeches contain from two to four main points. Here, for example, are the main points of a recent speech on controlling the cost of health care delivered by pharmaceuticals executive Robert Ingram:¹⁵

1. The first priority in reducing the cost of health care is preventing disease.
2. The second priority is providing accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.
3. The third priority is being innovative in tackling health problems.

These three main points are the heart of Ingram's message. As with any speech, they are the most important things to listen for.

Unless a speaker is terribly scatterbrained, you should be able to detect his or her main points with little difficulty. Often a speaker will give some idea at the outset of the main points to be discussed in the speech. For example, at the end of his introduction, Ingram said: "I would submit that the solution comes in the form of three very simple, but very important, basic principles." Noticing this, a sharp listener would have been prepared for a speech with three main points. Ingram also gave a preview statement identifying each of the main points before he started the body of his speech. As the speech progressed, he enumerated each point. After this, only the most inattentive of listeners could have missed his main points.

Listen for Evidence

Identifying a speaker's main points, however, is not enough. You must also listen for supporting evidence. By themselves, Ingram's main points are only assertions. You may be inclined to believe them just because they come from a major business executive. Yet a careful listener will be concerned about evidence no matter who is speaking. Had you been listening to Ingram's speech, you would have heard him support his claims with a mass of verifiable evidence. Here is an excerpt:

Seventy-five percent of the total amount we spend in this country on health care is spent on the 45 percent of our population that have one or more chronic diseases. . . .

We need to look at health care spending holistically, recognizing that the biggest slice of the health care pie goes to hospitals at about 31 percent, followed by doctors and clinics

at 22 percent, while spending on prescription drug therapy, including the pharmacist's dispensing fee, accounts for 11 percent of the overall health care bill, which, by the way, is the same percentage that it has been for over forty years.

Payers who cut Medicare budgets in isolation—even if they cut their pharmacy spending by half—do nothing to lower the over 90 percent of costs that make up the total health care bill.

There are four basic questions to ask about a speaker's evidence:

Is it *accurate*?

Is it taken from *objective sources*?

Is it *relevant* to the speaker's claims?

Is it *sufficient* to support the speaker's point?

In Ingram's case, the answer to each question is yes. His figures about the amount of money spent on health care in the United States and where that money goes are well established in the public record and can be verified by independent sources. The figures are clearly relevant to Ingram's claim that the cost of prescription drugs is only a small part of total spending on health care, and they are sufficient to support that claim. If Ingram's evidence were inaccurate, biased, irrelevant, or insufficient, you should be wary of accepting his claim.

We shall discuss these—and other—tests of evidence in detail in Chapters 7 and 16. For now, it's enough to know that you should be on guard against unfounded assertions and sweeping generalizations. Keep an eye out for the speaker's evidence and for its accuracy, objectivity, relevance, and sufficiency.

Listen for Technique

We said earlier that you should not let a speaker's delivery distract you from the message, and this is true. However, if you want to become an effective speaker, you should study the methods other people use to speak effectively.

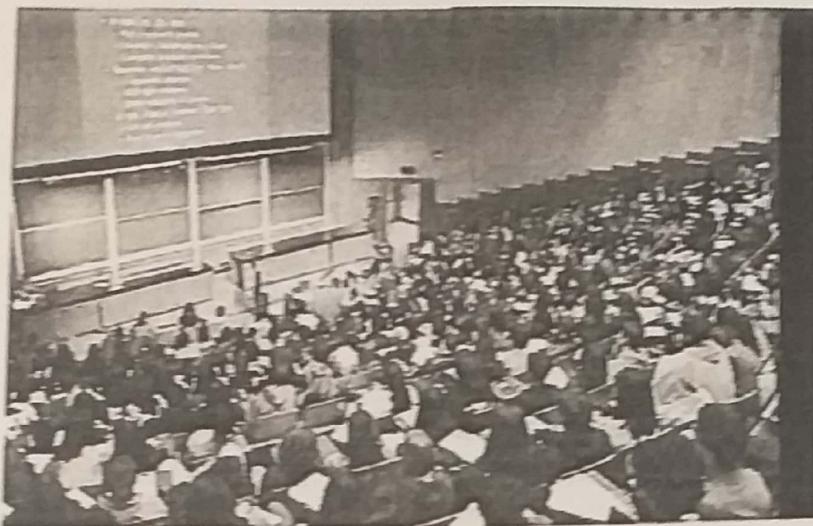
Analyze the introduction: What methods does the speaker use to gain attention, to relate to the audience, to establish credibility and goodwill? Assess the organization of the speech: Is it clear and easy to follow? Can you pick out the speaker's main points? Can you follow when the speaker moves from one point to another?

Study the speaker's language: Is it accurate, clear, vivid, appropriate? Does the speaker adapt well to the audience and occasion? Finally, diagnose the speaker's delivery: Is it fluent, dynamic, convincing? Does it strengthen or weaken the impact of the speaker's ideas? How well does the speaker use eye contact, gestures, and visual aids?

As you listen, focus on the speaker's strengths and weaknesses. If the speaker is not effective, try to determine why. If he or she is effective, try to pick out techniques you can use in your own speeches. If you listen in this way, you will be surprised how much you can learn about successful speaking.

DEVELOP NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Speech students are often amazed at how easily their teacher can pick out a speaker's main points, evidence, and techniques. Of course, the teacher knows what to listen for and has had plenty of practice. But the next time you get an opportunity, watch your teacher during a speech. Chances are she or he will be listening with pen and paper. When note taking is done properly, it is a surefire way to improve your concentration and keep track of a speaker's ideas.



Research confirms that listening carefully and taking effective notes are vital skills for success in college. They will also benefit you in countless situations throughout life.

The key words here are *when done properly*. Unfortunately, many people don't take notes effectively. Some try to write down everything a speaker says. They view note taking as a race, pitting their handwriting agility against the speaker's rate of speech. As the speaker starts to talk, the note taker starts to write. But soon the speaker is winning the race. In a desperate effort to keep up, the note taker slips into a scribbled writing style with incomplete sentences and abbreviated words. Even this is not enough. The speaker pulls so far ahead that the note taker can never catch up.¹⁶

Some people go to the opposite extreme. They arrive armed with pen, notebook, and the best of intentions. They know they can't write down everything, so they wait for the speaker to say something that grabs their attention. Every once in a while the speaker rewards them with a joke, a dramatic story, or a startling fact. Then the note taker seizes pen, jots down a few words, and leans back to await the next fascinating tidbit. By the end of the lecture the note taker has a set of tidbits—and little or no record of the speaker's important ideas.

As these examples illustrate, most inefficient note takers suffer from one or both of two problems: They don't know *what* to listen for, and they don't know *how* to record what they do listen for.¹⁷ The solution to the first problem is to focus on a speaker's main points and evidence. But once you know what to listen for, you still need a sound method of note taking.

Although there are a number of systems, most students find the *key-word outline* best for listening to classroom lectures and formal speeches. As its name suggests, this method briefly notes a speaker's main points and supporting evidence in rough outline form. Suppose a speaker says:

Hospitals in the United States are facing a serious shortage of nurses. According to the American Hospital Association, the nurse shortage nationwide has reached an alarming total of 120,000. The National Association of Nurse Recruiters reports that the average hospital has 47 full-time nursing positions vacant. Hospitals in major cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Miami have had to reduce services because of a lack of nurses.

There are four major causes for this shortage of nurses. One cause is that there are not enough faculty members at nursing schools to train the number of nurses needed by

key-word outline
An outline that briefly notes a speaker's main points and supporting evidence in rough outline form.

KEY TERMS

hearing (48)
listening (48)
appreciative listening (49)
empathic listening (49)
comprehensive listening (49)

critical listening (49)
spare "brain time" (50)
active listening (55)
key-word outline (59)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the difference between hearing and listening?
2. How is listening connected with critical thinking?
3. Why is it important to develop strong listening skills?
4. What are the four main causes of poor listening?
5. What are seven ways to become a better listener?



connectlucas.com
For further review go to the
Study Questions in the online
Study Aids for this chapter.

EXERCISES FOR CRITICAL THINKING

1. Which of the four causes of poor listening do you consider the most important? Choose a specific case of poor listening in which you were involved. Explain what went wrong.
2. Using the Listening Self-Evaluation Worksheet on page 54, undertake a candid evaluation of your major strengths and weaknesses as a listener. Explain what steps you need to take to become a better listener.
3. Watch the lead story this week on *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, or another newsmagazine program. Using the key-word outline method of note taking, record the main ideas of the story.
4. Choose a lecture in one of your other classes. Analyze what the lecturer does most effectively. Identify three things the lecturer could do better to help students keep track of the lecture.

Build trust and establish rapport.



Ask specific questions.

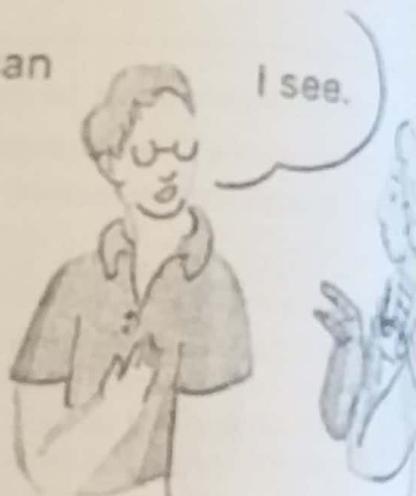


Active Listening Skills

Active listening techniques can help you truly understand what people are saying in conversations and meetings



Use brief verbal affirmations



and coming to agreement. Often the leader will ask for a vote. At brainstorming meetings, the purpose is to think of and share new ideas about a topic or try to solve a problem. These meetings are often informal and participants are expected to be creative.

Usually we think meetings are where people are together discussing things. But we can also describe a training and a team-building as types of meetings. The goal in these kinds of meetings is to improve the work situation. For example, by helping employees use the new software program or by encouraging employees to work together as a team. We also usually think of meetings as a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting room. However, these days there are also meetings where some or all of the participants are in different locations. These kinds of meetings, teleconferences or video conferences can have the same purposes that we've just talked about but they also have their own special guidelines and you'll learn about these guidelines later in the course. To review the general kinds of meeting there are let's look at a few examples and decide what kind of meeting would be appropriate.

You work for a small coffee shop company with a few coffee shops in town. You would like to add some food. You want to get some ideas from your team. That's right, you would want to hold a brainstorming meeting. You've just reorganized the management team in your organization and you want to explain it to your department. That's right. You would want to hold an information meeting. How about this situation? You want to select a new software program for your design team. Because you need to make a decision, this would be a decision-making meeting. Finally, your international sales team needs to have its monthly meeting. Many of the team members are out of the office. Because they are in different places, a teleconference would be the best way to hold the meeting. Now that we know about the different kinds of meetings we can think about what makes a successful meeting. If participants understand what the purpose of a meeting is and what is expected of them then it's more likely to be successful, right?

Essentials of a Successful Meeting

These are the answers of some professionals about one of the meetings they attended:

>> We didn't start for 20 minutes because people were just chatting and then the meeting went on for an extra hour. One of the participants wouldn't shut up. No-one else was able to speak. I didn't really know what we were supposed to be talking about, and at the end I didn't know what we had decided. I felt it was a complete waste of time. I came prepared because I had read the documents that we were supposed to discuss, but it was really clear that a lot of other people at the meeting hadn't read them. Some of them didn't even bring the documents at the meeting. I felt so frustrated.
>> I wanted to contribute because I thought I had a few good ideas, but I didn't feel comfortable giving my opinion, so I just kept quiet. The meeting room was small so we were all sitting really close together. There was also construction work going on outside so it was hard to hear.>>

Were any of those comments familiar? They probably were because those are very typical complaints about meetings. However, if we think about it we can solve most of those problems fairly easily. By following a few basic guidelines, we can make sure most of the meetings we attend are successful. Perhaps the most important guideline is to be prepared. Make sure that there

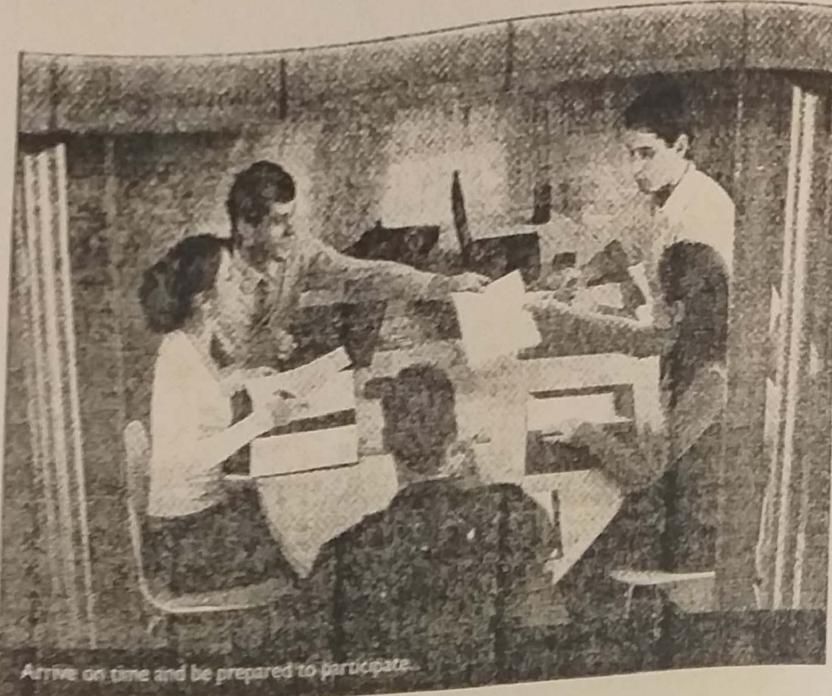
Please let me know when you are available. When is a good time for you? Can you give me sometimes when you are free? >>

Of course, asking for suggestions is more complicated, because all of you need to agree on the best time. It's also a good idea to give people a deadline for letting you know about the date. >> Could you let me know by tomorrow if that doesn't work for you? >> We use, by a time, to say that we want something done before that time. Once the time has been arranged, we need to decide on the location. You'll need to think about how many people will be there and also what equipment will be needed. You should also decide what handouts are necessary.

So now we know the kind of meeting, the time, the location, the attendees, and what equipment is needed. The next step is to prepare the agenda. As we learned in our previous lesson, having an agenda can help a meeting be successful. So let's see how to create one. First, an agenda should include the title of the meeting at the top. This lets people know what kind of meeting it will be. Sometimes, in more formal meetings, you would also include the name of the company. Then, you should write the details of the meeting, the date, time, and location. The people who have been invited to attend the meeting will be listed next as attendees. Below this, in more formal meetings, there might be a space to list anyone who will not be attending the meeting. They will have told the meeting organizer before that they will not be able to attend. This can be listed as excused or apologies.

Next, we list the items to be covered in the meeting. In a more formal decision making meeting, for example a board meeting, the minutes of the previous meeting will often need to be approved and that usually happens at the start of a meeting. However, this is not common in normal business meetings. In regularly scheduled meetings there is often time for people to give updates or make announcements. This is usually listed as reports, or simply, updates. Next, we continue with the main items. Remember, as we learned in the previous lesson, each item should be clear so that the participants will know what they're going to be talking about. Usually the headings for items on the agenda start with nouns like discussion, update or vote. Having a single noun like discussion won't give you much information. You need to add details like, discussion on something, or, vote on something. You can add how much time you think will be needed for each item to help the organizer run the meeting efficiently.

If a particular person will be responsible for talking about an item, you can list his or her name, too. This means the person won't be surprised when he or she is asked to lead the discussion at the actual meeting. Sometimes you can include a question to help focus people's attention on what outcome of the discussion will be. For example, which design do we prefer? Instead of a question, you could use a statement of the outcome of the discussion. For example, decide whether to request an increase in our marketing budget. However, you should be consistent. Either use all questions or all statements if you decide to do this. At the end of a meeting there is often some time for participants to talk about anything that wasn't listed on the agenda at the start. This is often listed as new business. Sometimes instead we can list it as announcements. At the end of the agenda, you can leave space for action items. Remember, these will be things that people will do after the meeting based on what was decided. If you have several items on the agenda to



If you are not familiar with the location of a meeting, get directions beforehand. Find a place where you know you can park for as long as necessary at the time of day of the meeting. Allow yourself extra time that day in case traffic is heavier than you anticipated or you make a wrong turn.

If you must arrive late for a meeting, notify the leader. When you enter, take your seat without interrupting.

Improve Decision Making

When members of a group are reluctant to make a decision, an effective participant tries to determine the source of the reluctance and move the group forward. One way to do that is to ask a probing question such as "Does anyone need more information about the software?"

Sometimes a group gets bogged down in the process of making a decision. People ask for more information or get sidetracked on unimportant issues. When such things happen, try to close the discussion and refocus members on the present task. Be tactful but firm. For example, say something like, "Now that we have all of the information we need about the software, we can proceed to costs" or "Ja'far has brought up some important concerns about productivity. I think we should look at them closely the next time we meet. Today, though, we need to make a decision about costs."

The opposite problem occurs when the group is preparing to make a decision before you believe it is ready. In that case, express your concerns directly or ask questions that will yield information or raise matters you think should be considered. You could say, "I've listened carefully to everything the committee has told us, but I still have some questions. Edith, tell me again why you think the software will help us maintain inventory." Even if the group does not agree with you, your hesitation probably will create more discussion.

One pitfall that groups need to guard against is *groupthink*. A phenomenon identified by psychologist Irving L. Janis, *groupthink* occurs when the

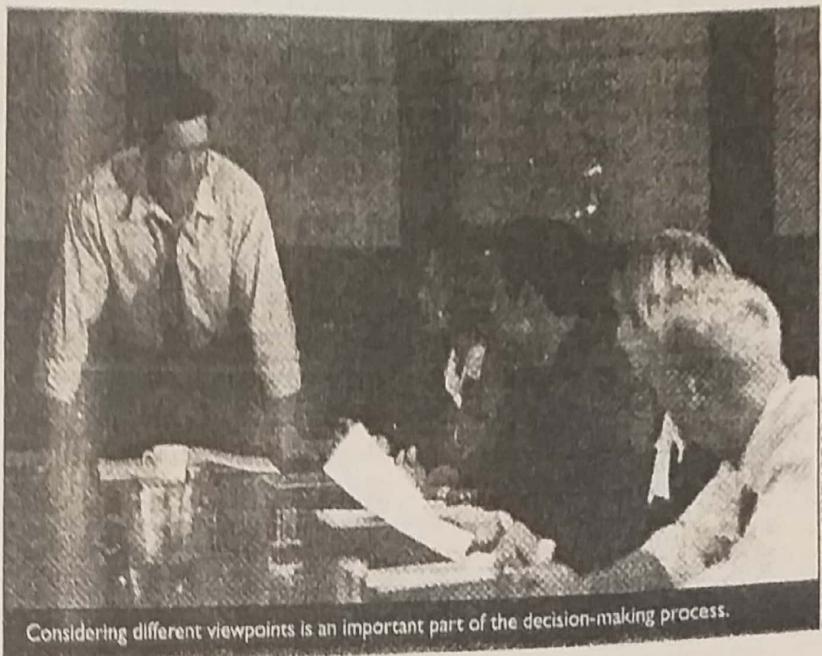
FOCUS

EMPLOYABILITY

To ask the right question at the right time is a sign of an alert, capable employee.

TEACHING TIP

Emphasize that knowing when to move a meeting forward and when to hold back on a decision is a valuable skill. Most leaders and participants do not think about how, when, or where to move a meeting.



© GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

Considering different viewpoints is an important part of the decision-making process.

To Make Decisions

Decision-making meetings bring people and companies together to debate an issue, air different views, raise points that should be considered, reconcile conflicting positions, and make a decision. When planning a decision-making meeting, you may find it useful to solicit information about the various perspectives beforehand and to provide the information with the agenda. As the leader, you will be expected to establish ground rules for the debate, monitor its conduct and duration, and bring the group to a decision. Deciding by **consensus**—with all members contributing and ultimately accepting the decision—is the most effective method.

KEY POINT

Effective meeting leaders and participants make sure assignments are clear and accepted.

To Delegate Work

Meetings to delegate are held to assign tasks to people or groups. Although you can assign responsibilities over the telephone or by e-mail or memo, you may need to hold a meeting to clarify details, to get volunteers, or to determine who would be best at handling each task. Meetings to delegate often are followed by informational and decision-making meetings.

To Collaborate

Collaborative meetings are sessions in which participants work together; for example, to organize complex memos, letters, or reports. Collaborative efforts succeed only when people work together as a team. For this type of meeting, make sure that whatever supplies and equipment the team needs to work together are provided.

To Persuade

In persuasive meetings, people make oral presentations designed to achieve a group consensus and to gain support for a course of action. For example, a persuasive meeting may present the merits of new equipment or build enthusiasm for the training needed to use the equipment properly.

FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

Collaborative software enables group members to work together simultaneously on the same document, whether they are in the same location or are meeting virtually.

LEAD MEETINGS EFFECTIVELY

How a leader conducts a meeting has a great deal to do with how successful the meeting will be. State the objective, use the agenda to run the meeting in an orderly way, encourage participation, apply strategies for managing difficult people, be professional, and end with a summary and thank yous.

TEACHING TIP
Use Teaching Suggestion 2
on page IE-39.

Begin Appropriately

Begin with a roll call, approval of minutes from the previous meeting, or any other routine business that needs to be conducted. If some participants do not know each other, introduce them or ask people to introduce themselves to the group. State the objective of the meeting and quickly go over the tasks to be accomplished. Make your statement positive and forward-looking. Convene the meeting on time to show your determination to get the job done.

Use the Agenda

Use the agenda to ensure that topics are discussed in order and within the time allotted. As each agenda item is dispensed with, summarize points of agreement and disagreement and outline any actions that will be taken.

A common problem is for participants to stray from the topic. Their attention drifts to peripheral issues, or they begin telling personal stories. Remain polite and friendly, but keep the group on track. When people ramble, a good approach is to summarize what you think they meant to say and to ask a question that will point them in the right direction.

Another common problem is spending too much time on an agenda item. If it looks as though a presentation or discussion will exceed the time allotted, decide whether extra time is needed. If it isn't, tell the presenter or group how much time remains and request a summing up or conclusion within that time. If more time is needed, you must decide whether to take time from other agenda items or to revisit the topic at another meeting.

Encourage Participation

Encourage people to share their insights. If a discussion is slow getting started, try posing an open-ended question, one that requires more than a simple yes or no answer. For example, you might ask, "What sorts of changes can we make to our basic shop operations to reduce pollution?"

Encourage quiet people to join in by asking direct, specific questions such as, "Gino, you're our computer expert. Will adding this program overload the existing computer system? Will we have to upgrade?" When people talk about an area they know well, their shyness often disappears. Although you cannot force people to participate, you can provide a positive climate and abundant opportunities.

Make sure that ideas are communicated clearly and that everyone understands them. Be alert for puzzled looks and other signs of confusion. When participants do not grasp a concept, restate in your own words what you think the speaker is saying. "I believe Zeshon is telling us that, according to these surveys, there is not enough interest among our customers to justify offering online banking services." If you are not sure what the speaker means, ask a clarifying question. For example, you might say, "Hatsu, I don't understand what a proxy server does. Can you explain it to us?"

KEY POINT
An agenda can be used to direct participants back to the objective of a meeting if they stray.

TEACHING TIP
Point out that meetings without agendas often waste time.

TEACHING TIP
Note that drawing people into the conversation makes a nonverbal statement that everyone's input counts.

Section 16.3 Assessment

KEY TERMS

brainstorming
consensus

groupthink
mechanics

open-ended question

REVIEW

Fill in the blank, using the correct term from the chapter.

1. Making sure furniture is arranged appropriately and refreshments are provided is part of a meeting's _____.
2. When members of a group tend to make their ideas and opinions conform to those of other members, _____ is operating.
3. The best way to reach agreement at a decision-making meeting is by way of _____.
4. _____ is a tool for generating new ideas.
5. If you are organizing a meeting, the first thing you should ask yourself is whether the meeting is _____.

KEY

1. mechanics
2. groupthink
3. consensus
4. Brainstorming
5. necessary

APPLY

Write complete answers to the following items.

1. Form a group with three or four other students. Hold a brainstorming session to come up with ideas for a fund-raiser that students in your school could do to benefit a local charity. Appoint one person to record ideas. Think of as many ideas as you can in five minutes. Everyone should contribute at least one idea.
2. You are planning a follow-up meeting in which you will assign tasks for the fund-raiser from Application 1. Determine the objective and type of meeting and plan the mechanics. Send an e-mail to your instructor with the information.

KEY

1. Answers will vary.
Have students submit their lists.
2. Answers will vary.
The objective is to assign tasks for the fund-raiser; the type of meeting is a meeting to delegate work.

DISCUSS

Write complete answers to the following items.

1. How can you apply the *you* attitude and positive words in your remarks at meetings?
2. Difficult people cause other problems in meetings besides those discussed in the text. For example, they play games or make inappropriate or abusive comments. Choose one negative behavior and explain how an effective leader can manage it. You might draw on your experiences with sports teams or other groups.

KEY

See page IE-39.

MEETING MINUTES:

Clear, organized and well-structured. Those are the hallmarks of effective meeting minutes. Meetings can be a fantastic collaboration tool. Often, however, participants invest time and energy into a meeting only to disagree later on what occurred. Meeting minutes can prevent these disagreements by providing an accurate depiction of the essential information from the meeting. Taking effective meeting minutes does not have to be an exhausting and laborious process, however. Here are six quick tips for taking effective meeting minutes.

Writing minutes has two major aspects to it:

1. Observation and note taking while the meeting is in progress
2. Writing a report on the meeting with all details discussed with clarity and precision.

For note taking, follow the guidelines below:

- Make sure that all of the essential elements are noted, such as type of meeting, name of the organization, date and time, name of the chair or facilitator, main topics and the time of adjournment. For formal and corporate meetings include approval of previous minutes, and all resolutions.
- Prepare an outline based on the agenda ahead of time, and leave plenty of white space for notes. By having the topics already written down, you can jump right on to a new topic without pause.
- Prepare a list of expected attendees and check off the names as people enter the room. Or, you can pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign as the meeting starts.
- To be sure about who said what, make a map of the seating arrangement, and make sure to ask for introductions of unfamiliar people.
- Don't make the mistake of recording every single comment, but concentrate on getting the gist of the discussion and taking enough notes to summarize it later. Remember that minutes are the official record of what happened, not what was said, at a meeting.
- Use whatever device is comfortable for you, a notepad, a laptop computer, a tape recorder, a steno pad, shorthand. Many people routinely record important meetings as a backup to their notes.
- Be prepared! Study the issues to be discussed and ask a lot of questions ahead of time. If you have to fumble for understanding while you are making your notes, they won't make any sense to you later.
- Don't wait too long to type up the minutes, and be sure to have them approved by the chair or facilitator before distributing them to the attendees.
- Don't be intimidated, you may be called upon many times to write meeting minutes, and the ability to produce concise, coherent minutes is widely admired and valued.

For writing the report, follow the guidelines below:

MULTIMEDIA SUPPORT

TM 16-10 summarizes do's and don'ts for meeting leaders.

RESOURCES

Exercise 7 in the Study Guide provides practice in handling difficult people; Exercise 10, in evaluating meetings, participants, and leaders.

TEACHING TIP

Emphasize that high standards maintain quality and promote positive attitudes.

Handle Difficult People

Handling difficult people is the greatest challenge any meeting leader faces. Sometimes a difficult person is being difficult because he or she is unable to express a concern or thinks the group hasn't understood or considered it adequately. If you think a difficult person has a legitimate concern, ask questions to try to identify the problem. Be respectful, listen actively, and keep an open mind.

If the behavior persists, keep your composure. Don't respond to the person's arguments point for point. As one consultant suggests, "Act rather than react." Keep your remarks brief and focus on the issue or areas of agreement rather than on personalities.² A good strategy is to use the agenda or a technical point to move the discussion to another topic.

Frequently one person wants to dominate the conversation. To discourage an overzealous contributor, you could say something like, "Chris, as you can see by the agenda, we have a lot to cover. I can give you only five more minutes." If Chris continues to talk, interrupt and redirect the discussion to another person. Say, for example, "Your experiences point to the need to communicate with consumers. Kelli, can you fill us in on the advertising plan?"

Be Professional

The leader sets the tone for the meeting through fairness, work ethic, and control. The following steps show your ability as a leader.

Recognize Contributions

Recognize everyone's contributions. Participants who believe that their insights are valued will continue to contribute. Even if a proposal has problems, focus on the positive aspects and lead the group forward.

Maintain High Standards

Do not accept slipshod work or opinions that masquerade as facts. When participants do not have information the group needs, postpone the meeting if possible.

Maintain Order

Make sure the meeting follows the agenda. Allow only one person to speak at a time and discourage private conversations.

End Appropriately

At the end of a meeting, summarize what has been accomplished and move the group ahead to future action. List items that need further consideration. Review assignments and deadlines for future work. If the group must meet again, explain that you will communicate with everyone soon regarding the date and time. Finally, thank participants for their time and efforts.

²Baron Goldsmith, "Managing Difficult People," *Successful Meetings* 53, no. 2 (February 2004): 32.



Pay attention to the mechanics.

GETTY IMAGES/PHOTODISC

For example, you may need a table to hold papers or an overhead projector available only in a conference room. If most of the people who will attend the meeting work in one location, it makes sense to schedule the meeting at that location. A room with new furniture or a scenic view provides a pleasant working environment.

Arrange the Furniture

Arrange the furniture sensibly for all concerned. Usually, everyone, including the leader, sits around a table. Check that presenters will be able to see the audience and will have the space they need. Ensure that each participant will be able to see the presenter and everyone else. Can visual aids be seen clearly from any seat? If you plan to offer refreshments, place them so people will not have to cross in front of others.

Secure Equipment and Supplies

Make sure the room is equipped with everything that participants will need and that equipment is working properly. Some examples of equipment and supplies that you might require are a speakerphone, individual computer setups, a whiteboard, a projector, microphones, an audio recorder, notepads, name tags, and pens or pencils.

Provide for Comfort

The last step in meeting mechanics is to provide for the comfort of participants. Make water, coffee, and tea available. If you are meeting early in the morning, consider bringing in doughnuts, bagels, and muffins. For working breakfasts, lunches, or dinners, choose a vendor whose food and service you know is good from personal experience or who is recommended by someone reliable. Try to anticipate the needs and preferences of the various people who will be attending. For example, if the meeting will include lunch or dinner, vegetarian or kosher offerings might be appropriate. Plan for breaks during long meetings.

FOCUS

TECHNOLOGY

Section 16.4 describes technology that you can use to meet virtually.

Choose Participants Carefully

Communication in a meeting works best when everyone has a reason for attending and can contribute to the discussion. When more than one person has the same expertise or point of view, choose only one to join the group. If you can choose, select people you know will be effective participants.

Corporate culture may affect who can and cannot be invited to a meeting. In formal, highly structured companies, meetings usually are attended by people on the same organizational level. In less structured companies, participants are more likely to span the entire organization, with less emphasis on seniority and position.

Take Care of the Mechanics

Mechanics are the practical and functional details of a meeting. They include scheduling the meeting, creating an agenda, choosing a site, arranging the furniture, securing equipment and supplies, and providing for the comfort of the participants. Good mechanics create a positive atmosphere. They show attendees that you value their time and appreciate their input. Take care of the details so participants can focus their time and energy on the work at hand.

Schedule for Convenience

Schedule a meeting at a date and time that is convenient for most participants and that is not unduly inconvenient for anyone. One way to do that is to offer a selection of dates and times and to ask people to indicate which two or three would be best for them.

Early morning and right after lunch are popular meeting times. Many businesspeople hold working breakfasts, lunches, or dinners with food served or brought in.

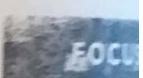
Invitations are usually extended by e-mail or phone and occasionally by memo. Advantages of e-mail are that participants have a written record of the invitation, they can take time in consulting their calendars and replying, and it avoids telephone tag. When you need an immediate reply or are inviting only a few people, phoning may be a better choice. If you write, include a date by which people should let you know if they can attend. When that date arrives, call anyone who hasn't responded.

Create an Agenda

Creating an agenda was discussed earlier in the chapter. When composing the agenda, contact people who will or may have something to present to find out how much time they will need. Send the agenda and any background materials well in advance of the meeting. Plan to bring extra copies to the meeting in case anyone needs them. If you don't have a person who takes minutes regularly, arrange for someone to take minutes and make sure that person understands what information to record.

Select an Appropriate Site

The decision to meet in your office, in a conference room, in someone else's office, or at an outside location depends on the amount of space needed, the convenience of the location, and the environment that is best for the group.



To help keep a meeting
productive, consider creating a
presentation of key points
(Chapter 11).

DO'S	DON'TS
Prepare.	Show up with no background for the meeting.
Arrive on time.	Arrive late.
Focus on the topic.	Be inattentive or spend excessive time on side issues.
Be concise.	Ramble.
Participate actively.	Remain uninvolved.
Help the group arrive at sound decisions.	Keep to yourself when the group has trouble deciding or prepares to decide prematurely.
State positions clearly.	Speak in an unorganized way or choose not to share your views.
Follow the agenda.	Raise issues whenever you want to talk about them.
Discuss ideas willingly.	Argue or refuse to listen to different points of view.
Engage in fair play.	Dominate the discussion or act unfairly.

FIGURE 16.4 Do's and don'ts for meeting participants

usually is done at a lower organizational level. Look carefully at the purpose of your meeting. Determine what your group should accomplish. Plan to state the objective clearly at the beginning of the meeting.

Trying to do too much makes meetings frustrating, disorganized, and unproductive. Restrict the content of a meeting to its designated purpose. Although, under certain conditions, a meeting can have two or more purposes, you should generally call separate meetings in such instances. The rule is "one objective—one meeting." Do the same when a task is too large to accomplish in a single meeting. Divide the task into workable parts and plan separate meetings.

Determine the Type of Meeting

With the objective identified, you can easily determine what type of meeting to hold. Meetings can be held (1) to inform, (2) to develop new ideas, (3) to make decisions, (4) to delegate work, (5) to collaborate, and (6) to persuade. Determining the type of meeting makes organizing it easier.

To Inform

At meetings to inform, information is provided in the form of oral presentations. Use a meeting to inform when clarifying written information that participants have already received or when presenting new information.

To Develop New Ideas

Meetings may be held to develop or improve procedures, programs, or products. A common technique used in such meetings is brainstorming. **Brainstorming** is thinking of every possible idea about a topic. The goal is to generate ideas. No one criticizes anyone's ideas; in fact, the ideas are not evaluated until after the brainstorming session. If you decide to use brainstorming, invite a diverse group of people, plan to state ground rules before brainstorming begins, and appoint someone to record ideas.

FOCUS
EMPLOYABILITY
The first international scientific study of the effects of meeting time on employee well-being found that although people complain about meetings, most like to have at least one per day. A key factor is whether meetings are run efficiently.

KEY POINT
At brainstorming meetings, a leader should stress that the goal is inventing, not deciding.

members of a group tend to suppress their own ideas and to make their opinions and decisions conform to those of other members. As a group member, you have a responsibility to listen to and consider different points of view. You also have a responsibility to state your own point of view, particularly when you think a decision is wrong.

TEACHING TIP

Tell students that groupthink has been identified as a factor in some well-known disastrous decisions, such as the decision to launch the space shuttle *Challenger* the day it exploded.

MULTIMEDIA SUPPORT

The bulleted list appears in TM 16-8; Figure 16.4 appears in TM 16-9.

TEACHING TIP

Remind students that people believe nonverbal messages more than they believe verbal messages.

THINK CRITICALLY

How might groupthink develop from the desire to get along and avoid conflict? What negative characteristics might a group in which groupthink operates display?

Make a Positive Impact

The following suggestions will help you make a positive impact on any group of which you are a part:

- *Be willing to listen.* Groups work best when participants are open to new information and points of view.
- *Speak briefly and directly.* Speak in a clear, organized manner so others will want to hear.
- *Discuss ideas.* To discuss is to exchange ideas; to argue is to become emotional and unreasonable. Arguments often start when participants put their ideas ahead of group objectives and refuse to listen to differing points of view.
- *Avoid personal attacks.* Mutual respect is a key to group functioning.
- *Engage in fair play.* Give everyone the opportunity to speak; do not dominate the discussion.
- *Use body language to your advantage.* Make eye contact when you begin speaking, speak slowly and calmly even when excited, and make sure your posture communicates authority and confidence.
- *Take notes.* Take notes that will help you remember what is said, complete assignments, and prepare for any future meetings. Even if the group has a secretary who records minutes, you still need to take notes on matters of importance to you.

Figure 16.4 summarizes do's and don'ts for meeting participants.

FOCUS

EMPLOYABILITY

Reports indicate that in the 20th century, the average number of meetings at work more than doubled. Further, the amount of time spent in meetings increases constantly.
—University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

ORGANIZE PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

If you are responsible for holding a meeting, the first thing you should do is ask yourself whether the meeting is really necessary. Determine if the work can be accomplished without a meeting; for example, through e-mail, memos, or telephone calls. If the work can be completed without a meeting, do not call one. If a meeting is needed, you can help make it productive by defining the objective, determining the type of meeting to hold, choosing participants carefully, and taking care of the mechanics.

Define the Objective

An effective leader recognizes what a group can and cannot do. For example, entry-level managers do not develop company policy. Corporate directors develop company policy but do not gather information; that job

Effective Meetings

Objectives

After completing Section 16.3, you should be able to:

- 1 Identify guidelines for effective participation in meetings.
- 2 Organize productive meetings.
- 3 Discuss guidelines for leading a meeting effectively.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

TEACHING TIP

Stress that employees should try to make a good impression in meetings. Effective participation can result in added responsibilities and promotions.

When you attend meetings as an employee, you have the responsibility to be an interested and useful participant. In addition, your conduct in meetings—what you do, what you say, and how you say it—sends a message about who you are, your abilities, and your competence. This section of the chapter discusses the art of effective communication in meetings. Meetings are most likely to yield good results when they have active participants, organization, and effective leadership.

Prepare to Take Part

Active participation means that you take responsibility of partial ownership of the meeting. This type of participation requires involvement—a process that begins before you enter the room. For example, when you receive the agenda for the meeting, review it carefully. Write down any questions you would like to ask. If you think that you need some background on an agenda item, educate yourself. Read any attachments.

If a meeting has been called to make a decision, be ready to support your point of view. Disagreement is OK. Few managers want yes-people; instead, they want participants who voice thoughtful opinions and who bring up points the group should consider. Write down the things you want to say so you will remember them.

Come to a meeting prepared—ready to listen as well as to speak—and remain focused on the objective of the meeting.

Arrive on Time

Strive to be at meetings on time. Timeliness sends a nonverbal message that you are dependable and that you believe the meeting is important. Tardiness sends the opposite message. Make a habit of arriving early. Do not allow work, unexpected conversations, or other factors to delay you.

FOCUS

DIVERSITY

In the North American business culture, arriving on time for a meeting is extremely important.

Also tell the team to inform you if they won't attend the meeting. Give a deadline. Remember to include a subject line.

3. Review three of your peers' email. Use the following to review.
 1. Is the subject line a clear noun phrase?
 2. Is the greeting appropriate?
 3. Does the writer mention the meeting in the first line?
 4. Is the objective or the type of meeting included in the email?
 5. Does the writer include the time and the location of the meeting?
 6. Is there a reference to the agenda?
 7. Does the writer invite the readers to respond if they want to add anything to the agenda and/or cannot attend?
 8. Does the writer ask the readers to prepare by reading and/or bringing the reports?
 9. Is there a closing sentence?
 10. Is there a closing like Best regards, and the name?
 11. What additional feedback do you have? Comment on anything that your peer asked about.

going to ask what it is either. However, when you use this phrase, it means that it's probably something important, not that you just don't feel like coming to work. Another expression that is more serious is "due to a family emergency". This could mean someone in your family is very sick. After giving your reason, you might also want to add another sentence apologizing for not being able to attend the meeting. Of course, this depends on your relationship with the reader.

If you're writing to your boss, you probably would want to be clear and give an apology. >> Sorry to let you know on such short notice. >> On short notice means, that you are letting the reader know that you cannot come a short time before the actual meeting. >> My apologies. I'm sorry for any inconvenience. >> This is a little more formal. Next, you'll want to end by adding a closing sentence, so that it doesn't sound too abrupt or sudden. Here are some examples. >> Please let me know what was decided. >> Anyway, I look forward to hearing what was discussed. >> I look forward to reading the minutes. >>

What about if you really want to or need to attend? Well, you could ask that the meeting time be changed. Again, you would probably ask a colleague this question, not usually your boss. As this is a special request, you'll want to make the language indirect. Let's see some examples. Notice how the request is a yes/no question. >> Would it be possible to move it to Tuesday? >> Is there any chance we could push it back to the following week? >> Push back means to postpone something. >> Could we maybe reschedule it for later in the week? So to review, we've covered how to write an email asking a question about the agenda and saying you can't attend. We've seen how to give a reason and how to end with a closing sentence. >>

Exercise

In this assignment, you will write an email announcing a meeting and then respond to another person's email saying that you cannot attend.

1. Read these notes.

Company: Eagletop Outdoors

Meeting: Weekly Management Meeting (including decision about the location of the new flagship store)

Preparation: Read/bring reports on the 3 locations.

Time: 1hr 30 minutes.

Write an email to the management team announcing the meeting. Decide on a time and location. Mention the agenda. Ask for any questions or if the team would like to talk about anything else.

agenda is very direct and could sound rude if you don't know the person very well. The other two are good, let's see how we can use them. You can write something like this. >> Hi, Karin, thanks for the email. Do we have an agenda? >> If the writer forgot to attach the agenda, you could write something like this. >> Hi Karin, I think you forgot to attach the agenda. >> Sometimes the meeting email will ask if anyone wants to add anything to the agenda.

So, if you want to talk about something that is not on the agenda, send a quick email. Here are examples of how to do it. >> Hi Karen, I'd like to add some time to talk about the new store. We probably need about 15 minutes. >> Hi Karin, Can we have some time to talk about next week's training? 10 minutes is enough. >> And this example is a little more formal >> Hi, Karen. I would like to add an item to the agenda. I think we need to discuss next month's advertising campaign. I'm not sure how long we need, but I think it's important. >> Finally, this example is a little more indirect. >> Hi, Karen, would we have enough time to talk about last month's sales report?

Here are some guidelines for writing an email where you can say that you cannot attend. After the greeting, you'll first need to write, that you cannot attend the meeting. Here are certain examples of what to write in the first line. >> Hi Karen, I wanted to let you know that I can't come to next week's meeting. >> Here is an example that is a little more informal. >> Hi Karin, just to let you know that I can't make it to next week's meeting. >> And here's an example that is a little more formal. >> Dear Lauren, I am writing to let you know that I am unable to attend next week's meeting. >> Remember you might want to soften your message to make it sound less direct. In this case, you can use words like, I'm afraid, I'm sorry but or unfortunately. Let's see how we can add these phrases to our first sentence. >> Hi Karin, I wanted to let you know that I'm afraid I can't come to next week's meeting. >> Hi Karin, just to let you know that I'm sorry, but I can't make it to next week's meeting. >> Dear Lauren, I'm writing to inform you that unfortunately, I am unable to attend next week's meeting. >> When you say that you can't do something, you usually have to give a reason.

So, let's look at some different reasons we might have. First, we'll look at some reasons when it is impossible for you to attend. >> I'm going to be out of the office on Monday. I'm on vacation all next week. I have a previously scheduled appointment on that day. >> This is more formal language. Sometimes there are other reasons why you can't attend. Maybe you are just too busy. However, it's not a good idea to just write, I'm busy. You should give more details about what you are doing. >> I have to finish the sales report by Tuesday. >> I have the deadline for the website redesign coming up >> The reorganization of the Northlake store is currently taking up a lot of my time. >>

When you are busy, you should really give details but sometimes we don't have to be clear. It's acceptable to give vague reasons when something unexpected happens or there are personal reasons. >> Something has just come up. >> This means that something unexpected has happened. >> Due to a family commitment. >> This means, that you have to go to something like a wedding, family celebration or attend a meeting at your child's school. >> Due to a personal matter. >> Due to a personal matter is very vague, because it's personal and so, that means it's private. You're not going to say exactly what the reason is and other people are not

announcing a meeting. And remember you should send this kind of email with the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting. [MUSIC]

Exercise: Writing an Agenda

Write the agenda for a meeting you have to conduct as a class group leader. Invent all necessary details.

Review criteria

Review three other people's agendas. Use the following to review:

1. Does the agenda have a title?
2. Is the correct time and date included? (example: Wednesday, June 8th at 9:00.)
3. Was Reports/Updates listed as an item?
4. Was closing the Eastside Store listed as the next item?
5. Was deciding if they are going to hire Creative Build the next item?
6. Was increasing the marketing budget the next item?
7. Was discussing the location of the newest store the next item?
8. Was space for action items included?
9. Optional: Was a sentence or question focusing on the objective included under any of the agenda items?
10. Optional: Was New Business/Announcements listed at the end?
11. Optional: Was a time listed next to each item?
12. Optional: Is Karin listed as attending?
13. What additional feedback do you have? Comment on anything that your peer asked about.

Responding to Meeting Announcements

When you receive an email informing you about a meeting that you should attend, most of the time you don't need to do much. Except, if you're using meeting scheduling software, you would accept the meeting request. However, sometimes you might want to respond by asking a question. Here are some situations when you might need to send an email to the person organizing the meeting. If there was no agenda sent, you might want to ask about that. Imagine you are writing back to a colleague. Which of these would you probably not choose? Where's the

discuss, you could also include space for the action item after each one. So let's review what is necessary for planning a meeting. We decide what kind of meeting it will be and the goal of the meeting. We identify the people to invite, then based on their schedules we decide on a time and location. We might have to find out what time is best by emailing the people involved. We prepare any necessary equipment, and then we write up an agenda.

Writing Announcement

So you've organized the meeting and written the agenda. The next thing you should do before the meeting takes place is send an email to everybody with details and include the agenda. At the end of this part of the lesson, you will be able to identify what to include in this kind of email. As we saw in the first part of this lesson, we should begin an email by writing a subject line. The subject line should tell the reader what the email will be about. \

Then for our greeting we can use one of these for a group email as appropriate. >> Hi Folks, Hi Everyone, Team. >> Next we need to give the details of the meeting including the time and location. This is usually done in the first line. >> Our next team meeting will be held on Monday, May 2nd at 10:00 AM in the 4th floor conference room. This is to remind you that the SoftPoint training will take place on Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 PM in 301A. >> If necessary, say whether it is a required meeting. For example, if it's a required training or an optional information meeting. Software like Microsoft Outlook allows you to show whether it is required for you to attend a meeting or whether it is optional. >> This is a required meeting. Although attendance is optional, I hope to see most of you there. >> You can also give some more details about the meeting, for example the objective. >> You'll need to choose the design team for our remodel at this meeting. >> If the participants need to prepare something for the meeting, also include a sentence about this. >> Please read the proposal before the meeting. In preparation, please look at last year's financial report. Please bring copies of the report. Handouts will be available at the meeting. >> Next, you should refer to the agenda. You can either attach the agenda to the email. >> The agenda is attached. I've attached a copy of the agenda. >> Or if there's not much on the agenda, you can also include it in the body of the email. >> The agenda is as follows. The agenda is below. >>

Sometimes you can also ask if anyone would like to add an item to the agenda. But the organizer can also do this at the start of the actual meeting. >> Please let me know if you want to add anything to the agenda. >> However, if you think you won't have a lot of time, you can say something like this. >> We have a pretty full agenda. >> You can then include a sentence to let everyone know what to do if they cannot attend the meeting. It's a good idea to also include a deadline. >> Please let me know by tomorrow if you can't attend. >> Sometimes people use the word apologies to describe not being able to attend the meeting. Although this is more common outside of the US. >> Please send apologies by the end of the week. >> Finally, finish with a friendly closing sentence. Here are some examples. >> I look forward to seeing you next week. Please let me know if you have any questions. See you all tomorrow. >> And then the closing. >> Best regards, Erik. Best, Erik. Erik. >> So now you know what to include in an email

Organizing Meetings and Writing the Agenda

Have you ever had to set up a meeting? How was it? Did you like having to do it? Actually, I think a lot of people don't really look forward to organizing meetings. Probably the main reason is that we have to try and find a time when everybody is available to meet and that is often the most difficult part. But, once we've agreed on a time, we can just follow some guidelines to make sure that people come to the meeting prepared and ready to participate. So, let's talk about what we need to do. First, let's take an example from a company. Karen is the Chief Marketing Officer at Ranier Chocolates. She calls Eric, a member of her team and leaves a voicemail. Karen wants Eric to arrange a meeting. What does Eric need to do? Listen to the message for details about when, what and who. Write notes.

>> Hey Erik. Karin here. I just wanted to let you know that I'm going to be out of the office for about ten days and wanted to ask if you could organize a team meeting for the first week of next month. As well as our regular updates I'd like us to discuss the remodel of the Northlake store. We need to give input on which design we prefer. I'd also like us to decide if we need more money in our budget, so it would be good if you could invite Lauren to join us too. Thanks and let me know if you have any questions. You can call me on my cell. See you in two weeks. >>

So Eric has to organize a team meeting for next month. They will have short updates and then discussions about the remodel of the Northlake store and the budget. Lauren will also be invited. Now let's talk about what he needs to do to set up the meeting. First, we need to know what kind of meeting it is, and what the purpose is. Then we should decide who the attendees, or participants, are. In addition to the members of the team, Karen also told Eric to invite Lauren. So, the next step is to find a date and time for the meeting. In some organizations, meetings are often set up through scheduling software such as Google Calendar or Microsoft Outlook. Employees are required to post their schedules on a calendar so that the organizer of a meeting can easily see when people are available. But sometimes this might not be possible. Some people might not be good keeping the schedule up to date. And if you're inviting someone from outside the organization or team, they might not use the same software.

A good meeting email must have a clear subject line such as scheduling next month's team meeting. The subject line should be a noun phrase, that tells the reader what the email will be about. Next, there should be an appropriate greeting for an email to a group of people. The purpose of the email is then in the first line. Here are some examples of how we can do this. >> I need to schedule next month's team meeting. I'd like to set up a meeting for next week. I'm trying to arrange a meeting for sometime next week. I want to find a time for us to meet. >> Notice the verbs we can use with the word meeting. Schedule, set up, and arrange. Then we need to try to organize the time. You can choose a date and time, and asked if this would be okay. Here are some phrases you could use to suggest a time and then check. >> I'd like to propose Monday, May 2nd at 10 a.m. How about Thursday afternoon at 2:00? Would Wednesday at 9:00 work for everyone? >> Sometimes you might want to give some choices and ask which one people prefer. >> Here are some options, let me know what you think. Which of these days and times work for you? Let me know which of these dates you prefer. >> Also you could ask people to give you suggestions of the best time. >>

is an agenda and that everyone receives the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting. If you are a participant in the meeting, make sure that you read the agenda and prepare any documents that are necessary. It's a good idea to print out the agenda or at least have an electronic copy available. If you are running the meeting you could also print out an agenda for people in case, they don't have one. If you want to save paper, project it on a screen if one is available. To help participants be prepared for a meeting, it should be clear what each item on the agenda means. For example, an item with just the phrase Next Year's Budget, doesn't give you a lot of information about what you'll be required to do. For example, Vote on Approval of Next Year's Budget tells you that you will decide what will be in the budget. This means you should know what is in the budget before coming to the meeting, that you should be prepared to ask questions and give your opinion. And that you will be asked to vote.

The second most important guideline is that the meeting should be well run, and often that is the responsibility of the chair, or leader, or team leader. The meeting should start on time. It's okay to have a little small talk before starting. But the chair should make sure that it doesn't go on for more than just a few minutes. The meeting should also finish on time or better several minutes before. The chair might postpone the discussion of any remaining items to the next meeting if you run out of time. In fact, when planning a meeting, it is better to ask ourselves the question, how much time will we need to reach the objective, instead of, how many things can we discuss in the time that we have?

Another important role of the chair or leader is to make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak. That one person doesn't talk all the time and that the discussion stays on topic, meaning people don't start talking about things not related to the topic of the meeting. This can be a little difficult and you'll find out more about this when we focus on leading meetings in week two.

Another important guideline is to think about when and where a meeting will be held. For example, scheduling a meeting late on a Friday afternoon is maybe not the best idea in the US. A cold or noisy meeting room would make it uncomfortable or difficult for people to participate successfully. Deciding to have a brain storming meeting at a local restaurant wouldn't be a good idea either because ordering food and eating could be distracting.

Meetings are so common and frankly, many people find them so boring that some organizations are trying to be more creative about the location of meetings. A recent interesting idea is to hold meetings outside while walking. Even in Seattle it might catch on despite the rain.

When the meeting is over, a summary or the minutes of the discussion, including any decisions that were made and any action items, should be sent to all participants as soon as possible. This reminds people what the meeting achieved. Finally, when we are meetings with people who are from different cultures and who speak different languages, we should always be considerate of those differences and do our best to make the other participants feel comfortable participating in and speaking in English. So here's what we've done so far.

Business Meetings

What is a Business Meeting?

A **business meeting** is a gathering of two or more people for the purpose of making decisions or discussing company objectives and operations. **Business meetings** are generally conducted in person in an office, however with the rise of video conferencing technologies, participants can join a **business meeting** from anywhere.

Before we talk about the kinds of meetings, let's start with some general vocabulary for meetings. Usually a meeting has an agenda. This is the plan for the order of things to talk about at that meeting. Each part of the agenda is called an item. If someone needs to do something after the meeting it's often called an action item. The person who is in charge of a meeting is called the Leader, the Lead or sometimes the Chair. The Leader runs or leads the meeting. We can also use chair like this, as a verb, and say someone chairs a meeting. In most meetings someone will write down a summary of what was discussed and what was decided. These notes are called minutes. We use the verb phrase take minutes to describe writing these notes. After the meeting this person will distribute the minutes to the other participants or attendees. In more formal situations the participants will approve the minutes at their next meeting. That means they say that the summary was correct. So now we know some basic meeting vocabulary, let's think about different types of meetings.

Types of Meetings

In business there are many kinds of meetings, for example, social get-togethers networking meetings, and negotiations with people from different companies. In this course however, will be mainly talking about internal meetings, meetings with people you work with. Even so there are still several types of internal meetings. So let's talk briefly about what they are. Basically the type of meeting often depends on what the purpose of the meeting is. Look at this list of different meetings that might happen in a company. How many have you participated in? Lets talk about each of these different meetings.

The purpose of an information meeting is to explain something. In an information meeting there might be just one or two speakers and an audience. Participants usually listen and may sometimes ask questions. A team meeting is when members of a particular team meet, for example a management team or a finance team. Usually these meetings are scheduled regularly, weekly, or monthly. At these meetings people usually share information and give updates. They may also make announcements and make decisions. If people from different departments are working on a specific project, there will usually be a kick off meeting. When the project begins and then regular progress report meetings take place afterwards where people working on the project give updates. At the end there may be a debrief meeting where participants can discuss what was successful or not so successful about the project. At decision-making meetings, the purpose is to reach agreement on one or more issues. Attendees are expected to participate fully, giving their opinions

hospitals. A second cause is that nurses can find employment at medical facilities other than hospitals. A third cause is that many nurses are reluctant to stay on the job because of poor working hours that include nights, holidays, and weekends. A fourth cause is that nurses are burdened with excessive paperwork.

A key-word note taker would record something like this:

Serious nurse shortage

Total of 120,000

Average 47 per hospital

Reduced services at hospitals

Four major causes

Low faculty at nursing schools

Employment available beyond hospitals

Poor working hours

Excessive paperwork

Notice how brief the notes are. Yet they accurately summarize the speaker's ideas. They are also very clear. By separating main points from subpoints and evidence, the outline format shows the relationships among the speaker's ideas.

Perfecting this—or any other—system of note taking requires practice. But with a little effort you should see results soon. As you become a better note taker, you will become a better listener. There is also a good chance you will become a better student. Research confirms that students who take effective notes usually receive higher grades than those who do not.¹⁶

SUMMARY



Most people are poor listeners. Even when we think we are listening carefully, we usually grasp only half of what we hear, and we retain even less. Improving your listening skills can be helpful in every part of your life, including speechmaking.

The most important cause of poor listening is giving in to distractions and letting our thoughts wander. Sometimes, however, we listen too hard. We try to remember every word a speaker says, and we lose the main message by concentrating on details. In other situations, we may jump to conclusions and prejudge a speaker without hearing out the message. Finally, we often judge people by their appearance or speaking manner instead of listening to what they say.

You can overcome these poor listening habits by taking several steps. First, take listening seriously and commit yourself to becoming a better listener. Second, work at being an active listener. Give your undivided attention to the speaker in a genuine effort to understand her or his ideas. Third, resist distractions. Make a conscious effort to keep your mind on what the speaker is saying. Fourth, try not to be diverted by appearance or delivery. Set aside preconceived judgments based on a person's looks or manner of speech.

Fifth, suspend judgment until you have heard the speaker's entire message. Sixth, focus your listening by paying attention to main points, to evidence, and to the speaker's techniques. Finally, develop your note-taking skills. When done properly, note taking is an excellent way to improve your concentration and to keep track of a speaker's ideas.



People spend more time listening than in any other communicative activity. One benefit of your speech class is that it can improve your listening skills in a variety of situations.

of a court day in which I have only listened, I find myself wringing wet despite a calm and casual manner."¹¹

Later in this chapter, we will look at some things you can do to concentrate better on what you hear.

LISTENING TOO HARD

Until now we have been talking about not paying close attention to what we hear. But sometimes we listen *too hard*. We turn into human sponges, soaking up a speaker's every word as if every word were equally important. We try to remember all the names, all the dates, all the places. In the process we often miss the speaker's main point. What is worse, we may end up confusing the facts as well.

Shortly after graduating from college, Erik Waldman landed an excellent job at a graphics design firm. Knowing he had never been good at budgeting his money, he was determined to begin thinking about his long-range economic future. When his employer circulated an e-mail announcing a financial planning workshop, Erik signed up right away.

The first session was about retirement planning. Simone Fisher, who was conducting the workshop, explained that 7 of 10 Americans between the ages of 22 and 35 do not have either a monthly budget or a regular savings plan. Erik wrote down every number Simone mentioned.

"If you want to have a retirement income equal to 75 percent of your current salary," Simone continued, "you will need to invest at least 6 percent of your present earnings, and beyond that you need to figure in future inflation rates. We have set aside time this afternoon to meet with you personally to calculate your individual savings needs. In the meantime, I want to stress that the most important thing is to start saving now."

Erik wrote furiously to record all the statistics Simone cited. When she opened the floor for questions, Erik raised his hand and said, "I have two questions. When is the best time to start saving for retirement? And how am I supposed to figure out my savings target if I don't know what inflation rates will be in the future?"

Four Causes of Poor Listening

97

There is plenty of reason, then, to take listening seriously. Employers and employees, parents and children, wives and husbands, doctors and patients, students and teachers—all depend on the apparently simple skill of listening. Regardless of your profession or walk of life, you never escape the need for a well-trained ear.

Listening is also important to you as a speaker. It is probably the way you get most of your ideas and information—from television, radio, conversation, and lectures. If you do not listen well, you will not understand what you hear and may pass along your misunderstanding to others.

Besides, in class—as in life—you will listen to many more speeches than you give. It is only fair to pay close attention to your classmates' speeches; after all, you want them to listen carefully to *your* speeches. An excellent way to improve your own speeches is to listen attentively to the speeches of other people. Over and over, teachers find that the best speakers are usually the best listeners.

A side benefit of your speech class is that it offers an ideal opportunity to work on the art of listening. During the 95 percent of the time when you are not speaking, you have nothing else to do but listen and learn. You can sit there like a stone—or you can use the time profitably to master a skill that will serve you in a thousand ways.

Listening and Critical Thinking

One of the ways listening can serve you is by enhancing your skills as a critical thinker. We can identify four kinds of listening.⁸

- *Appreciative listening*—listening for pleasure or enjoyment, as when we listen to music, to a comedy routine, or to an entertaining speech.
- *Empathic listening*—listening to provide emotional support for the speaker, as when a psychiatrist listens to a patient or when we lend a sympathetic ear to a friend in distress.
- *Comprehensive listening*—listening to understand the message of a speaker, as when we attend a classroom lecture or listen to directions for finding a friend's house.
- *Critical listening*—listening to evaluate a message for purposes of accepting or rejecting it, as when we listen to the sales pitch of a used-car dealer or the campaign speech of a political candidate.

Although all four kinds of listening are important, this chapter deals primarily with comprehensive listening and critical listening. They are the kinds of listening you will use most often when listening to speeches in class, when taking lecture notes in other courses, when communicating at work, and when responding to the barrage of commercials, political messages, and other persuasive appeals you face every day. They are also the kinds of listening that are most closely tied to critical thinking.

As we saw in Chapter 1, critical thinking involves a number of skills. Some of those skills—summarizing information, recalling facts, distinguishing main points from minor points—are central to comprehensive listening. Other skills

appreciative listening
Listening for pleasure or enjoyment.

empathic listening
Listening to provide emotional support for a speaker.

comprehensive listening
Listening to understand the message of a speaker.

critical listening
Listening to evaluate a message for purposes of accepting or rejecting it.

It was a hot afternoon in May. The professor of ancient history was lecturing on the fall of the Roman Empire. She began, "Yesterday we discussed the political and social conditions that weakened the empire from within. Today we will talk about the invasions that attacked the empire from the outside—the Visigoths from the northwest, the Ostrogoths from the northeast, the Vandals from the south, the Huns from the west, and Homer Simpson from the southeast."

Nobody batted an eye. Nobody looked up. The classroom was quiet, except for the scratch of pens as the students took notes—presumably recording Homer Simpson as an invader of the Roman Empire.

hearing

The vibration of sound waves on the eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses in the brain.

listening

Paying close attention to, and making sense of, what we hear.

This story illustrates what one research study after another has revealed—most people are shockingly poor listeners. We fake paying attention. We can look right at someone, appear interested in what that person says, even nod our head or smile at the appropriate moments—all without really listening.

Not listening doesn't mean we don't hear. *Hearing* is a physiological process, involving the vibration of sound waves on our eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain. But *listening* involves paying close attention to, and making sense of, what we hear. Even when we think we are listening carefully, we usually grasp only 50 percent of what we hear. After 24 hours we can remember only 10 percent of the original message.¹ It's little wonder that listening has been called a lost art.²

Listening Is Important

Although most people listen poorly, there are exceptions. Top-flight business executives, successful politicians, brilliant teachers—nearly all are excellent listeners.³ So much of what they do depends on absorbing information that is given verbally—and absorbing it quickly and accurately. If you had an interview with the president of a major corporation, you might be shocked (and flattered) to see how closely that person listened to your words.

In our communication-oriented age, listening is more important than ever. This is why, in most companies, effective listeners hold higher positions and are promoted more often than ineffective listeners.⁴ When business managers are asked to rank-order the communication skills most crucial to their jobs, they usually rank listening number one.⁵ Listening is so important that in one survey of America's Fortune 500 companies, almost 60 percent of the respondents said they provide some kind of listening training for their employees.⁶

Even if you don't plan to be a corporate executive, the art of listening can be helpful in almost every part of your life. This is not surprising when you realize that people spend more time listening than doing any other communicative activity—more than reading, more than writing, more even than speaking.

Think for a moment about your own life as a college student. Close to 90 percent of class time in U.S. colleges and universities is spent listening to discussions and lectures. A number of studies have shown a strong correlation between listening and academic success. Students with the highest grades are usually those with the strongest listening skills. The reverse is also true—students with the lowest grades are usually those with the weakest listening skills.⁷

1. Begin with a succinct overview of meeting details. Document the meeting date and/or time and a description of the meeting's purpose. Also give the meeting minutes a brief title. Locate this information at the top of the document as this will provide the reader with the at-a-glance context required to understand the minutes

2. Capture participation. Keep in mind that the reader may not be familiar with all participants. Document a participant's name as well as some identifying information such as title or role in the discussion. In some instances it may be useful to list all invitees and mark attendance with a "Yes" or "No" value so there is a record of participants who were invited but were not present for the discussion. On a related note, it may be useful to distinguish participants who may have been able to participate for only part of the meeting; this can be done with something as simple as a third attendance value, for example: "Yes (partial)".

3. Structure information in a clear and readable format. A few quick tips to ensure clarity:

- Always spell out acronyms. While it may be obvious during the meeting that OFA stands for Our Favorite Acronym, chances are that this may not be clear to future readers.
- Do not capture the conversation verbatim. It may sound useful to capture the conversation in its entirety, but this is rarely the best way to document discussions. Often participants meander about a topic, jump between topics, think out loud, etc... Documenting all of this verbatim requires the reader to invest significant effort in following the thread of the conversation.
- Use visual cues to structure data and call out key elements. Bullets can be used to combine related points and bolding can be used to highlight decisions which were made. If a single meeting covered multiple topics, use underlined headers to separate these conversations. With these simple style guidelines, readers can scan the meeting minutes and find the portion that is of importance to them.
- Structure discussion points in a logical order, not in the sequence they occurred. For example, a topic may be introduced at the beginning of the meeting and later a second topic may be introduced. Participants may occasionally make comments related to the first topic – these comments can be grouped under the first topic header, so that the reader can see all related information in one section.
- Often visual aids or other materials are used as references for the discussion. Include these items in the minutes so that the reader has the appropriate information required to understand the conversation.

4. Capture next steps. Almost every meeting results in a set of action items. It's a common occurrence that participants will fully agree with action items during the meeting, but after the meeting will forget who owns a given item or what the expected completion date is. Capturing action items, the assigned owner or owners and the expected completion date (if relevant) ensures that there is no confusion after-the-fact.

5. Document meeting minutes as soon as possible. The longer you wait to document the meeting minutes, the less likely you are to capture information accurately.

WRITING MEETING MINUTES

The minutes, an organization's official record of a meeting, are distributed to all those who belong to the committee or any other unit represented at the meeting. In writing a set of minutes, your goal is to be clear, comprehensive, objective, and diplomatic. Your job is not to interpret what happened. You have three main goals:

1. to record the logistical details of the meeting
2. to provide an accurate record of the meeting
3. to ensure that minutes reflect positively on the participants and the organization

Recording the Logistical Details of the Meeting

According to Robert's Rules of Order (Robert & Patnode, 1994), the authoritative reference work on parliamentary procedure, you should record the following information:

- 1.the name of the group or committee that met
- 2.the location, date, and time of the meeting
- 3.the type of meeting (regular or special)
- 4.the presence of the chair and secretary, or their substitutes
- 5.the time at which the meeting was adjourned

Another respected source, the Gregg Reference Manual (Sabin, 1999), suggests that you include the names of those who attended and those who did not and a separate list of guests.

Also record what action was taken about the minutes of the previous meeting. For example, the minutes were read (or distributed) and approved (or amended and approved). You should record any changes to the previous minutes.

Providing an Accurate Record of the Meeting

Because meetings rarely follow the agenda perfectly, you might find it challenging to provide an accurate record of the meeting. Record the major topics discussed at the meeting as well as any actions taken. For example, write down the names of reports read or approved, motions made (and whether they were approved, defeated, or tabled), and resolutions adopted. Record the outcomes of discussions. Record the names of the people who made motions, read reports, and so forth; for example, "Barry Young presented a report on the June activities of the Safety Department." If the conversation is going too fast for you to keep an accurate record, interrupt the discussion to request a clarification.

Reflecting Positively on the Participants and the Organization

Your task in recording the minutes includes separating the substance of the meeting from the emotional exchanges of participants. Do not write: "The motion to add a new position in the QA Department was defeated 7 to 6 after a heated argument in which Bob Minor complained that 'Alice states that she-supports my department, but when it comes to action, she's all talk.' " Instead, write: "After considerable discussion, the motion to add a new position in the QA department was defeated by a vote of 7 to 6." Sometimes the smartest thing a recording secretary can do is choose not to record what was said.

Revision Checklist: Do the minutes:

- a. provide the necessary housekeeping details about the meeting?
- b. explain the events of the meeting accurately?
- c. reflect positively on the participants and the organization?

Exercise: Select the correct spelling from the options given in these sentences:

- 1. He had been practising/practicing medicine for years.
- 2. It was a nice compliment/complement about my work.
- 3. The principal/principle reason why the project succeeded was the team management.
- 4. The chairperson was concerned about the affect/effect this would have on the practise/practice time.

Exercise: Add any missing apostrophes.

- 1. The clients rooms are nearby. (three clients)
- 2. The managers response was "no". (one manager)
- 3. The secretaries attitude must improve.
- 4. The mens preference was to sit down.
- 5. The caretaker says that hes happy with this plan.
- 6. Youre not sure what your choice will be.
- 7. Its difficult to know if the company and its representatives are included.
- 8. The SATs were very difficult.

Exercise: Re-write the following paragraph to avoid repetition and to flow better.

It was agreed that there was a very good chance that the manager would tell the department what she was going to do. The chairperson said that the CEO had said that everyone should be told about the fact that there could well be redundancies. She also said that she thought this would happen.

Exercise: Think of ways to improve these phrases and avoid repetition.

- 1. Jon Smith (JS) brought the sales figures to the meeting. These were distributed to the members of the Committee and discussed and Jane Adams (JA) agreed they had improved. All other attendees agreed they had improved too. It was agreed that a bonus could be paid this year.
- 2. The repairs needed to the new offices were discussed. It was quite rightly agreed that the walls needed painting, the windows needed replacing and the doors needed replacing. Mr Jones agreed to contact the Board to get their permission to carry out these repairs.
- 3. JS asked the Committee for their views on the proposed new pay system. JA said she thought it was good, HB said he thought there some issues which should be looked at in more detail. JS and JA agreed with this. These issues were then discussed and everyone then agreed that they would go ahead with this new system.
- 4. The Committee discussed the half year sales figures ending 30th June. It was noted that a profit of £13 million had been made in the first 6 months of the year.

In an official meeting at his company, following were the words spoken by Mr. Smith regarding the agenda item "New Marketing Plan". Assuming that you are writing the minutes of this meeting, present Mr. Smith's input as you would in a formal minutes of the meeting. [3]

Mr. Smith: Well, we all agreed in the last meeting that we need to change our marketing strategy. So, I would suggest that this time we invest more in social media marketing. We need to study our competitors' techniques and outdo them. Our Facebook page should be very active. We need a team of people regularly updating our Facebook page, Twitter also. And this team should give quick response to customer comments and queries on our social media pages.

Given below is the discussion about an agenda item that happened during an official meeting. Read the conversation between the chairperson, Bernard, and the Chief Sales Executive, Sam, and the write the minutes for the agenda item "Declining Sales". You do not have to write any other component of the minutes report.

BERNARD: Okay, I think we should now move to agenda item 3, that is, Declining Sales.

VOICES: Right.

BERNARD: Well, we're here today to look at some of the reasons for the decline in profits which has affected this subsidiary. Right, well, can I ask Sam Canning, Chief Sales Executive, to open up with his remarks.

SAM: Thank you, Bernard. Well I think we have to face up to several realities and what I have to say is in three parts and will take about 20 minutes.

BERNARD: Er, Sam ... we don't have much time - it's really your main points we're most interested in.

SAM: Well, the three points I want to make can be made in three sentences. First, sales are down but only by 5%. Secondly, our budget for sales has been kept static - it hasn't increased - not even with inflation - so we're trying to do better than last year on less money. Thirdly, the products are getting old, we need a new generation.

BERNARD: So let me summarise that. You say that sales are down but not by so much, that you've had less money to promote sales and that the products are old? Is that right?

SAM: In a nutshell.

Item 5: Minute Writing Exercise

Objectives for item 5, at the end of this item you will:

- ✓ Have practised your new skills by writing minutes from a script

Exercise: Use the transcript below to write a set of minutes for the meeting. You can assume that everyone, that was there, spoke at least once.

AGENDA for the staff meeting on Weds 4th April

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Staff canteen accounts
5. Reception refurbishment
6. Student placements
7. Summer barbecue
8. Any other business
9. Date of next meeting

Meeting transcript

Lily Green (Chairperson)	Good afternoon everyone. Taylor Black won't be here today; he's had to meet up with our contacts at Colours Limited. Was everyone happy with the last minutes? (all nod) Can we sign them? (Chairperson signs) Good, matters arising? Anything to report?
Bradley Brown	Daisy and I spoke to Heather about her training and we've agreed to finance this. She won't be here for the next meeting as she will be on the first day.
Chairperson	That's good. Right, let's move on to item 4. Marcus, you wanted to discuss the accounts for the canteen. Can we see copies of these?

Marcus Blue	Yes, I have copies for everyone (distributes copies). We made a profit of £1,300 over the first 6 months of the year. I thought it would be a good idea to get some new chairs with some of the money – the existing ones are a bit wobbly!
Chairperson	Good idea, Marcus, but could you get some costs for us to look at during the next meeting? (Mr Blue agrees)
Chairperson	OK let's look at the next item. Some people have commented that our reception area is looking rather tatty.
Hazel Fawn	I thought the same, it needs redecorating and modernising.
Chairperson	Who would like to get some quotes for this?
Hazel Fawn	Yes, I'll do that. We've got some good contacts we can speak to.
Chairperson	Right, that's something else to continue with next time, Cameron, you're next.
Cameron White	We would like to start taking on work experience students, which will hopefully raise the company's profile and give us access to new staff as we expand. We could perhaps take on two students in September and pay them if possible.
Hazel Fawn	That would be an excellent idea.
Chairperson	I agree, but I don't think we can authorise it. Cameron, would you email the directors and ask them to discuss it at the board meeting and let us know their decision?
Cameron White	I will.
Chairperson	Now, the final item. Summer barbecue. Rose, have you got the menus?
Rose Pink	Yes, I was able to get hold of quite a few. (distributes copies)
Cameron White	I like the look of the Canalside Hotel menu and they have facilities for if it rains.
Bradley Brown	It does look good – not too expensive either.
Rose Pink	Shall we go for that one then? (agreement)
Chairperson	What date seems the best?
Rose Pink	The last Friday evening in June will work for the majority of staff?
Chairperson	That's great, Rose, can you make the arrangements?
Rose Pink	Yes, I'll book the hotel and send an email to all the staff. Should be good.
Chairperson	I'm looking forward to it. Any other business, anyone? No? OK, let's meet again in 3 weeks' time.

STEP Leadership Team
Meeting Minutes

Date/time: July 18, 2011, 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.
Attendees: Willie Good, Chilton Rogers, Margie Labadie, Michele Vine, Deb Smith
Absent: Johnny Roberts
Guests: Bob Schaumleffel

AGENDA

- 1) Welcome and Announcements (15 minutes)
- 2) Share drafts of strategy statements for each committee (30 minutes)
- 3) Discuss and improve drafts (75 minutes)
 - a. Does each draft have a clear "issue for implementation"?
 - b. Does each draft explain its expected impact?
 - c. What additional information is needed in each draft?

MINUTES

Agenda item #1 – Welcome and Announcements

- The new Town Manager, Bob Schaumleffel, was introduced.
- A blog has been created for the STEP Project.
- Chilton offered to help each of us organize our draft presentations for the September board meeting.

Action items

- Everyone should look at the new blog. Send news items to Deb for posting.
- Committee leaders need to set up one-to-ones with Chilton by next month.

Agenda item #2 -- Share drafts of strategy statements for each committee

The leader of each committee read out their draft strategy statements. Margie read "Broadening Education" & Caroline read "Leadership". The "Entrepreneurship" draft wasn't available.

Action items

- The Entrepreneurship group will email their statement by tomorrow, 10:30 AM.
- Everyone needs to revise their statements using the Goldfield town statement as a model. Chilton will email out the Goldfield model tonight.

Agenda item #3 – Discuss & Improve Drafts

We broke into three groups (Broadening Education, Leadership, & Entrepreneurship) to discuss the agenda questions. We then rewrote our drafts to have the same detail & structure as the Goldfield model.

Action items

- Everyone needs to use the same strategy template. Each group leader should send their revised draft to Deb by 5:00PM next Friday.

**Participatory Governance Council
Meeting Summary**

Meeting attended by:	ADMINISTRATORS: Andre Barnes, David Dore; FACULTY: Alisa Messer, Francine Podenski, Karen Saginor, STUDENTS: Bouchra Simmons, Shannell Williams
Absent:	Athena Steff, Karl Gamarra
Date:	December 18, 2012
Time:	3:00pm-5:0pm
Agenda Topic #1: Introductions	
Notes: After introductions of council members, each constituent group described the process used to select their representatives.	Deadlines:
Action Items: All groups must identify alternates to attend in the absence of a rep	By our next scheduled meeting.
Agenda Topic #2: Review Participatory Governance Policy	
Notes: Policy #2.07 was reviewed. The Council can make 'recommendation' to the Chancellor for a new committee or workgroup. The Council cannot establish committees or workgroups. The Council is a 'recommending body', not a decision-making body.	
Action Items: The correction to Policy - Item V.A. needs to be made.	Andre will inform the Council Secretary by next week.
Agenda Topic #3: Handling Public Comment	
Notes: Members questioned how public comment would be handled through the council. Several reps suggested that every agenda should include a Public Comment time slot. Constituent groups need to ensure that their rep shares information. As an example, the Student reps have a website and are willing to share the web structure.	
Action Items: Ensure the web site is updated and accessible.	Bouchra will email sample web structure to the group on Monday.
Agenda Topic #4: Discuss DRAFT organization chart	
Notes: Program Review should be a subcommittee under Annual Plan and Budget. Student development issues will be addressed under through Program Review and approved by the Budget Committee.	
Action Items: Change org chart to Annual Plan/Budget/Program Review Ensure that Student Development is addressed through the Program Review process and by the Budget Committee.	By our next scheduled meeting.
Meeting Adjourned. Next Meeting: 3 rd Thursday of each month, 3-5pm MUB 140	

PGC Summary Notes December 18, 2012 Meeting
Adapted from <http://www.ccsf.edu/>

1

strengthen your overall presentation. Don't restrict your message to just core job duties, either. Also highlight personal characteristics that apply to the targeted position, such as your ability to work hard or handle responsibility:

While attending college full-time, I worked part-time during the school year and up to 60 hours a week each summer in order to be totally self-supporting while in college. I can offer your organization the same level of effort and perseverance.

Mention your salary requirements only if the organization has asked you to state them. If you don't know the salary appropriate for the position and someone with your qualifications, you can find typical salary ranges at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website, www.bls.gov, or a number of commercial websites. If you do state a target salary, tie it to the value you would offer:

For the past two years, I have been helping a company similar to yours organize its database marketing efforts. I would therefore like to receive a salary in the same range (the mid-60s) for helping your company set up a more efficient customer database.

Toward the end of this section, refer the reader to your résumé by citing a specific fact or general point covered there:

As you can see in the attached résumé, I've been working part-time with a local publisher since my sophomore year. During that time, I've used client interactions as an opportunity to build strong customer service skills.

Motivating Action

The final paragraph of your application letter has two important functions: to ask the reader for a specific action (usually an interview) and to facilitate a reply. Offer to come to the employer's office at a convenient time or, if the firm is some distance away, to meet with its nearest representative or arrange a telephone or Skype interview. Include your email address and phone number, as well as the best times to reach you:

After you have reviewed my qualifications, could we discuss the possibility of putting my marketing skills to work for your company? I am available at (360) 555-7845 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday or by email at john.wagner462@gmail.com.

After editing and proofreading your application letter, give it a final quality check by referring to "Checklist: Writing Application Letters." Then send it along with your résumé promptly, especially if you are responding to an advertisement or online job posting.

Don't bring up salary in application letter unless client has asked you to include salary requirements.

REAL-TIME UPDATES
LEARN MORE BY EXPLORING THIS SECTION
How much are you worth?
Find real-life salary ranges for a wide range of jobs.
Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

In the final paragraph of your application letter, respectfully ask for specific action and make it easy for the reader to respond.

CHECKLIST ✓ Writing Application Letters

- Take the same care with your application letter that you took with your résumé.
- If you are *prospecting* using an unsolicited message, do deep research to identify the qualities the company likely wants.
- For solicited messages in response to a posted job opening, word your message in a way that echoes the qualifications listed in the posting.
- Open the letter by capturing the reader's attention in a businesslike way.
- Use specific language to clearly state your interests and objectives.
- Build interest and desire in your potential contribution by presenting your key qualifications for the job.
- Link your education, experience, and personal qualities to the job requirements.
- Outline salary requirements only if the organization has requested that you provide them.
- Request an interview at a time and place that is convenient for the reader.
- Make it easy to comply with your request by providing your complete contact information and good times to reach you.
- Adapt your style for cultural variations, if required.

Think creatively about a follow-up message; show that you've continued to add to your skills or that you've learned more about the company or the industry.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER SUBMITTING A RÉSUMÉ

Deciding if, when, and how to follow up after submitting your résumé and application letter is one of the trickiest parts of a job search. First and foremost, keep in mind that employers continue to evaluate your communication efforts and professionalism during this phase, so don't say or do anything to leave a negative impression. Second, adhere to whatever instructions the employer has provided. If a job posting says "no calls," for example, don't call. Third, if the job posting lists a *close date*, don't call or write before then because the company is still collecting applications and will not have made a decision about inviting people for interviews. Wait a week or so after the close date. If no close date is given and you have no other information to suggest a timeline, you can generally contact the company starting a week or two after submitting your résumé.⁶

When you follow up by email or telephone, you can share an additional piece of information that links your qualifications to the position (keep an eye out for late-breaking news about the company, too) and ask a question about the hiring process as a way to gather some information about your status. Good questions to ask include:⁷

- Has a hiring decision been made yet?
- Can you tell me what to expect next in terms of the hiring process?
- What is the company's time frame for filling this position?
- Could I follow up in another week if you haven't had the chance to contact me yet?
- Can I provide any additional information regarding my qualifications for the position?

Whatever the circumstances, a follow-up message can demonstrate that you're sincerely interested in working for the organization, persistent in pursuing your goals, and committed to upgrading your skills.

If you don't land a job at your dream company on the first attempt, don't give up. You can apply again if a new opening appears, or you can send an updated résumé with a new unsolicited application letter that describes how you have gained additional experience, taken a relevant course, or otherwise improved your skill set. Many leading employers take note of applicants who came close but didn't quite make it and may extend offers when positions open up in the future.⁸

Understanding the Interviewing Process

LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Describe the typical sequence of interviews, the major types of interviews, and the attributes employers look for during an interview.

Preparing early for your interviews—and be sure to consider a wide range of options.

An employment interview is a meeting during which both you and the prospective employer ask questions and exchange information. The employer's objective is to find the best talent to fill available job openings, and your objective is to find the right match for your goals and capabilities.

As you get ready to begin interviewing, keep two vital points in mind. First, recognize that the process takes time. Start your preparation and research early; the best job offers usually go to the best-prepared candidates. Second, don't limit your options by looking at only a few companies. By exploring a wide range of firms and positions, you might uncover great opportunities that you would not have found otherwise. You'll increase the odds of getting more job offers, too.

THE TYPICAL SEQUENCE OF INTERVIEWS

Most employers interview an applicant multiple times before deciding to make a job offer. At the most selective companies, you might have a dozen or more individual interviews across several stages.⁹ Depending on the company and the position, the process may stretch out over many weeks, or it may be completed in a matter of days.¹⁰

Employers start with the *screening stage*, in which they filter out applicants who are unqualified or otherwise not a good fit for the position. Screening can take place on your

g the screening stage of news, use the limited time available to confirm your fit for the position.

In situational interviews, you're asked to explain how you would handle various hypothetical situations.

In a working interview, you perform actual work-related tasks.

Stress interviews help recruiters see how you handle yourself under pressure.

Expect to use a variety of media when you interview, from in-person conversations to virtual meetings.

Treat a telephone interview as seriously as you would an in-person interview.

When interviewing via email or IM, be sure to take a moment to review your responses before sending them.

In a video interview, speak to the camera as though you are addressing the interviewer in person.

A situational interview is similar to a behavioral interview except that the questions focus on how you would handle various hypothetical situations on the job. The situations will likely relate closely to the job you're applying for, so the more you know about the position, the better prepared you'll be.

A working interview is the most realistic type of interview: You actually perform a job-related activity during the interview. You may be asked to lead a brainstorming session, solve a business problem, engage in role playing, or even make a presentation.¹⁹

The most unnerving type of interview is the stress interview, during which you might be asked questions designed to unsettle you or might be subjected to long periods of silence, criticism, interruptions, and/or even hostile reactions by the interviewer. The theory behind this approach is that you'll reveal how well you handle stressful situations, although some experts find the technique of dubious value.²⁰ If you find yourself in a stress interview, recognize what is happening and collect your thoughts for a few seconds before you respond.

You might encounter two or more types of interview questions within a single interview, so stay alert and try to understand the type of question you're facing before you answer each one.

INTERVIEW MEDIA

Expect to be interviewed through a variety of media. Employers trying to cut travel costs and the demands on staff time now interview candidates via telephone, email, instant messaging, virtual online systems, and videoconferencing, in addition to traditional face-to-face meetings.

To succeed at a telephone interview, make sure you treat it as seriously as an in-person interview. Be prepared with a copy of all the materials you have sent to the employer, including your résumé and any correspondence. In addition, prepare some note cards with key message points you'd like to make and questions you'd like to ask. And remember that you won't be able to use a pleasant smile, a firm handshake, and other nonverbal signals to create a good impression. A positive, alert tone of voice is therefore vital.²¹

Email and IM are also sometimes used in the screening stage. Although you have almost no opportunity to send and receive nonverbal signals with these formats, you do have the major advantage of being able to review and edit each response before you send it. Maintain a professional style in your responses, and be sure to ask questions that demonstrate your knowledge of the company and the position.²²

Many employers use video technology for both live and recorded interviews. For instance, the online clothing retailer Zappos uses video interviews on Skype to select the top two or three finalists for each position and then invites those candidates for in-person interviews.²³ Recruiters can also use mobile apps for interviews. With recorded video interviews, an online system asks a set of questions and records the respondent's answers. Recruiters then watch the videos as part of the screening process.²⁴ Prepare for a video interview as you would for an in-person interview—including dressing and grooming—and take the extra steps needed to become familiar with the equipment and the process. If you're interviewing from home, arrange your space so that the webcam doesn't pick up anything distracting or embarrassing in the background. During any video interview, remember to sit up straight and focus on the camera.

Online interviews can range from simple structured questionnaires and tests to sophisticated job simulations that are similar to working interviews (see Figure 19.4). These simulations help identify good candidates, give applicants an idea of what the job is like, and reduce the risk of employment discrimination lawsuits because they closely mimic actual job skills.²⁵

REAL-TIME UPDATES

LEARN MORE BY WATCHING THESE VIDEOS

Five TED talks that will help you prepare for interviews

MIT career advisor Lily Zhang hand-picked these talks for the insights they can give all job hunters. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

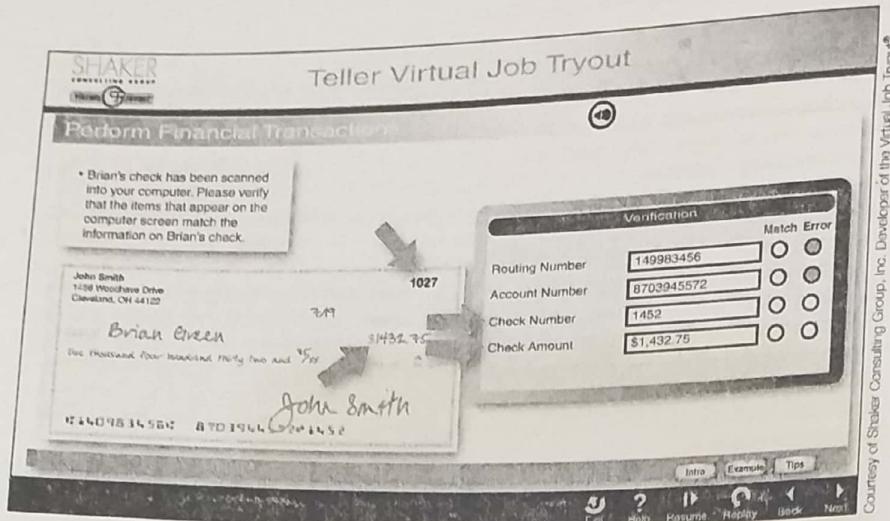


Figure 19.4 Job Task Simulations

Computer-based job simulations are an increasingly popular approach to testing job-related skills.

WHAT EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN AN INTERVIEW

Interviews give employers the chance to go beyond the basic data of your résumé to get to know you and to answer two essential questions. The first is whether you can handle the responsibilities of the position. Naturally, the more you know about the demands of the position, and the more you've thought about how your skills match those demands, the better you'll be able to respond.

The second essential question is whether you will be a good fit with the organization and the target position. All good employers want people who are confident, dedicated, positive, curious, courteous, ethical, and willing to commit to something larger than their own individual goals. Companies also look for fit with their individual cultures. Just like people, companies have different "personalities." Some are intense; others are more laid back. Some emphasize teamwork; others expect employees to forge their own way and even to compete with one another. Expectations also vary from job to job within a company and from industry to industry. An outgoing personality is essential for sales but less so for research, for instance.

PREEMPLOYMENT TESTING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

In an effort to improve the predictability of the selection process, many employers now conduct a variety of preemployment evaluations and investigations. Here are types of assessments you are likely to encounter during your job search:²⁶

- **Integrity tests.** Integrity tests attempt to measure how truthful and trustworthy a candidate is likely to be.
- **Personality tests.** Personality tests are designed to gauge such aspects as attitudes toward work, interests, managerial potential, dependability, commitment, and motivation.
- **Cognitive tests.** Cognitive tests measure a variety of attributes involved in acquiring, processing, analyzing, using, and remembering information. Typical tests involve reading comprehension, mathematics, problem solving, and decision making.
- **Language proficiency.** You may be asked to take a reading or writing test.
- **Job knowledge and job-skills tests.** These assessments measure the knowledge and skills required to succeed in a particular position. An accounting candidate, for

Suitability for a specific job is judged on the basis of such factors as

- Academic preparation
- Work experience
- Job-related personality traits

Compatibility with an organizational culture and a position is judged on such factors as personal background, attitudes, and communication style.

Preemployment tests attempt to provide objective, quantitative information about a candidate's skills, attitudes, and habits.

MOBILE APP
The **CareerBuilder** app lets you search and apply for jobs from your phone or tablet.

- example, might be tested on accounting principles and legal matters (knowledge) and asked to create a simple balance sheet or income statement (skills).
- Substance tests. A majority of companies perform some level of drug and alcohol testing. Many employers believe such testing is necessary to maintain workplace safety, ensure productivity, and protect companies from lawsuits, but others view it as an invasion of employee privacy.
 - Background checks. In addition to testing, most companies conduct some sort of background check, including reviewing your credit record, checking to see whether you have a criminal history, and verifying your education. Moreover, you should assume that every employer will conduct a general online search on you. To help prevent a background check from tripping you up, verify that your college transcripts are current, look for any mistakes or outdated information in your credit record, plug your name into multiple search engines to see whether anything embarrassing shows up, and scour your social network profiles and connections for potential problems.

Preemployment assessments are a complex and controversial aspect of workforce recruiting. For instance, even though personality testing is widely used, some research suggests that commonly used tests are not a reliable predictor of job success.²⁷ However, expect to see more innovation in this area and greater use of testing in general in the future as companies try to reduce the risks and costs of poor hiring decisions.

If you're concerned about any preemployment test, ask the employer for more information or ask your college career center for advice. You can also get more information from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at www.eeoc.gov.

Preparing for a Job Interview

3 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

List six tasks you need to complete to prepare for a successful job interview.

Now that you're armed with insights into the interviewing and assessment process, you're ready to begin preparing for your interviews. Preparation will help you feel more confident and perform better under pressure, and preparation starts with learning about the organization.

LEARNING ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND YOUR INTERVIEWERS

Interviewers expect you to know some basic information about the company and its industry.

Employers expect serious candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the company's operations, its markets, and its strategic and tactical challenges.²⁸ You've already done some initial research to identify companies of interest, but when you're invited to an interview, it's time to dig a little deeper (see Table 19.2). Making this effort demonstrates your interest in the company, and it identifies you as a business professional who knows the importance of investigation and analysis.

In addition to learning about the company and the job opening, try to find out as much as you can about the managers who will be interviewing you, if you can get their names. Search LinkedIn in particular. It's also perfectly acceptable to ask your contact at the company for the names and titles of the people who will be interviewing you.²⁹ Whatever information you can find, think about ways to use it during your interview. For example, if an interviewer lists membership in a particular professional organization, you might ask whether the organization is a good forum for people to learn

about vital issues in the profession or industry. This question gives the interviewer an opportunity to talk about his or her own interests and experiences for a moment, which builds rapport and might reveal vital insights into the career path you are considering. Just make sure your questions are sincere and not uncomfortably personal.

REAL-TIME UPDATES

LEARN MORE BY READING THIS ARTICLE

The ultimate interview preparation checklist

Prepare for your next interview by following this advice. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

TABLE 10.2 Investigating an Organization and a Job Opportunity

Where to Look and What You Can Learn
• Company website, blogs, and social media accounts: Overall information about the company, including key executives, products and services, locations and divisions, employee benefits, job descriptions
• Competitors' websites, blogs, and social media accounts: Similar information from competitors, including the strengths these companies claim to have
• Industry-related websites and blogs: Objective analysis and criticism of the company, its products, its reputation, and its management
• Marketing materials (print and online): The company's marketing strategy and customer communication style
• Company publications (print and online): Key events, stories about employees, new products
• Your social network contacts: Names and job titles of potential contacts within a company
• Periodicals (newspapers and trade journals, both print and online): In-depth stories about the company and its strategies, products, successes, and failures; you may find profiles of top executives
• Career center at your college: Often provides a wide array of information about companies that hire graduates
• Current and former employees: Insights into the work environment
Points to Learn About the Organization
• Full name
• Location (headquarters and divisions, branches, subsidiaries, or other units)
• Ownership (public or private; whether it is owned by another company)
• Brief history
• Products and services
• Industry position (whether the company is a leader or a minor player; whether it is an innovator or more of a follower)
• Key financial points (such as stock price and trends, if a public company)
• Growth prospects (whether the company is investing in its future through research and development; whether it is in a thriving industry)
Points to Learn About the Position
• Title
• Functions and responsibilities
• Qualifications and expectations
• Possible career paths
• Salary range
• Travel expectations and opportunities
• Relocation expectations and opportunities

THINKING AHEAD ABOUT QUESTIONS

Planning ahead for the interviewer's questions will help you handle them more confidently and successfully. In addition, you will want to prepare insightful questions of your own.

Planning for the Employer's Questions

Many general interview questions are "stock" queries you can expect to hear again and again during your interviews. Get ready to face these six at the very least:

- What is the hardest decision you've ever had to make? Be prepared with a good example (that isn't too personal), explaining why the decision was difficult, how you made the choice you made, and what you learned from the experience.
- What is your greatest weakness? This question seems to be a favorite of some interviewers, although it probably rarely yields useful information. One good strategy is to mention a skill or attribute you haven't had the opportunity to develop yet but would like to in your next position.³⁰ Another option is to discuss a past shortcoming you took steps to correct.
- Where do you want to be five years from now? This question tests (1) whether you're merely using this job as a stopover until something better comes along and (2) whether you've given thought to your long-term goals. Your answer should reflect your desire to contribute to the employer's long-term goals, not just your own goals. Whether this question often yields useful information is also a matter of debate, but be prepared to answer it.³¹

You can expect to face a number of common questions in your interviews, so be sure to prepare for them.

- What didn't you like about previous jobs you've held? Answer this one carefully: The interviewer is trying to predict whether you'll be an unhappy or difficult employee.³² Describe something that you didn't like in a way that puts you in a positive light, such as having limited opportunities to apply your skills or education. Avoid making negative comments about former employers or colleagues.
- Tell me something about yourself. One good strategy is to briefly share the "story of you" (see page 563)—quickly summarizing where you have been and where you would like to go—in a way that aligns your interests with the company's. Alternatively, you can focus on a specific skill you know is valuable to the company, share something business-relevant that you are passionate about, or offer a short summary of what colleagues or customers think about you.³³ Whatever tactic you choose, this is not the time to be shy or indecisive, so be ready with a confident, memorable answer.
- How do you spend your free time? This question can pop up late in an interview, after the interviewer has covered the major work-related questions and wants to get a better idea of what sort of person you are.³⁴ Prepare an answer that is honest and that puts you in a positive light, without revealing more than you are comfortable revealing or suggesting that you might not fit in the corporate culture. Sports, hobbies, reading, spending time with family, and volunteer work are all "safe" answers.

REAL-TIME UPDATES**Prepare your answers to these tough interview questions**

Use this advice to get ready for five questions you're likely to encounter. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

Continue your preparation by planning a brief answer to each question in Table 19.3.

TABLE 19.3 Twenty-Five Common Interview Questions

Questions About College
1. What courses in college did you like most? Least? Why? 2. Do you think your extracurricular activities in college were worth the time you spent on them? Why or why not? 3. When did you choose your college major? Did you ever change your major? If so, why? 4. Do you feel you did the best scholastic work you are capable of? 5. How has your college education prepared you for this position?
Questions About Employers and Jobs
6. Why did you leave your last job? 7. Why did you apply for this job opening? 8. Why did you choose your particular field of work? 9. What are the disadvantages of your chosen field? 10. What do you know about our company? 11. What do you think about how this industry operates today? 12. Why do you think you would like this particular type of job?
Questions About Work Experiences and Expectations
13. What was your biggest failure? 14. What is your biggest weakness? 15. Describe an experience in which you learned from one of your mistakes. 16. What motivates you? Why? 17. What do you think determines a person's progress in a good organization? 18. What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work? 19. Why should we hire you?
Questions About Work Habits
20. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself? 21. What type of boss do you prefer? 22. Have you ever had any difficulty getting along with colleagues or supervisors? With instructors? With other students? 23. What would you do if you were given an unrealistic deadline for a task or project? 24. How do you feel about overtime work? 25. How do you handle stress or pressure on the job?

Sources: "50 Most Common Interview Questions," Glassdoor blog, 25 March 2016, www.glassdoor.com; Alison Green, "The 10 Most Common Job Interview Questions," U.S. News & World Report, 27 April 2015, money.usnews.com; Carole Martin, "10 Most Common Interview Questions," Monster, accessed 14 May 2016, www.monster.com.

REAL-TIME UPDATES**LEARN MORE BY VIEWING THIS PRESENTATION****Simple tips for a professional interview look**

Not sure how to get the right look? Follow this advice. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

If you want to be taken seriously, dress and act seriously.

Be ready to go the minute you arrive at the interviewing site; don't fumble around for your résumé or your list of questions.

- Limited jewelry (men, especially, should wear very little jewelry)
- No visible piercings other than one or two earrings (for women only)
- No visible tattoos, although this expectation is changing in some industries
- Stylish but professional-looking shoes (no extreme high heels or casual shoes)
- Clean hands and nicely trimmed fingernails
- Little or no perfume or cologne (some people are allergic and many people are put off by strong smells)
- Subtle makeup (for women)
- Exemplary personal hygiene

An interview is not the place to express your individuality or to let your inner rebel run wild. Send a clear signal that you understand the business world and know how to adapt to it. You won't be taken seriously otherwise.

BEING READY WHEN YOU ARRIVE

When you go to your interview, take a small notebook, a pen, a list of the questions you want to ask, several copies of your résumé (protected in a folder), an outline of what you have learned about the organization, and any past correspondence about the position. You may also want to take a small calendar, a transcript of your college grades, a list of references, and a portfolio containing samples of your work, performance reviews, and certificates of achievement.³⁸ Think carefully if you plan to use a tablet computer or any other device for note taking or reference during an interview. You don't want to waste any of the interviewer's time fumbling with it. Also, turn off your mobile phone; in a recent survey of hiring professionals, answering calls or texting while in an interview was identified as the most common mistake job candidates make during their interviews.³⁹

Be sure you know when and where the interview will be held. The worst way to start any interview is to be late. Verify the route and time required to get there, even if that means traveling there ahead of time. Plan to arrive early, but don't approach the reception desk until 5 minutes or so before your appointed time.⁴⁰ Chances are the interviewer won't be ready to receive you until the scheduled time.

If you have to wait for the interviewer, use this time to review the key messages about yourself you want to get across in the interview. Conduct yourself professionally while waiting. Show respect for everyone you encounter, and avoid chewing gum, eating, or drinking. Anything you do or say at this stage may get back to the interviewer, so make sure your best qualities show from the moment you enter the premises. To review the steps for planning a successful interview, see "Checklist: Planning for a Successful Job Interview."

CHECKLIST ✓ Planning for a Successful Job Interview

- Learn about the organization, including its operations, markets, and challenges.
- Learn as much as you can about the people who will be interviewing you, if you can find their names.
- Plan for the employer's questions, including questions about tough decisions you've made, your perceived shortcomings, what you didn't like about previous jobs, and your career plans.
- Plan questions of your own to find out whether this is really the job and the organization for you and to show that you've done your research.
- Bolster your confidence by removing as many sources of apprehension as you can.
- Polish your interview style by staging mock interviews.
- Present a professional appearance with appropriate dress and grooming.
- Be ready when you arrive and bring along a pen, paper, a list of questions, copies of your résumé, an outline of your research on the company, and any correspondence you've had regarding the position.
- Double-check the location and time of the interview and map out the route beforehand.
- Relax and be flexible; the schedule and interview arrangements may change when you arrive.

organization. If you can do so comfortably, try to pin down what will happen next, but don't press for an immediate decision.

If this is your second or third visit to the organization, the interview may end with an offer of employment. If you have other offers or need time to think about this offer, it's perfectly acceptable to thank the interviewer for the offer and ask for some time to consider it. If no job offer is made, the interview team may not have reached a decision yet, but you may tactfully ask when you can expect to know the decision.

Discussing Salary

If you receive an offer during the interview, you'll naturally want to discuss salary. However, let the interviewer raise the subject. If asked your salary requirements during the interview or on a job application, you can say that your requirements are open or negotiable or that you would expect a competitive compensation package.⁴⁵

How far you can negotiate depends on several factors, including market demand for your skills, the strength of the job market, the company's compensation policies, the company's financial health, and any other job offers you may be considering. Remember that you're negotiating a business deal, not asking for personal favors, so focus on the unique value you can bring to the job. The more information you have, the stronger your position will be.

If salary isn't negotiable, look at the overall compensation and benefits package. You may find flexibility in a signing bonus, profit sharing, retirement benefits, health coverage, vacation time, and other valuable elements.⁴⁶

To review the important tips for successful interviews, see "Checklist: Making a Positive Impression in Job Interviews."

Research salary ranges in your job, industry, and geographic region before you try to negotiate salary.

Negotiating benefits may be one way to get more value from an employment package.

INTERVIEW NOTES

Maintain a notebook or simple database with information about each company, interviewers' answers to your questions, contact information for each interviewer, the status of follow-up communication, and upcoming interview appointments. Carefully organized notes will help you decide which company is the right fit for you when it comes time to choose from among the job offers you receive.

For the latest information on interviewing strategies, visit real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Chapter 19.

Keeping a careful record of your job interviews is essential.

CHECKLIST ✓ Making a Positive Impression in Job Interviews

- A. Be ready to make a positive impression in the warm-up stage.
 - Be alert from the moment you arrive; even initial small talk is part of the interviewing process.
 - Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile and direct eye contact.
 - Offer a firm (not crushing) handshake if the interviewer extends a hand.
 - Take a seat only after the interviewer invites you to sit or has taken his or her own seat.
 - Listen for clues about what the interviewer is trying to get you to reveal about yourself and your qualifications.
 - Exhibit positive body language, including standing up straight, walking with purpose, and sitting up straight.
- B. Convey your value to the organization during the question-and-answer stage.
 - Let the interviewer lead the conversation.
 - Never answer a question before the interviewer finishes asking it.
 - Listen carefully to the interviewer and watch for nonverbal signals.
- C. Close on a strong note.
 - Don't limit yourself to simple yes or no answers; expand on the answer to show your knowledge of the company (but don't ramble on).
 - If you encounter a potentially discriminatory question, decide how you want to respond before you say anything.
 - When you have the opportunity, ask questions from the list you've prepared; remember that interviewers expect you to ask questions.
 - Watch and listen for signs that the interview is about to end.
 - Quickly evaluate how well you've done and correct any misperceptions the interviewer might have.
 - If you receive an offer and aren't ready to decide, it's entirely appropriate to ask for time to think about it.
 - Don't bring up salary but be prepared to discuss it if the interviewer raises the subject.
 - End with a warm smile and a handshake and thank the interviewer for meeting with you.

5 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Identify the most common employment messages that follow an interview and explain when you would use each one.

A follow-up message after an interview is more than a professional courtesy; it's another chance to promote yourself to an employer.

Use the model for a direct request when you write an inquiry about a hiring decision.

Following Up After the Interview

Staying in contact with a prospective employer after an interview shows that you really want the job and are determined to get it. Doing so also gives you another chance to demonstrate your communication skills and sense of business etiquette. Following up brings your name to the interviewer's attention once again and reminds him or her that you're actively looking and waiting for the decision.

Any time you hear from a company during the application or interview process, be sure to respond quickly. Companies flooded with résumés may move on to another candidate if they don't hear back from you within 24 hours.⁴⁷

FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE

Send a follow-up message within two days of the interview, even if you feel you have little chance of getting the job. These messages are often referred to as "thank-you notes," but they give you an important opportunity to go beyond merely expressing your appreciation. You can use the message to reinforce the reasons you are a good choice for the position or have changed your mind, and respond to any negatives that might have arisen in the interview (see Figure 19.6).⁴⁸ Email is usually acceptable for follow-up messages, unless the interviewer has asked you to use other media.

MESSAGE OF INQUIRY

If you're not advised of the interviewer's decision by the promised date or within two weeks, you might make an inquiry. A message of inquiry (which can be handled by email if the interviewer has given you his or her email address) is particularly appropriate if you've received a job offer from a second firm and don't want to accept it before you have an answer from the first. The following message illustrates the general model for a direct request:

When we talked on April 7 about the fashion coordinator position in your Park Avenue showroom, you indicated that a decision would be made by May 1. I am still enthusiastic about the position and eager to know what conclusion you've reached.

← Identifies the position and introduces the main idea

To complicate matters, another firm has now offered me a position and has asked that I reply within the next two weeks.

← Places the reason for the request second

Because your company seems to offer a greater challenge, I would appreciate knowing about your decision by Thursday, May 12. If you need more information before then, please let me know.

← Makes a courteous request for specific action last, while clearly stating a preference for this organization

REQUEST FOR A TIME EXTENSION

If you receive a job offer while other interviews are still pending, you can ask the employer for a time extension. Open with a strong statement of your continued interest in the job, ask for more time to consider the offer, provide specific reasons for the request, and assure the reader that you will respond by a specific date (see Figure 19.7 on page 616).

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

Use the model for positive messages when you write a letter of acceptance.

When you receive a job offer you want to accept, reply within five days. Begin by accepting the position and expressing thanks. Identify the job you're accepting. In the next paragraph, cover any necessary details. Conclude by saying that you look forward to reporting for work. As always, a positive letter should convey your enthusiasm and eagerness to cooperate:

I'm delighted to accept the graphic design position in your advertising department at the salary of \$3,875 per month.

← Confirms the specific terms of the offer with a good-news statement at the beginning

Federal, state, and local laws prohibit employment discrimination based on a variety of factors, and well-trained interviewers know to avoid questions that could be used to discriminate in the hiring process.

Think about how you might respond if you were asked a potentially unlawful question.

Handling Potentially Discriminatory Questions

A variety of federal, state, and local laws prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age (at least if you're between 40 and 70), marital status, religion, national origin, or disability. Interview questions designed to elicit information on these topics are potentially illegal.⁴³ Table 19.6 compares some specific questions that employers are and are not allowed to ask during an employment interview.

If an interviewer asks a potentially unlawful question, consider your options carefully before you respond. You can answer the question as it was asked, you can ask tactfully whether the question might be prohibited, you can simply refuse to answer it, or you can try to answer "the question behind the question."⁴⁴ For example, if an interviewer inappropriately asks whether you are married or have strong family ties in the area, he or she might be trying to figure out if you're willing to travel or relocate—both of which are acceptable questions. Only you can decide which is the right choice based on the situation.

Even if you do answer the question as it was asked, think hard before accepting a job offer from this company if you have alternatives. Was the off-limits question possibly accidental (it happens) and therefore not really a major concern? If you think it was intentional, would you want to work for an organization that condones illegal or discriminatory questions or that doesn't train its employees to avoid them?

If you believe an interviewer's questions to be unreasonable, unrelated to the job, or an attempt to discriminate, you have the option of filing a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or with the agency in your state that regulates fair employment practices.

THE CLOSE

Like the warm-up, the end of the interview is more important than its brief duration would indicate. These last few minutes are your final opportunity to emphasize your value to the organization and to correct any misconceptions the interviewer might have. Be aware that many interviewers will ask whether you have any more questions at this point, so save one or two from your list.

Concluding Gracefully

You can usually tell when the interviewer is trying to conclude the session. He or she may ask whether you have any more questions, check the time, summarize the discussion, or simply tell you that the allotted time for the interview is up. When you get the signal, be sure to thank the interviewer for the opportunity and express your interest in the

Conclude an interview with courtesy and enthusiasm.

TABLE 19.6 Acceptable Versus Potentially Discriminatory Interview Questions

Interviewers May Ask This . . .	But Not This
What is your name?	What was your maiden name?
Are you over 18?	When were you born?
Did you graduate from high school?	When did you graduate from high school?
[Questions about race are not allowed.]	What is your race?
Can you perform [specific tasks]?	Do you have physical or mental disabilities?
[Questions about alcohol use are not allowed.]	Do you drink alcoholic beverages?
Are you currently using illegal drugs?	Have you ever been addicted to drugs in the past?
Would you be able to meet the job's requirement to frequently work weekends?	Would working on weekends conflict with your religion?
Do you have the legal right to work in the United States?	What country are you a citizen of?
Have you ever been convicted of a felony?	Have you ever been arrested?
This job requires that you speak Spanish. Do you?	What language did you speak in your home when you were growing up?

Sources: Dave Johnson, "Illegal Job Interview Questions," CBS Money Watch, 27 February 2012, www.cbsnews.com; "5 Illegal Interview Questions and How to Dodge Them," Forbes, 20 April 2012, www.forbes.com; Vivian Giang, "11 Common Interview Questions That Are Actually Illegal," Business Insider, 5 July 2013, www.businessinsider.com.

Interviewing for Success

At this point, you have a good sense of the overall process and know how to prepare for your interviews. The next step is to get familiar with the three stages of every interview: the warm-up, the question-and-answer session, and the close.

4 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Explain how to succeed in all three stages of an interview.

THE WARM-UP

Of the three stages, the warm-up is the most important, even though it may account for only a small fraction of the time you spend in the interview. Studies suggest that many interviewers make up their minds within the first 20 seconds of contact with a candidate.⁴¹ Don't let your guard down if the interviewer engages in what feels like small talk; these exchanges are every bit as important as structured questions.

Body language is crucial at this point. Stand or sit up straight, maintain regular but natural eye contact, and don't fidget. When the interviewer extends a hand, respond with a firm but not overpowering handshake. Repeat the interviewer's name when you're introduced ("It's a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Litton"). Wait until you're asked to be seated or the interviewer has taken a seat. Let the interviewer start the discussion, and be ready to answer one or two substantial questions right away. The following are some common openers:⁴²

- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you know about us?
- Tell me a little about yourself.

The first minute of the interview is crucial, so stay alert and be on your best business behavior.

Recognize that you could face substantial questions as soon as your interview starts, so make sure you are prepared and ready to go.

THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER STAGE

Questions and answers usually consume the greatest part of the interview. Depending on the type of interview, the interviewer will likely ask about your qualifications, discuss some of the points mentioned in your résumé, and ask about how you have handled particular situations in the past or would handle them in the future. You'll also be asking questions of your own.

MOBILE APP
The Monster mobile app offers helpful tips to help you prepare for your next job interviews.

Answering and Asking Questions

Let the interviewer lead the conversation and never answer a question before he or she has finished asking it. Not only is this type of interruption rude, but the last few words of the question might alter how you respond. As much as possible, avoid one-word yes or no answers. Use the opportunity to expand on a positive response or explain a negative response. If you're asked a difficult question or the offbeat questions that companies such as Zappos and Google are known to use, pause before responding. Think through the implications of the question. For instance, the recruiter may know that you can't answer a question and only wants to know how you'll respond under pressure or whether you can construct a logical approach to solving a problem.

Whenever you're asked if you have any questions, or whenever doing so naturally fits the flow of the conversation, ask a question from the list you've prepared. Probe for what the company is looking for in its new employees so that you can show how you meet the firm's needs. Also try to zero in on any reservations the interviewer might have about you so that you can dispel them.

Listen carefully to questions before you answer.

REAL-TIME UPDATES
LEARN MORE BY LISTENING TO THIS PODCAST

Expert tips for successful phone interviews

Recruiting experts offer invaluable advice on nailing a phone interview. Go to real-timeupdates.com/bct14 and select Learn More in the Students section.

Listening to the Interviewer

Paying attention when the interviewer speaks can be as important as giving good answers or asking good questions. Review the tips on listening offered in Chapter 2. The interviewer's facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, and posture may tell you the real meaning of what is being said. Be especially aware of how your answers are received. Does the interviewer nod in agreement or smile to show approval? If so, you're making progress. If not, you might want to introduce another topic or modify your approach.

Paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal messages can help you turn the question-and-answer stage to your advantage.

TABLE 19.5 Warning Signs: 25 Attributes Interviewers Don't Like to See

1. Poor personal appearance	13. Poor scholastic record
2. Overbearing, overaggressive, or conceited demeanor; a "superiority complex", a know-it-all attitude	14. Unwillingness to start at the bottom; expecting too much too soon
3. Inability to express ideas clearly; poor voice, diction, or grammar	15. Tendency to make excuses
4. Lack of knowledge or experience	16. Evasive answers; hedging on unfavorable factors in record
5. Poor preparation for the interview	17. Lack of tact
6. Lack of interest in the job	18. Lack of maturity
7. Lack of planning for career; lack of purpose or goals	19. Lack of courtesy and common sense, including answering mobile phones, texting, or chewing gum during the interview
8. Lack of enthusiasm; passive and indifferent demeanor	20. Being critical of past or present employers
9. Lack of confidence and poise; appearance of being nervous and ill at ease	21. Lack of social skills
10. Insufficient evidence of achievement	22. Marked dislike for schoolwork
11. Failure to participate in extracurricular activities	23. Lack of vitality
12. Overemphasis on money; interest only in the best offer	24. Failure to look interviewer in the eye
	25. Limp, weak handshake

Sources: Donna Fuscaldi, "Seven Deadly Interview Sins," Glassdoor blog, 4 April 2012, www.glassdoor.com; "Employers Reveal Outrageous and Common Mistakes Candidates Make in Job Interviews, According to New CareerBuilder Survey," CareerBuilder, 12 January 2011, www.careerbuilder.com. The Northwestern Endicott Report (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Placement Center).

fortune on interview clothes, but your clothes must be clean, pressed, and appropriate. The following look will serve you well in most interview situations:³⁷

- Neat, "adult" hairstyle
- For more formal environments, a conservative business suit (for women, that means no exposed midriffs, short skirts, or plunging necklines) in a dark solid color or a subtle pattern such as pinstripes; white shirt and understated tie for men; coordinated blouse for women
- For less formal environments, smart-looking "business casual," including a pressed shirt or blouse and nice slacks or a skirt

COMMUNICATING ACROSS CULTURES

Cross-Cultural Employee Selection

Migration across the borders of the world is increasing in frequency and ease, whether temporary or permanent. This means that the diversity in employment of individuals is increasing and so recruitment processes need to reflect this diversity. You may be considering moving to a different cultural environment to seek employment or, at some stage in your career, you may well be involved in the recruitment of individuals from cultures that are quite different to your own.

You are very likely, currently, to live in a multi-cultural society and so meet with the effects of cultural differences and realize that, at times, there may well be a need for some adjustments to be made by all parties involved to accommodate the apparent differences. Recruiting and selecting employees are processes that, likewise, need to accommodate cultural difference from both the perspective of the recruiter and the prospective candidate.

Whether interviewing or being interviewed, a way of reducing the offence and mis-understanding that can be the result of cultural clashes is to research comparative cultural norms. There are numerous sources of cultural analysis that can be used to help you research the cultural backgrounds of individuals. You could try, as a start, <http://geert-hofstede.com/> to look at cultural differences.

You will discover that you need to consider, particularly in an interview situation, aspects such as how to dress, some

cultures require very formal attire, and others require you to avoid being too well dressed so that you do not appear too elite or arrogant. As an interviewee, you may be expected to ask questions in some cultures and yet in others only respond to questions. Tone of the interview can make a huge difference with some cultures expecting a serious and formal approach whilst others might be tolerant of a more relaxed style.

Whatever the cultural norms, you can expect that lack of cultural accommodation will result in no hire being completed.

CAREER APPLICATIONS

- In order to practice your research and develop your understanding of how cultures can differ, imagine you are working with another interviewer from two different countries to your own. This would mean that there would be three different cultural backgrounds to be considered. What would be the differences in tone of the interview process and, if no attention had been paid to cultural differences, how might you expect each person to dress? If there were also gender differences, how would the process be affected?
- What is the importance of eye contact and body language, particularly in relation to eastern cultures compared to western cultures?

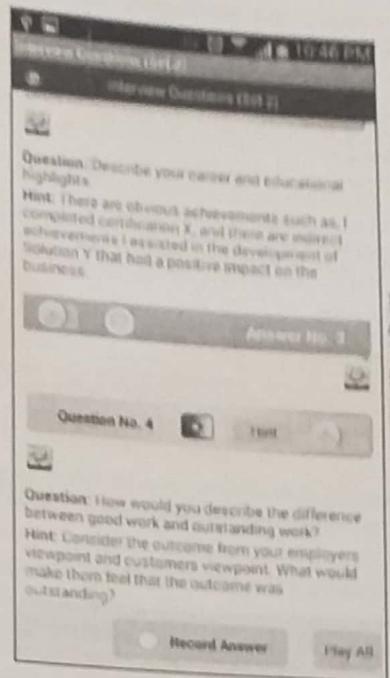


Figure 19.5 Interview Simulators

A number of mobile apps are available to help you practice and polish your interviewing skills.

Evaluate the length and clarity of your answers, your nonverbal behavior, and the quality of your voice.

using an interview simulator on your phone or tablet (see Figure 19.5). Record these mock interviews so you can evaluate yourself. Your college's career center may have computer-based systems for practicing interviews as well.

After each practice session, look for opportunities to improve. Have your mock interview partner critique your performance, or critique yourself if you're able to record your practice interviews, using the list of warning signs shown in Table 19.5. Pay close attention to the length of your planned answers as well. Interviewers want you to give complete answers, but they don't want you to take up valuable time or test their patience by chatting about minor or irrelevant details.³⁶

In addition to reviewing your answers, evaluate your non-verbal behavior, including your posture, eye contact, facial expressions, and hand gestures and movements. Do you come across as alert and upbeat or passive and withdrawn? Pay close attention to your speaking voice as well. If you tend to speak in a monotone, for instance, practice speaking in a livelier style, with more inflection and emphasis. And watch out for "filler words" such as *uh* and *um*. Many people start sentences with a filler without being conscious of doing so. Train yourself to pause silently for a moment instead as you gather your thoughts and plan what to say.

PRESENTING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

Dress conservatively and be well groomed for every interview.

Clothing and grooming are important elements of preparation because they reveal something about a candidate's personality, professionalism, and ability to sense the unspoken "rules" of a situation. Your research into various industries and professions should give you insight into expectations for business attire. If you're not sure what to wear, ask someone who works in the same industry or even visit the company at the end of the day and see what employees are wearing as they leave the office. You don't need to spend a

As you prepare answers, look for ways to frame your responses as brief stories (30 to 90 seconds) rather than simple declarative answers.³⁵ Cohesive stories tend to stick in the listener's mind more effectively than disconnected facts and statements.

Look for ways to frame your responses as brief stories rather than as dry facts or statements.

Planning Questions of Your Own

Remember that an interview is a two-way conversation: The questions you ask are just as important as the answers you provide. By asking insightful questions, you can demonstrate your understanding of the organization, steer the discussion into areas that allow you to present your qualifications to best advantage, and verify for yourself whether this is a good opportunity. Plus, interviewers expect you to ask questions, and they look negatively on candidates who don't have any questions to ask. For good questions that you might use as a starting point, see Table 19.4.

Preparing questions of your own helps you understand the company and the position, and it sends an important signal that you are truly interested.

BOOSTING YOUR CONFIDENCE

Interviewing is stressful for everyone, so some nervousness is natural. However, you can take steps to feel more confident. Start by reminding yourself that you have value to offer the employer and that the employer already thinks highly enough of you to invite you to an interview.

The best way to build your confidence is to prepare thoroughly and address shortcomings as best you can. In other words, take action.

If some aspect of your appearance or background makes you uneasy, correct it if possible or offset it by emphasizing positive traits such as warmth, wit, intelligence, or charm. Instead of dwelling on your weaknesses, focus on your strengths. Instead of worrying about how you will perform in the interview, focus on how you can help the organization succeed. As with public speaking, the more prepared you are, the more confident you'll be.

POLISHING YOUR INTERVIEW STYLE

Competence and confidence are the foundation of your interviewing style, and you can enhance them by giving the interviewer an impression of poise, good manners, and good judgment. You can develop a smooth style by staging mock interviews with a friend or

Staging mock interviews with a friend is one good way to hone your style.

TABLE 19.4 Ten Questions to Consider Asking an Interviewer

Question	Reason for Asking
1. What are the job's major responsibilities?	A vague answer could mean that the responsibilities have not been clearly defined, which is almost guaranteed to cause frustration if you take the job.
2. What qualities do you want in the person who fills this position?	This will help you go beyond the job description to understand what the company really wants.
3. How do you measure success for someone in this position?	A vague or incomplete answer could mean that the expectations you will face are unrealistic or ill defined.
4. What is the first problem that needs the attention of the person you hire?	Not only will this help you prepare, but it can also signal whether you're about to jump into a problematic situation.
5. How well do my qualifications align with the current and future needs of this position?	This gives you the opportunity to address any unspoken concerns the interviewer might have.
6. Why is this job now vacant?	If the previous employee got promoted, that's a good sign. If the person quit, that might not be such a good sign.
7. What makes your organization different from others in the industry?	The answer will help you assess whether the company has a clear strategy to succeed in its industry and whether top managers communicate this to lower-level employees.
8. How would you define your organization's managerial philosophy?	You want to know whether the managerial philosophy is consistent with your own working values.
9. What is a typical workday like for you?	The interviewer's response can give you clues about daily life at the company.
10. What are the next steps in the selection process? What's the best way to follow up with you?	Knowing where the company is in the hiring process will give you clues about following up after the interview and possibly give you hints about where you stand.

Sources: Jacquelyn Smith and Natalie Walters, "The 29 Smartest Questions to Ask at the End of Every Job Interview," *Business Insider*, 28 January 2016, www.businessinsider.com; Heather Huhman, "5 Must-Ask Questions at Job Interviews," *Glassdoor blog*, 7 February 2012, www.glassdoor.com.

school's campus, at company offices, via telephone (including Skype or another Internet-based phone service), or through a computer-based screening system. Time is limited in screening interviews, so keep your answers short while providing a few key points that confirm your fit for the position. If your screening interview will take place by phone, try to schedule it for a time when you can be focused and free from interruptions.¹¹

The next stage of interviews, the *selection stage*, helps the organization identify the top candidates from all those who qualify. During these interviews, show keen interest in the job, relate your skills and experience to the organization's needs, listen attentively, and ask questions that show you've done your research.

If the interviewers agree that you're a good candidate, you may receive a job offer, either on the spot or a few days later by phone, mail, or email. In other instances you may be invited back for a final evaluation, often by a higher-ranking executive. The objective of the *final stage* is often to sell you on the advantages of joining the organization.

COMMON TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Be prepared to encounter a variety of interviewing approaches. These can be distinguished by the way they are structured, the number of people involved, and the purpose of the interview.

Structured Versus Unstructured Interviews

In a structured interview, the interviewer (or a computer program) asks a series of questions in a predetermined order. Structured interviews help employers identify candidates who don't meet basic job criteria, and they allow the interview team to compare answers from multiple candidates.¹²

In contrast, in an *open-ended interview*, the interviewer adapts his or her line of questioning based on the answers you give and any questions you ask. Even though it may feel like a conversation, remember that it's still an interview, so keep your answers focused and professional.

MOBILE APP

Add the **Skype** mobile app to your phone to be ready for video interviews.

During the selection stage, continue to show how your skills and attributes can help the company.

During the final stage, the interviewer may try to sell you on working for the firm.

A structured interview follows a set sequence of questions, allowing the interview team to compare answers from all candidates.

In an open-ended interview, the interviewer adapts the line of questioning based on your responses and questions.

Panel and Group Interviews

Although one-on-one interviews are the most common format, some employers use panel or group interviews as well. In a *panel interview*, you meet with several interviewers at once.¹³ Try to make a connection with each person on the panel, and keep in mind that each person has a different perspective, so tailor your responses accordingly.¹⁴ For example, an upper-level manager is likely to be interested in your overall business sense and strategic perspective, whereas a potential colleague might be more interested in your technical skills and ability to work in a team. In a *group interview*, one or more interviewers meet with several candidates simultaneously. A key purpose of a group interview is to observe how the candidates interact.¹⁵ Group interviews can be tricky because you want to stand out while coming across as a supportive team player. Be sure to treat your fellow candidates with respect, while looking for opportunities to demonstrate the depth of knowledge you have about the company and its needs.

In a panel interview, you meet with several interviewers at once. In a group interview, you and several other candidates meet with one or more interviewers at once.

Behavioral, Situational, Working, and Stress Interviews

Interviewing techniques also vary based on the types of questions you are asked. Perhaps the most common type of interview these days is the *behavioral interview*, in which you are asked to relate specific incidents and experiences from your past.¹⁶ In contrast to generic questions that can often be answered with "canned" responses, behavioral questions require candidates to use their own experiences and attributes to craft answers. Studies show that behavioral interviewing is a much better predictor of success on the job than traditional interview questions.¹⁷ To prepare for a behavioral interview, review your work or college experiences to recall several instances in which you demonstrated an important job-related attribute or dealt with a challenge such as uncooperative team members or heavy workloads. Get ready with responses that quickly summarize the situation, the actions you took, and the outcome of those actions.¹⁸

In a behavioral interview, you are asked to describe how you handled situations from your past.

Example answer: Minutes of the staff meeting held on Weds 4th April

Present:

Lily Green (chair), Marcus Blue, Bradley Brown, Hazel Fawn, Rose Pink, Cameron White, Glenda Green
(Minutes)

1 Apologies: Apologies were received from Taylor Black

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read, agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

3 Matters arising

Bradley Brown and Daisy had agreed to finance Heather's training, which starts on 25th April.

4 Staff canteen accounts

Marcus Blue distributed copies of the canteen accounts which showed a profit of £1,300 over the first 6 months of the year.

It was suggested that new chairs be bought with some of this profit and Marcus agreed to obtain estimates for discussion at the next meeting.

MB, 25/4

5 Reception refurbishment

Following comments that the reception area looked rather shabby, Hazel Fawn offered to get quotations for redecorating and modernising. These will be discussed at the next meeting.

HF, 25/4

6 Student placements

Cameron White outlined proposals to take on work experience students to raise the company's profile and give access to new staff. He suggested two paid positions.

This was thought to be an excellent idea but the Chairperson stated that Board approval was required.

Cameron agreed to email the directors to ask them to discuss this at their meeting.

CW

7 Summer barbecue

Rose Pink agreed to book the Canalside Hotel for this event on 30 June and to send an email to inform all staff.

RP

8 Any other business: There was no other business.

9 Date of next meeting: Weds 25th April

33

Your version of the minutes:

Example
Present
Chairly Gr
Minutes

1

2

3

4

I was fortunate to receive two job offers during my search. Because my desire to work abroad can more readily be satisfied by another company, I have accepted that job offer. I deeply appreciate the time you spent talking with me. Thank you again for your consideration and kindness.

- Precedes the bad news with tactfully phrased reasons for the applicant's unfavorable decision
- Lets the reader down gently with a sincere and cordial ending

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

If you get a job offer while employed, you can maintain good relations with your current employer by writing a thoughtful letter of resignation to your immediate supervisor. Follow the advice for negative messages and make the letter sound positive, regardless of how you feel. Say something favorable about the organization, the people you work with, or what you've learned on the job. Then state your intention to leave and give the date of your last day on the job. Be sure you give your current employer at least two weeks' notice.

- Uses an appreciative opening to serve as a buffer

My sincere thanks to you and to all the other Emblem Corporation employees for helping me learn so much about serving the public these past two years. You have given me untold help and encouragement.

- States reasons before the bad news itself, using tactful phrasing to help keep the relationship friendly, should the writer later want letters of recommendation

You may recall that when you first interviewed me, my goal was to become a customer relations supervisor. Because that opportunity has been offered to me by another organization, I am submitting my resignation. I will miss my friends and colleagues at Emblem, but I want to take advantage of this opportunity.

- Discusses necessary details in an extra paragraph

I would like to terminate my work here two weeks from today (June 13) but can arrange to work an additional week if you want me to train a replacement.

- Tempers any disappointment with a cordial close

My sincere thanks and best wishes to all of you.

To verify the content and style of your follow-up messages, consult the tips in "Checklist: Writing Follow-Up Messages."

Letters of resignation should always be written in a businesslike and professional style that avoids criticism of your employer or your colleagues.

CHECKLIST ✓ Writing Follow-Up Messages

A. Thank-you messages

- Write a brief thank-you letter within two days of the interview.
- Acknowledge the interviewer's time and courtesy.
- Restate the specific job you're applying for.
- Express your enthusiasm about the organization and the job.
- Add any new facts that may help your chances.
- Politely ask for a decision.

B. Messages of inquiry

- If you haven't heard from the interviewer by the promised date, write a brief message of inquiry.
- Use the direct approach: main idea, necessary details, specific request.

C. Requests for a time extension

- Request an extension if you have pending interviews and need time to decide about an offer.
- Open on a friendly note.
- Explain why you need more time and express continued interest in the company.
- In the close, promise a quick decision if your request is denied and ask for a confirmation if your request is granted.

D. Letters of acceptance

- Send this message within five days of receiving the offer.
- State clearly that you accept the offer, identify the job you're accepting, and confirm vital details such as salary and start date.
- Make sure you want the job; an acceptance letter is treated as a legally binding contract.

E. Letters declining a job offer

- Use the indirect approach for negative messages.
- Open on a warm and appreciative note and then explain why you are refusing the offer.
- End on a sincere, positive note.

F. Letters of resignation

- Send a letter of resignation to your current employer as soon as possible.
- Begin with an appreciative buffer.
- In the middle section, state your reasons for leaving and actually state that you are resigning.
- Close cordially.

- A. Preparation**
1. Determine the requirements and financial salary range of the job.
 2. Research the organization's products, structure, financial standing, and prospects for growth.
 3. Determine the interviewer's name, title, and status in the firm.
 4. Prepare (but don't over-rehearse) answers for the questions you are likely to be asked.
 5. Develop relevant questions to ask.
 6. Dress in a businesslike manner, regardless of the mode of dress preferred within the organization.
 7. Take a briefcase or portfolio—with pen, paper, list of questions, two resumes, work samples.
 8. Double check the location and time of the interview, mapping out the route beforehand.
 9. Plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early; allow 10 to 15 minutes for possible problems en route.
- B. Initial stages of the interview**
1. Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile and direct eye contact.
 2. Offer a firm (but not long) handshake if the interviewer extends a hand.
 3. Take a seat only after the interviewer invites you to be seated or has taken his or her own seat.
 4. Listen for cues about what the questions are trying to reveal about you and your qualifications.
 5. Assume a calm and poised attitude (avoiding gum chewing, smoking, and other signs of nerves).

- C. Body of the interview**
1. Display a genuine (not artificial) smile when appropriate.
 2. Convey interest and enthusiasm.
 3. Listen attentively so that you can give intelligent responses (writing few notes).
 4. Relate your knowledge and skills to the position, and stress your positive qualities.
 5. Keep responses brief, clear, and to the point.
 6. Avoid exaggeration and convey honesty and sincerity.
 7. Avoid slighting references to former employers, lunch or dinner.
 8. Avoid alcoholic drinks if you are interviewed over lunch or dinner.
- D. Salary discussions**
1. Let the interviewer dominate the discussion of salary, but put it off until late in the interview if possible.
 2. If asked, state that you would like to receive the standard salary for the position.
- E. Closing stages of the interview**
1. Watch for signs that the interview is about to end.
 2. Tactfully ask when you will be advised of the decision on your application.
 3. If you're offered the job, either accept or ask for time to consider the offer.
 4. With a warm smile and a handshake, thank the interviewer for meeting with you.

WHAT EMPLOYERS DON'T LIKE TO SEE IN CANDIDATES

- Poor personal appearance
- Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited demeanor; a "superiority complex"; "know it all" attitude
- Inability to express ideas clearly, poor voice, diction, grammar
- Lack of knowledge or experience
- Poor preparation for the interview
- Lack of interest in the job
- Lack of planning for career/lack of purpose, goals
- Lack of enthusiasm; passive and indifferent demeanor
- Lack of confidence and poise; appearance of being nervous and ill at ease
- Insufficient evidence of achievement
- Failure to participate in extracurricular activities
- Overemphasis on money; interest only in the best dollar offer
- Poor scholastic record; just got by
- Unwillingness to start at the bottom; expecting too much too soon
- Tendency to make excuses
- Evasive answers; hedges on unfavorable factors in record
- Lack of tact
- Lack of maturity
- Lack of courtesy; ill mannered
- Condemnation of past employers
- Lack of social skills
- Marked dislike for schoolwork
- Lack of vitality
- Failure to look interviewer in the eye
- Limp, weak handshake

Example: "The company's mission to help graduates pay off their university debts speaks to me. I've been in that situation, and I'd love the opportunity to work with a company that's making a difference. Finding a company with a positive work environment and values that align with my own has remained a priority throughout my job search, and [insert company name] ranks at the top of the list."

5. What interests you about this role?

Like the previous question, hiring managers often include this question to make sure you understand the role, and to give you the opportunity to highlight your relevant skills. In addition to thoroughly reading the job description, it can be helpful to compare the role requirements against your skills and experience. Choose a few things you particularly enjoy or excel at, and focus on those in your answer.

Example: "I've been passionate about user experience design for most of my professional career. I was excited to see that [insert company name] uses Adobe products because I'm well-versed in the entire suite. Also, I'm a huge advocate for applying agile workflows to design. I think it's the most effective way to tackle large projects. I was able to successfully build and launch an agile process in my previous role as UX manager, and we saw considerable improvements in project speed."

6. What motivates you?

Employers ask this question to gauge your level of self-awareness and ensure your sources of motivation align with the role. To answer, be as specific as possible, provide real-life examples and tie your answer back to the job role.

Example: "Making a true difference in the lives of my patients and their families motivates me to strive for excellence in everything I do. I look forward to seeing my patient's reaction when we get a positive outcome that will change their lives forever. That's why I became a nurse, and why I'm pursuing a position in pediatrics."

7. What are you passionate about?

Much like the previous question about motivation, employers might ask what you are passionate about to better understand what drives you and what you care most deeply about. This can both help them understand whether you are a good fit for the role and if it fits into your larger goals. To answer, choose something you are genuinely passionate about, explain why you're passionate about it, give examples of how you've pursued this passion and relate it back to the job.

Example: "As an experienced, service-oriented professional with more than a decade of experience working in boutique salons, I thrive on creating a welcoming environment for all clients and providing the highest quality skincare services. My specialized training, along with my interpersonal skills, has helped me become adept at developing long-term, trusted relationships that help to build a loyal client base. These relationships are the reason I'm excited to go to work every day."

15. Why should we hire you?

While this question may seem like an intimidation tactic, interviewers generally bring this up to offer you another opportunity to explain why you're the best candidate. Your answer should address the skills and experience you offer and why you're a good culture fit.

Example: *"I have a passion for application development that's grown stronger over the course of my five-year career. The company's mission aligns with my personal values and, from my limited time in the office, I can already tell this is the sort of positive culture that I would thrive in. I want to work for a company that has the potential to reshape the industry, and I believe you're doing just that."*

16. Do you have any questions?

This might be one of the most important questions asked during the interview process because it allows you to explore any subject that hasn't been addressed and shows the interviewer you're excited about the role. By this point, you'll likely have already covered most of the basics about the position and the company, so take time to ask the interviewer questions about their own experiences with the company and gain tips on how you can succeed if you're hired.

Example: *"What do you love about working for this company?" "What would success look like in this role?" "What are some of the challenges people typically face in this position?"*

Much like preparing for a test in school, the best way to succeed in your interview is to study and practice. Do research on the company and the job, and practice your talking points until you feel confident about your answers. The more you prepare, the more likely you are to leave a lasting impression and outperform other candidates.

- Describe the details.
- Be clear. Don't think the audience will understand your demonstration speech topics immediately.
- Conclude each step.
- Do the demonstration process topic checks on the main points before you jump to the next step of this demonstrational speech topics tutorial.

Delivery Of Your Demonstration Speech Topics

First and for all: think about the rules and time limit of the public speaking assignment.

Apply these eight public speaking speech tips for delivering your demonstration speech topics:

1. Visual aids, like objects, actual items, models or drawings can help you.
2. Include personal stories and examples to illustrate your topics for a demonstrative speech.
3. Provide each audience member materials and ingredients to practice with.
4. Insure everyone is participating.
5. Look around you and see if your audience is following you.
6. Ask yourself if someone in the audience has to assist with your demonstration.
7. Close your speech with a memorable summary or with a clear call to action.
8. Ask if there are any questions about your demonstrative speech topic ideas.

Elements of an Excellent Demonstration Speech

You will prepare a 4 to 5 minute speech showing the audience how to do something. The speech must include visual aids. Your topic must be appropriate for your audience. Your topic must be approved.

I. **Nature of a Demonstration Speech:** In a demonstration speech, you inform your audience by showing them...

1. How to make something (e.g., food; crafts; household decorations; technological gear);
2. How to complete a process (e.g., playing a game or sport, or inspecting, maintaining, or repairing something); or
3. How something works (e.g., part of a car; a machine; computer software)

II. **Selecting a Topic:** It's best to choose something which...

1. You know well
2. Can be shown within reliable time boundaries

3. Isn't highly technical and doesn't include too many steps
4. Can easily be shown to a large group
5. Will expand listeners' knowledge

III. Organization:

1. Organize the body of your speech into 2-5 main points which correspond to parts of your process--rather than in a long series of steps
2. Provide clear "signposts" for each main step in the process

IV. Preparation:

1. Arrange and test any AV equipment beforehand
2. Practice repeatedly so you can handle items easily
3. Lay everything out ahead of time and make sure the entire audience can see your work area

V. Presentation:

1. Be as clear as possible; use simple language; explain jargon; define acronyms
2. Use easy-to-follow, step-by-step processes, and large, visible visuals

C. Avoid obstructions; make sure everyone in the room can see you without having to strain

4. Speak at a pace which your audience can easily follow, keeping in mind that you may be introducing them to terms and concepts which are new to them
5. Speak to your audience rather than to your objects, using the T-T-T method (touch/turn/talk);
maintain eye contact

VI. Momentum

1. Talk while you demonstrate; avoid "dead air time"
2. Be prepared to add extra commentary if part of your process takes longer than expected (e.g., if something you're stirring doesn't thicken quickly)
3. If what you're demonstrating normally takes more than 5 minutes, go through just enough steps to

- give the idea, then show the finished product
4. Pass out handouts before or after your speech unless people really need to read or see something
 5. If you'll be using a volunteer or needing a helper with equipment, identify that person up ahead of time
- VII. After your presentation:
1. Be prepared to answer any questions
 2. Quickly clear your items away so the next speaker can get ready

Speech Tips

A Demonstrative Speech is one in which you will demonstrate to your audience how to do something. It is easiest to decide on a topic if you start with a verb, such as:

- How to Do something
- How to Make something
- How to Fix something
- How something Works

Other tips:

- Think of anything that you are good at or have a lot of practice with, as it will be easier to break down the steps when you are very familiar with your actions.
- You will also want to consider the limitations of your location, your audience, and your time. For example, it would not be possible to cook a meal for your classmates as you would not have access to a kitchen or enough time.
- It would, however, be possible to demonstrate decorating cookies as you would not need a kitchen and you can take as much or as little time as you are allowed.

SAMPLE DEMONSTRATIVE SPEECH OUTLINE

SPEECH TOPIC

What your demonstrative speech is about, the theme or subject of your talk.

GENERAL PURPOSE

To demonstrate a process and give the audience information while using visual aids. Or to show how to do something, how something is done, how to make something, or how something works.

SPECIFIC PURPOSE OR PURPOSE STATEMENT

This purpose statement is to clearly state your specific goal or purpose. To persuade that ... or to inform on ... Speech outline sample: The purpose of this demonstration speech is to persuade my audience how to pack light for an international backpacking travel trip.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Ask yourself: Which of your choices have enough potential to offer your audience valuable information?

Therefore analyze your audience. Especially for demonstration speech topics:

- Who are they - demographics?
- What are their interests?
- What do they like?
- What are their needs?

CENTRAL IDEA OR THESIS STATEMENT

In the thesis statement you describe in one sentence your purpose and speech topic. In our example: Packing light for an international trip will mean freedom.

THE SUPPORTING MATERIALS

List here in the demonstrative speech outline your sources, bibliography and possible visual aids. In our example: Backpack and supplies

Get the Attention

Start with a statement that catches the attention of the listeners immediately. For example: Pack and then remove half!

How to Greet Them

If they don't know who you are, and you are not being introduced, then you have to introduce yourself at this point in your presentation. And tell why you are the best person to give this demonstration speech.

Preview the Main Points

Introduce in one sentence the main topics of your demonstrative speech.

Tell What's In It for Them

State why your presentation is useful to your listeners. Offer a benefit. Example: Packing light for an international trip will mean flexibility and can avoid wrinkled clothes.

BODY SECTION

Main Point I

What props, examples, quotes, statistics, reasons, arguments, evidence, visuals can support main points? Use them to construct your subpoints.

- Subpoint 1
- Subpoint 2
- Subpoint 3

Main Point II

- Subpoint 1
- Subpoint 2
- Subpoint 3

Main Point III

Subpoint 1
Subpoint 2
Subpoint 3

CONCLUSION

Summary
Closers

Recap the main points, steps or action sequences.

Try to find a original sentence or eye-opener to help the audience remember your demonstrative speech.

Don't forget to use transition sentences, word and phrases. Help your listeners to hop fluently from the introduction text to the body part, and from the body to the concluding part of this demonstrative speech outline.

50+ Topics and Ideas

Use this list of demonstrative speech topics to develop your own topics for a demonstrative speech. It can be anything you like. Start with one of these example phrases for setting up demonstrative ideas first:

- How To Make ...
- How To Fix ...
- How To Use ...
- How To Do ...
- How ... Works
- How ... Is Done, Produced or Made

And try it with other verbs. Like the demonstration speech topics below. Just vary and tweak.
How:

- | | |
|---|--|
| to cook a pie - or what ever you like to cook :-) | to become a princess |
| to tie a tie | to make your garden full of flowers year around to build a good web site :-) |
| to be a vegetarian | to clean your swimming pool |
| to fix a flat tire | to clean your golf clubs |
| to create a Halloween mask | to make a fast summer salad |
| to clean your car | to make a new candle of old ones |
| to play piano | to make your own wedding dress |
| to change a bank cheque | to organize your wedding |
| to dress like a princess | to make a water-colour |
| to play a computer game | to build a shed |
| to make a cocktail | to find demonstration speech topics |
| to taste wine | to prevent injury |
| to organize a surprise party | to develop the best serve in a tennis game |
| to print a digital photo | to knot a carpet |
| to eat oysters | to stop thinking |
| to register for voting | to speak Italian |
| to make Irish Coffee | to become a good actress |
| to read music notes | to become a famous filmstar |
| to learn playing guitar | to write a filmscript |
| to use your breath when you sing | to write a business-like letter |
| to make beer | to make honey |
| to bottle your own wine | |

to blow a glass
to train your brains
to dry your hair
to greet Japanese people
to use the cruise control
to make a genealogical tree
to start a bed & breakfast
to become a policeman
to climb a building
to make a dancing show

to make ice
to become the president
to be in the chair in a meeting
to make a sweet dessert
to snow board
to board in sand
to wrinkle a skirt
to calculate your golf handicap
to make a golf swing - or demonstration speech
topics related to your favorite sports

And so on ...

Another way of inventing demonstration speech topics is by associating. Look at the general categories and themes below.

Food and Drink, Household, Sports, Recreation, Health & Beauty, Home Improvement, Decoration, Cars, Government Science, Nature, College Games, Culture, Tires and SuspensionTrademarks, Travel Packing, Acne, Building Treehouses, Vaccines, Vacuum Cleaners, Valentines Day Dating, Vanishing Tricks, Ventilation Systems, Video Game Consoles, Making Home Videos, Volleyball Techniques, Warm Ups and Stretching Training Methods, Water Polo Rules, Wind Turbines, Tasting Wine Vintages, Woodworking, How to Write a Testimonial About Yourself, Sales Elevator Pitches, Yoga Programs ... Et cetera.

TASK

Can you come up with any good how to, technical or demonstrative speech ideas?

Think of any process from your field and fill the given outline for demonstrative speech on the next page.

SAMPLE DEMONSTRATIVE SPEECH OUTLINE

SPEECH TOPIC

GENERAL PURPOSE

SPECIFIC PURPOSE OR
PURPOSE STATEMENT

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

CENTRAL IDEA OR THESIS
STATEMENT

THE SUPPORTING
MATERIALS

Get the Attention

How to Greet Them

Preview the Main Points

Tell What's In It for Them

BODY SECTION

Main Point I

- Subpoint 1
- Subpoint 2
- Subpoint 3

Main Point II

- Subpoint 1
- Subpoint 2
- Subpoint 3

Main Point III

- Subpoint 1
- Subpoint 2
- Subpoint 3

CONCLUSION

Summary

Closer

DEMONSTRATIVE SPEECHES IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Demonstrative speeches are speeches in which the aim of the speaker is to demonstrate

- A process
- How an activity/task is done
- How to use a given object or a thing

For projects given in different courses, students are required to give a demonstrative speech (Also called a presentation without a slide show) in front of the teachers. Following steps are involved in planning a demonstrative speech:

1. Determine the speech purpose: The first most important thing is to understand your aim behind speaking. Usually, there can be two major aims: TO INFORM and TO PERSUADE.
2. Analyze audience: Remember that your audience will be lecturers, professors, or clients.
3. Context analysis: The situation and domain of communication will be formal.
4. Planning your speech: First brainstorm, and jot down all the steps involved in a process, all the steps one needs to follow when performing a task, and all the key instructions and guidelines about how to use something. The idea is to break down the subject into many parts. Explain each part separately.
5. Organizing information: Organize everything into a clear pattern which will naturally lead to the completion of the task or process.
6. Visual aid: Use charts, videos, objects, or anything else that can help you demonstrate and explain everything effectively.

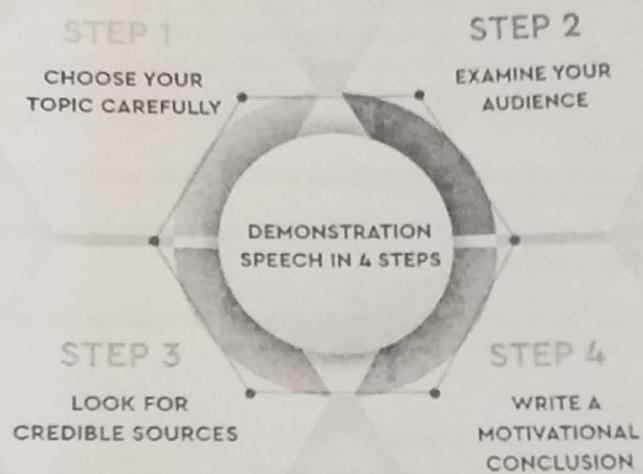
For example, in a demonstrative speech on the project "Developing a Game", your teacher will expect you to achieve the following objectives and address the given issues:

- To inform about the game
- Explain why you chose this type of a game.
- To demonstrate how the game will be used/ operated?
- What are the different functions?
- How can these functions be performed? You will have to give a demo and explain.
- What techniques (algorithms) did you use and why? Justify your choices.
- How can your game serve the society?
- What type of impact will your game have on the human personality and psychology?
- What are the future implications of your game?
- Where do you see it in the future?

In your speech, you will carry out two goals: Inform with demo and persuade the teacher in favor of your choices and vision. You can address each question one by one in an organized fashion. Same questions and issues are to be addressed in other such projects as well.

Demonstration speech definition

As the name implies, demonstration speech is a speech devoted to teaching the audience how to do a particular thing. It is a clear, step-by-step practical guide which intends to show people methods of using regular items and even improve someone's life with it. Demonstration speeches exist in different forms: they can be lengthy and detailed, short and straightforward, or medium and accurate. But either way, the very essence of this task is to teach you how to put thoughts into one, well-structured, and logical sequence of steps. It might seem dubious to take such a specific assignment, but if you take time to explore all the nuances and requirements for this task, it'll be much easier to handle it eventually.



- **Choose Your Topic Carefully**

Like with any other essay type, demonstration speech starts with topic selection. You have a vast field of "how to" speech ideas to talk about, but the ultimate choice is always on you. Also, professors often tend to give a specific topic to their students. In cases like this, it's even easier. Regardless of what your final topic is, there's always a need for research. Once the topic is defined, and you're 100 percent confident that it's going to fit the timeframe for delivery, go on to the next step, which is the audience analysis.

Examine Your Audience

There are specific criteria which can help you study the audience prior to delivering a speech. These factors include age, occupation, preferences, interests, and so on. So for example, if your listeners are professional gardeners, they'll probably expect some useful advice on their sphere of interest. Instead of nurturing them with something as banal as "How to grow a plant," give them real information, like "How to grow and take care of palm Washingtonia." Likewise, if your audience composes of teenagers, speak about something thought-provoking, yet not too professional and dull. Take, for instance, the topic on how to become successful, or how to deal with depression.

Look for Credible Sources

Before writing the demonstration speech, you'll first need some assistance to prove the credibility of your sayings. If you don't want the audience to think like the entire speech is a fly of your imagination, you should arm yourself with relevant evidence to prove the mentioned points. There are many places you can go to, like local libraries. They contain countless books on your topic, so you can use them for your advantage. Alternatively, consider using online resources, but only credible ones if you don't feel like walking anywhere. Even if such assistance is not enough for you, ask relatives or friends for help. Some of them might be experts in your topic, and more than willing to explain how this or that thing works.

• Write a Motivational Conclusion

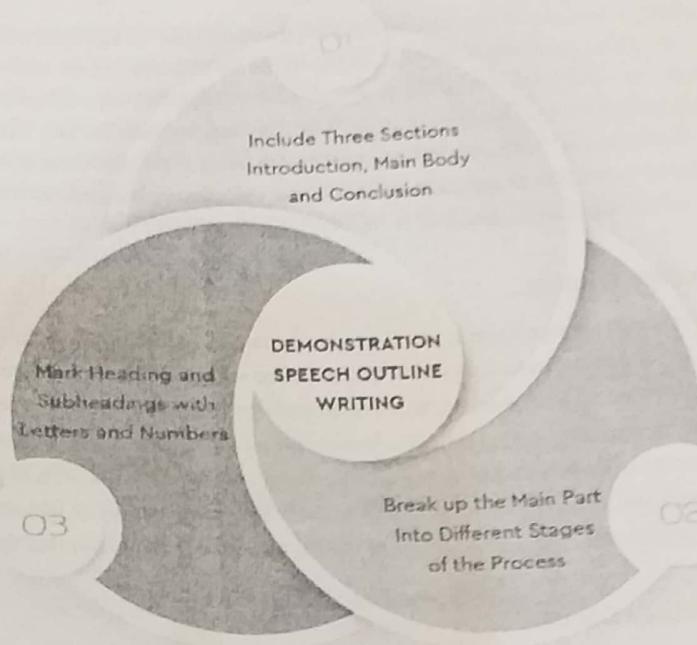
The best way to finish your demonstration speech is to give your audience a great insight into the process they haven't experienced themselves. For this, you can call listeners to action and motivate them to follow your practice. Let's review an example of a proper ending: "Now that you've learned about the basics of DIY table creation, you can craft one easily by yourself without costly materials and mountains of time." Such a prominent calling will make people not only have a positive impression of your speech but also encourage them to make something useful.

Demonstration speech outline

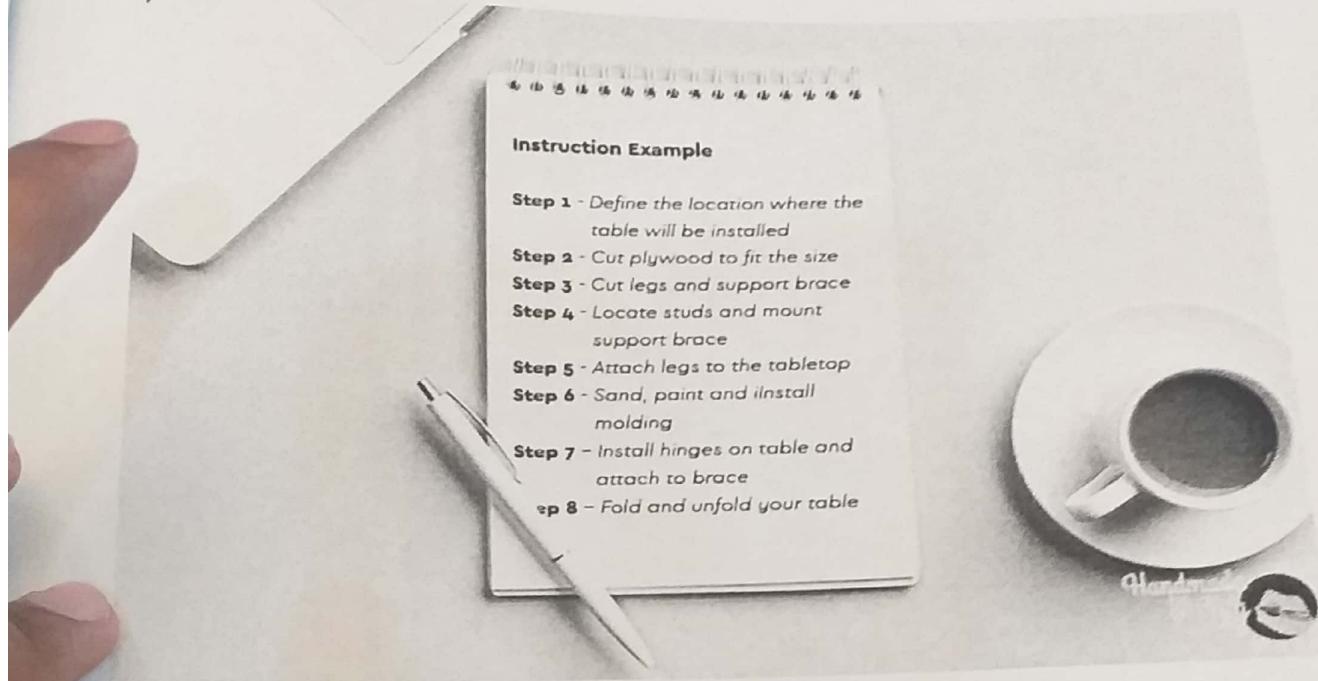
An outline is a way to structure the information that you want to share with your audience. The outline should explicitly showcase the order of steps that you will use in your demonstration speech. Many students seem to neglect the power of creating outlines for their academic writing tasks, but in vain. The key feature that makes outlines as significant as other processes of speech creation is a schematic representation of the main ideas. It means that writing the final variant of your demonstration speech will be much easier as you have an exact plan, and you don't need to think of the main points on the fly. As for the structure of an outline, it should contain the following elements:

- three sections – introduction, main body, and conclusion.
- the main part should be broken up into different stages of the process.

- headings and subheadings marked with letters and numbers for easier navigation throughout the outline



At the phase of plan creation, it's also vital to adhere to theses and use them as reference points. These can be either sentences or just keywords. Do as you are accustomed to doing and feel comfortable with making amendments before proceeding with writing the speech text. For each statement, use examples from personal life to validate the adequacy of described steps. Vast reasoning is, of course, excellent, but without specifics, they do not cling. To find the response in the heart of the audience, make your how-to-do instructions more understandable. For example, if you want to explain to your audience how to make and install a wall-mounted folding table, don't just enumerate the instruments required and tell people how to fold and unfold the table. Rather, give them proper instructions.



DEMONSTRATIVE SPEECHES IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Demonstrative speeches are speeches in which the aim of the speaker is to demonstrate

- A process
- How an activity/task is done
- How to use a given object or a thing

For projects given in different courses, students are required to give a demonstrative speech (Also called a presentation without a slide show) in front of the teachers. Following steps are involved in planning a demonstrative speech:

1. Determine the speech purpose: The first most important thing is to understand your aim behind speaking. Usually, there can be two major aims: TO INFORM and TO PERSUADE.
2. Analyze audience: Remember that your audience will be lecturers, professors, or clients.
3. Context analysis: The situation and domain of communication will be formal.
4. Planning your speech: First brainstorm, and jot down all the steps involved in a process, all the steps one needs to follow when performing a task, and all the key instructions and guidelines about how to use something. The idea is to break down the subject into many parts. Explain each part separately.

5. Organizing information: Organize everything into a clear pattern which will naturally lead to the completion of the task or process.
6. Visual aid: Use charts, videos, objects, or anything else that can help you demonstrate and explain everything effectively.

For example, in a demonstrative speech on the project "Developing a Game", your teacher will expect you to achieve the following objectives and address the given issues:

- To inform about the game
- Explain why you chose this type of a game.
- To demonstrate how the game will be used/ operated?
- What are the different functions?
- How can these functions be performed? You will have to give a demo and explain.
- What techniques (algorithms) did you use and why? Justify your choices.
- How can your game serve the society?
- What type of impact will your game have on the human personality and psychology?
- What are the future implications of your game?
- Where do you see it in the future?

In your speech, you will carry out two goals: Inform with demo and persuade the teacher in favor of your choices and vision. You can address each question one by one in an organized fashion. Same questions and issues are to be addressed in other such projects as well.

Demonstrative Speeches

Demonstration speeches are sometimes referred to as "process" or "how to" speeches because they often entail demonstrating something. These speeches require you to provide steps that will help your audience understand how to accomplish a specific task or process.

However, "how to" speeches can be tricky in that there are rarely universally agreed upon (i.e. irrefutable) ways to do anything. If your professor asked the students in his or her public speaking class to each bring in a recipe for baking chocolate chip cookies, would all of them be the exact same recipe? Probably not, but they would all be similar and, most importantly, they would all give you chocolate chip cookies as the end result. Students giving a demonstration speech will want to avoid saying "You should bake the cookies for 12 minutes" since that is not how everyone does it. Instead, the student should say something like:

"You can bake the cookies for 10 minutes."

"One option is to bake the cookies for 10 minutes."

"This particular recipe calls for the cookies to be baked for 10 minutes."

Each of the previous three statements is absolutely a fact that no one can argue or disagree with. While some people may say 12 minutes is too long or too short (depending on how soft or hard they like their cookies), no one can reasonably argue that these statements are not true.

Flow of Demonstrative speeches

Your Purpose - Determine the specific purpose of your speech topics. State it in one simple sentence.
For example: I want to demonstrate how to ____.

Your Central Idea - Determine the central idea of your demonstration speech text. In other words: a clear demonstration speech topic statement. Describe what your demo presentation is about and why you want to share it.

How to Introduce Your Demonstration Speech Topics - Once you have decided on a demonstration speech topic, write an attractive, effective and interactive attention getting introduction. Think about these sample introductions:

- Tell them what you are going to teach them.
- Tell them why you choose to demonstrate this topic.
- Then tell them why your listeners should know how to do it.
- Tell them that they are going to do it themselves in a couple of minutes and that the only thing your audience has to do is follow your instructions.

Your Demonstrative Speech Topics Outline - You've picked out a good demonstration speech topic? Present and demonstrate it to your listeners step by step.

- So, outline the steps of your topic.
- Show the activities or moves you have to make in a logical chronological order.

is to determine your current career trajectory and how this role plays into helping you reach your ultimate goals.

Example: "I would like to continue developing my marketing expertise as well as my leadership skills over the next several years. One of the reasons I'm interested in working for a fast-growing startup company is that I'll have the ability to wear many hats and collaborate with many different departments. I believe this experience will serve me well in achieving my ultimate goal of someday leading a marketing department."

12. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Understanding how you imagine your life in the future can help employers understand whether the trajectory of the role and company fits in with your personal development goals. To answer, provide general ideas about the skills you want to develop, the types of roles you see yourself in and things you would like to have accomplished.

Example: "In five years, I'd like to be an industry expert in my field, able to train and mentor students and entry-level designers alike. I would also like to gain specialized experience in user experience to be a well-rounded contributor working with design and marketing teams on large-scale projects that make a difference both in the company and the global community."

13. Can you tell me about a difficult work situation and how you overcame it?

This question is often used to assess how well you perform under pressure as well as your problem-solving abilities. Keep in mind stories are more memorable than facts and figures, so strive to "show" instead of "tell." This is also an excellent opportunity to show your human side and how you're willing to go the extra mile without being asked.

Example: "It was the first day of my boss's two-week holiday and our agency's highest-paying client threatened to leave because he didn't feel he was getting the personalized service he was promised. I spent my lunch hour on the phone with him, talking through his concerns. We even brainstormed ideas for his next campaign. He was so grateful for the personal attention that he signed another six-month contract before my boss even returned from her trip."

14. What is your salary range expectation?

Interviewers ask this question to make sure your expectations are in line with the amount they've budgeted for the role. If you give a salary range exceedingly lower or higher than the market value of the position, it gives the impression that you don't know your worth. Research the typical compensation range for the role on [Indeed Salaries](#), and tend toward the higher side of your range. Be sure to let the hiring manager know if you're flexible with your rate.

Example: "My salary expectation is between Rs.XX,XXX and Rs.XX,XXX, which is the average salary for a candidate with my level of experience in this city. However, I am flexible."

8. Why are you leaving your current job?

There are many reasons for leaving a job. Prepare a thoughtful answer that will give your interviewer confidence that you're being deliberate about this job change. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects of your current or previous role, focus on the future and what you hope to gain in your next position.

Example: "I'm looking for an opportunity that gives me the ability to build closer, long-term relationships with clients. In my current role, the sales cycle is so short that I don't spend as much time building a relationship with my customers as I'd like. Relationship-building is one of the reasons I chose a career in sales, and I look forward to working with a company where that's a top priority."

9. What are your greatest strengths?

This question gives you an opportunity to talk about both your technical and soft skills. To answer, share qualities and personal attributes and then relate them back to the role for which you're interviewing.

Example: "I'm a natural problem-solver. I find it rewarding to dig deep and uncover solutions to challenges—it's like solving a puzzle. It's something I've always excelled at, and something I enjoy. Much of product development is about finding innovative solutions to challenging issues, which is what drew me to this career path in the first place."

For more on answering this question, visit [Interview Question: "What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses?"](#)

10. What are your greatest weaknesses?

It can feel awkward to discuss your weaknesses in an environment where you're expected to focus on your accomplishments. However, when answered correctly, sharing your weaknesses can show that you are self-aware and want to continuously get better at your job—traits that are extremely attractive to many employers. Remember to start with the weakness and then discuss the measures you've taken to improve. This way, you're finishing your answer on a positive note.

Example: "I sometimes have trouble saying 'no' and end up overwhelmed by my workload. Earlier in my career, I would take on so many projects that I'd work evenings and weekends. It was stressful. I realized this was counterproductive, so I started using workload management tools and setting better expectations for myself and my teammates."

11. What are your goals for the future?

Often hiring managers ask about your future goals to determine whether or not you're looking to stay with the company long-term. Additionally, this question is used to gauge your ambition, expectations for your career and your ability to plan ahead. The best way to handle this question

From my 12 years of experience as an executive assistant, I've developed the ability to anticipate roadblocks and create effective alternative plans. My greatest value to any executive is my ability to work independently, freeing up their time to focus on the needs of the business.

It's clear that you're looking for someone who understands the nuances of managing a CEO's busy day and can proactively tackle issues. As someone with a sharp eye for detail and a drive to organize, I thrive on making sure every day has a clear plan and every plan is clearly communicated."

For more on answering this question, visit [Interview Question: "Tell Me About Yourself."](#)

2. How would you describe yourself?

When an interviewer asks you to talk about yourself, they're looking for information about how your qualities and characteristics align with the skills they believe are required to succeed in the role. If possible, include quantifiable results to demonstrate how you use your best attributes to drive success.

Example: *"I am a vigilant and proactive Security Officer working to ensure safe, secure, and orderly environments. I'm also a lifelong learner, always seeking out the latest security equipment and techniques to patrol buildings."*

Lastly, I am thorough, documenting all incidents and actively making suggestions to management about security improvements and changes."

3. What makes you unique?

Employers often ask this question to identify why you might be more qualified than other candidates they're interviewing. To answer, focus on why hiring you would benefit the employer. Since you don't know the other applicants, it can be challenging to think about your answer in relation to them. Addressing why your background makes you a good fit will let employers know why your traits and qualifications make you well prepared.

Example: *"What makes me unique is that I have four years of experience in the retail industry. Because I've had first-hand experience fielding shoppers' questions, feedback and complaints, I know what customers want. I know what it takes to create a positive consumer experience through marketing."*

4. Why do you want to work here?

Interviewers often ask this question as a way to determine whether or not you took time to research the company and to learn why you see yourself as a good fit. The best way to prepare for this question is to do your homework and learn about the products, services, mission, history and culture of the workplace. In your answer, mention the aspects of the company that appeal to you and align with your career goals. Explain why you're looking for these things in an employer.

Interview Strategies: Answering the 16 Toughest Questions

As you prepare for your interview, you may be considering which questions the employer is going to ask you. While there's no way to know for sure what topics will be covered, there are several popular interview questions you can expect to be asked.

Here's how to answer the 16 most common interview questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. What makes you unique?
4. Why do you want to work here?
5. What interests you about this role?
6. What motivates you?
7. What are you passionate about?
8. Why are you leaving your current job?
9. What are your greatest strengths?
10. What are your greatest weaknesses?
11. What are your goals for the future?
12. Where do you see yourself in five years?
13. Can you tell me about a difficult work situation and how you overcame it?
14. What is your salary range expectation?
15. Why should we hire you?
16. Do you have any questions?

Every interviewer is different and their questions may vary. By preparing your answers to these common interview questions, you can develop compelling talking points to make a great impression during your next job interview.

Common interview questions (with example answers)

1. Tell me about yourself.

Your interviewers will likely start out with a question about yourself and your background to get to know you. Start out by giving them an overview about your current position or activities, then provide the most important and relevant highlights from your background that make you most qualified for the role. If you'd like, it is generally acceptable to include some light personal details about things like your pets, hobbies or family. Doing so can help you be more memorable and personable to the interviewer.

Example: *Currently, I serve as the assistant to three of the company's five executive team members, including the CEO. During my time at the organization, I have been recognized for my time management skills, writing abilities and commitment to excellence.*

Ineffective

Request for extension - Message (HTML)

MESSAGE INSERT OPTIONS FORMAT TEXT REVIEW DEVELOPER ? X

To: Hank.Lapuzo@onestarfoods.com
Subject: Request for extension

Send | Submit | Request for extension

Dear Mr. Lapuzo:

I need more time to give you a decision about your offer of the e-commerce director position at Lone Star Foods. I am thrilled to get the offer, don't get me wrong, but I have another iron in the fire, as they say.

To make a long story short, I had a follow-up interview with another company on my schedule before my interview with you. Although I am truly interested in your organization because of its commitment to quality and team-based management style, this other job bears looking into.

I am so sorry to hold you up, but you certainly understand my need to verify and compare this other opportunity. I'll let you know by January 25, possibly earlier if I can.

Sincerely,

Effective

Request for extension - Message (HTML)

MESSAGE INSERT OPTIONS FORMAT TEXT REVIEW DEVELOPER ? X

To: Hank.Lapuzo@onestarfoods.com
Subject: Request for extension

Dear Mr. Lapuzo:

The e-commerce director position at Lone Star Foods is an exciting challenge, and I am thrilled that you offered me the position.

Because of another commitment, I would appreciate your giving me until January 25 to make a decision. Before our interview, I scheduled a follow-up interview with another company. I'm interested in your organization because of its commitment to quality and team-based management style, but I do feel obligated to keep my appointment.

If you need my decision immediately, I certainly understand. However, if you can allow me the added time to fulfill this earlier commitment, I would be grateful. Please let me know at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Chang Li
1448 Solsbury Avenue
Thunderhawk, SD 57655
(605) 555-6897

- ← (a) "I need" is a blunt and fairly offensive way to start any message, and particularly so when one is asking the reader to make an accommodation.
- ← (b) "To make a long story short" only makes the story longer, and saying "this other job bears looking into" sounds self-centered.

- ← (c) Apologizing isn't necessary under the circumstances, but the writer then commits a serious blunder by failing to ask for the extension to January 25.

- ← (a) This positive opener confirms the writer's interest in the job and serves as buffer before the upcoming request.

- ← (b) Phrasing this as the need to meet a prior commitment is a graceful way to communicate the idea of wanting to explore the other opportunity, without coming right out and saying so.

- ← (c) The respectful close acknowledges that it might not be possible for the reader to accommodate the request for an extension. The conditional phrasing ("if you can") is a good way to make the request without coming across as demanding.

Figure 19.7 Request for a Time Extension

Needing more time to decide on a job offer is not uncommon, particularly for candidates with desirable credentials. However, make the request in a respectful and subtle way. The reader understands you are comparing opportunities and looking for the best offer, so you don't need to belabor this point.

LETTER DECLINING A JOB OFFER

If you decide to decline a job offer, do so tactfully, using the model for negative messages.

After all your interviews, you may find that you need to write a letter declining a job offer. Use the techniques for negative messages (see Chapter 11): Open warmly, state the reasons for refusing the offer, decline the offer explicitly, and close on a pleasant note that expresses gratitude. By taking the time to write a sincere, tactful letter, you leave the door open for future contact:

Thank you for your hospitality during my interview at your Durham facility last month. I'm flattered that you would offer me the computer analyst position that we talked about.

← Uses a buffer in the opening paragraph

Ineffective

Dear Ms. Reynolds:

The talk, the tour, watching commercials being filmed—I had a great time interviewing with you yesterday! That was nice of you to take so much time to show me around. You guys are doing so many cool things there, and your tour convinced me that I would really enjoy working on the various film and TV productions you do there.

Again, thank you for the chat. I really believe you and I hit it off and would make a great team. Please let me know your decision as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Michael Espinosa
585 Montoya Road
Las Cruces, NM 88005
(505) 555-6208
espinosam@newm.com

(a) The subject line is too generic and doesn't give the reader any clues about the contents of the message.
 (b) The message oozes with enthusiasm but beyond that it doesn't really say anything to further the candidate's cause.
 (c) The writer fails to use this opportunity to confirm his ability to perform the job.
 (d) The tone here is too personal, and the closing line is too demanding.

Effective

Dear Ms. Reynolds:

After talking with you yesterday, touring your sets, and watching commercials being filmed, I remain enthusiastic about the possibility of joining your staff as a production assistant. Thanks for taking so much time to show me around.

During our meeting, I said I would prefer not to relocate, but I've reconsidered the matter. I would be pleased to relocate wherever you might need my skills in set decoration and prop design.

Now that you've explained the details of your operation, I feel quite strongly that I can make a contribution to the sorts of productions you are lining up. You can also count on me to be an energetic employee and a positive addition to your crew. I look forward to hearing your decision.

Sincerely,

Michael Espinosa
585 Montoya Road
Las Cruces, NM 88005
(505) 555-6208

Figure 19.6 Follow-Up Message

Use the follow-up message after an interview to express continued interest in the opportunity, to correct or expand on any information you provided during the interview, and to thank the interviewer for his or her time.

Enclosed are the health insurance forms you asked me to complete and sign. I've already given notice to my current employer and will be able to start work on Monday, January 18. ← Covers miscellaneous details in the body

The prospect of joining your firm is exciting. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, and I look forward to making a positive contribution. ← Closes with another reference to the good news and a look toward the future

Be aware that a job offer and a written acceptance of that offer can constitute a legally binding contract, for both you and the employer. Before you send an acceptance letter, be sure you want the job. Written acceptance of a job offer can be considered a legally binding contract.