

## **MCOM 281: Public Speaking Checklist**

### **Content Checklist**

As you write your speech outline, go through this list and shape it accordingly:

1. Know your audience well, including their needs and wants.
2. Be sensitive to multicultural contexts.
3. Choose a speech topic you are passionate about.
4. Have a worthwhile topic (Don't waste our precious time).
5. Do thorough research. (Do I have enough quality facts, statistics, testimonials, narratives, counter-arguments, etc.?)
6. Have a hook or angle that makes your approach to the topic fascinating.
7. Find stories and anecdotes that help support your message and/or enable the audience to experience and emotionally relate to your points.
8. Know your topic well and consider whether it is ethical.
9. Stress the benefits of your topic to your audience.
10. Have a clear thesis statement containing all of your main points.
11. Have an appropriate and clear organization pattern.
12. Craft a cogent and compelling Introduction that sets up your speech well.
13. Structure your main points well.
14. Structure your sub-points well.
15. Support your main points well.
16. Cite your research support and use your visual aids well.
17. Use internal transitions (previews and recaps) judiciously.
18. On re-write drafts, proportion your Introduction, Main body, and Conclusion so that the content flows well and creates "pictures" the audience can visualize and connect to.
19. Practice, trim, augment, etc. so that the ideas and insights flow well and are clear.
20. Craft a strong conclusion.

## **Delivery Checklist**

As you practice your speech, work on the following:

1. **Voice volume and projection** —Not too loud or too soft—relative to the situation and size of the room.
2. **Vocal variety and speaking rate**—Not flat, not too fast or too slow—relative to your audience and situation.
3. **Voice pitch**—A pleasing vocal quality—not whiney, nasally, tinny, etc.
4. **Articulation**—Proper pronunciation, enunciation, accent or dialect.
  - a. Practice articulation exercises to loosen up the mouth before speaking, e.g. me, me, mow, mah, whoo, wow, whee, wa.
5. **Pauses for emphasis**—Not too many, not too few.
6. **Gestures and mannerisms** —Not too big, not too many, not too wild, not too distracting but well timed and paced.
7. **Eye contact**—Take in the whole audience.
  - a. See people but don't make them uncomfortable by staring at them and single them out.
8. **Facial expressions**—Don't be a robot or a maniacal ax murderer.
9. **Posture**—Stand up right, but not too stiff or artificial.
10. **Dress**—Appropriate to the occasion, audience, and topic.
11. **Narrate well**—Move us with emotion and word pictures in your stories and anecdotes.
12. **Notes**—Glance at them when necessary, but don't read them.
13. Study **audience feedback** during your speech:
  - a. Their attention span—are you going too long?
  - b. Their confusion—are you not being clear?
  - c. Their connection—are they relating to you and your material?
  - d. Etc.
14. **Rehearse** in a similar space to the one where you will deliver your speech (if possible).
15. **Time your speech**—Is it too long or too short?

- a. Cut or add items if necessary.
- 16. Hone your **sharp opening and “killer” close**.
- 17. Mentally **pre-visualize** yourself giving the speech and doing well.
- 18. **Breathe and relax** during your speech.
- 19. **Love your audience**.
- 20. **Keep up your energy** during the speech and finish strong.

Remember to rehearse your speech in front of trusted people to get honest feedback regarding what is clear and not clear, and what is being delivered well and not so well.

### **Active Listening Checklist**

As an audience member we have an obligation to listen well. Practice these steps as you listen to the speeches in this course and elsewhere:

1. Put yourself in the mindset that you want to listen and commit to truly hearing the message.
2. Shake off distractions and noise that might interfere with listening well, including pre-judging the speaker.
3. Turn off your smart phone.
4. Focus your mind on the moment at hand, not what is going on around you or what is on the Internet.
5. Sit up straight.
6. Make eye contact with the speaker.
7. Focus on the speaker’s words and not the things around you.
8. Refocus on the speaker and his or her message if you get distracted.
9. Give feedback to the speaker by nodding, smiling, showing you are confused, etc.
10. If appropriate, clap or say “yes” or “uh-huh” to points you like.
11. Fight to not let your political or ideological bias prevent you from listening.
12. Fight to listen if you passionately disagree with the speaker’s message.
13. Fight to listen if you find the speaker’s delivery distracting.

14. Take notes on what you agree with and do not agree with.
15. Ponder rebuttals to what you do not agree with, but don't get caught up in them and miss more of the message.
16. Periodically paraphrase or summarize to yourself what the message is.
17. Continually ask, "What is the core message of this speech?"
18. Ask, "What is the speaker saying at a deeper level?" (subtext)
19. Formulate questions to ask, especially after the speech is over.
20. Applaud and give the speaker the respect he or she needs and deserves.

**Remember:** Respect the speaker as you would want to be respected, and in the interest of civility and charity, allow him or her the right to be heard. You do not have to agree.