

tell them why. Audiences get frustrated quickly when they don't get what's going on and feel left out. Needing to stay oriented as we follow demands that the teller not let us down, that you keep us on your track at all times.

*Unclear Language and Unfamiliar Words Lose and Anger  
Listeners*

When you say something I don't understand and leave it, you are making me notice how dumb I am and how smart (knowledgeable, sophisticated, competent, different from me) you are! Is that ever useful? It creates these effects:

- *You lose me*

I have to stop listening in order to start thinking about what that word or phrase means. While I do *that*, since I come equipped with only one brain, I have to stop paying attention to *you*. You rattle on, oblivious to the fact that you just lost your audience. This is particularly so if I'm struggling to understand complex, unfamiliar, or technical material, not well explained.

- *You make me angry*

No one welcomes the messenger who shows us our own incompetence, ignorance, or unpreparedness. Beware of this response universally, but especially when you are presenting to a superior who may need to know *something* of your specialty but not the in-depth knowledge you have. Making him/her ask for clarification about technical, unfamiliar words and concepts instead of your simply providing it is an obnoxious, if not downright threatening posture to take. Studiously avoid exposing your audience or competing with the boss about smarts. Be clear, self-edited, and helpful.

*Oral Presentation Is Difficult to Follow*

*You* not only know where you're going and what your subject matter is but have created *notes* and *documents* to help you. Your hapless first-time and once-only *listener* is more than ever in the dark next to you.

Since your information is new, the only anchor you can offer is *order*; the basic skeleton of how you will present your material.

For your listeners to follow you, the structure and organization of your presentation must be very clear. So clear that your listeners could almost visualize and write your outline as you go along. Knowing what to