

delivering your speech

chapter 12

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introduction

Imagine this. A speech topic is perfectly chosen; the content is nicely organized and flawlessly researched; a great deal of work was invested in preparing the “text” or “script” of the speech, but the speech is poorly delivered. Will the speech be effective? Will the audience stay alert and follow it? Will the audience properly interpret the speaker’s intended message? These last questions contribute to the universal fear of public speaking. It is not the preparation of a speech that strikes terror in the hearts of so many, but the *performance* of a speech!

Don't lower your expectations to meet your performance. Raise your level of performance to meet your expectations. Expect the best of yourself, and then do what is necessary to make it a reality.

~ Ralph Marston

Since an audience does not usually read the text of a speech, but simply listens to it, all the preparation of the content by the speaker must be encoded into a complex combination of communication channels (words, sounds, visual elements, etc.) ready to be performed. The purpose of this chapter is to offer guidance to transfer the speech from the page to the stage.

There is an old Burlesque joke:

chapter objectives

After studying this chapter you should be able to:

1. Identify, define and give an example of each of the four main types of delivery
2. Determine the best speaking style for different types of speaking occasions
3. Identify and utilize voice aspects of speaking
4. Recognize and utilize the key “ingredients” of a well-performed speech
5. Adapt to the physical aspects of a speaking venue
6. Plan the speech in preparation for delivery/performance of a speech.

*One man on a New York street comes up to another and asks,
“How can I get to Carnegie Hall?”
The second man answers,
“PRACTICE.”*

Practice is the key to excellent performance. Trite as it might sound (or obvious), the basic foundation for a good speech delivery involves the two “P’s”: Preparation and Practice. There is not an actor, athlete, or musician worth his/her salary who does not prepare and practice. Even when a

chapter outline

- **Introduction**
- **Methods of Delivery**
 - Manuscript Style
 - Memorized Style
 - Impromptu Style
 - Extemporaneous Style
- **Vocal Aspects of Delivery**
 - Articulation
 - Pronunciation
 - Accent, Dialect and Regionalisms
 - Vocal Quality
 - Pitch and Inflection
 - Rate of Speaking
 - Pauses Versus Vocalized Pauses
 - Vocal Projection
- **Nonverbal Aspects of Delivery**
 - Personal Appearance
 - Movement and Gestures
 - Facial Expressions
 - Eye Contact
- **Mastering the Location**
 - The Room
 - The Podium
 - The Equipment
 - Using a Microphone
 - Water Rules
- **Preparation, Practice and Delivery**
 - Preparing Notes
 - Rehearsing the Speech
 - Managing Stress
 - Delivering the Speech
- **Conclusion**
- **Review Questions and Activities**
- **Glossary**
- **References**

performance is given with spontaneity, the “P’s” are crucial.

Stand-up comedy is everywhere; and those who are successful comedians do

not make up their monologues on the spot. The phrasing, the pauses, the timing, is all rehearsed to assure the laughs will happen on cue. Good stand up comics are skilled in making it *look* as though they are making up their routine on the spot, which is part of the success of a good comedy performance. New speakers should think of themselves as performers facing an audience; actors ascending to stage; athletes stepping up to bat.

This chapter will describe the basic methods of delivery, and offer guidance in the aspects of presentation (such as voice, inflection, eye contact, and body and facial language). Some basic strategies for in setting up the room and **podium** for speaking will also be covered.

It is delivery that makes the orator's success.

~ Johann Wolfgang
Von Goethe

methods of delivery

There are four basic *methods* (sometimes called styles) of presenting a speech: manuscript, memorized, extemporaneous, and impromptu. Each has a variety of uses in various forums of communication.

manuscript style

The word **manuscript** is the clue to the style. The speech is written and the speaker reads it word for word to the audience. Originally, it was done from the hand-written paper manuscript. Today the **manuscript style** is common, but the paper is gone. Who reads the speech to the audience? Answer: Newscasters and television personalities. In the old days, the manuscript was hand-lettered on cue cards, which were held next to the camera lens. Then paper scrolls, like printed piano rolls were used, especially in Soap Operas. Today, a special teleprompter (working like a periscope) is attached to the camera so the newscaster is looking at the lens while reading.



Why is the manuscript important and in use? Precision. In the news-reporting industry, every fraction of a second counts because broadcast time is costly. Also, the facts and names must be exact and accurate so there is no room for error. Errors in reporting decrease the credibility of the news organization and the newscaster.

The most regular use of the teleprompter for **manuscript** delivery is by the U.S. President. In fact, the teleprompter, used by every President since Reagan, is called a “Presidential Teleprompter.” It is made of two pieces of glass, each flanking the podium. They reflect the text from a monitor on the floor like a periscope. The glass on both sides has the same text, and the speaker looks alternately from one glass to the other as though looking at the audience through the glass. The audience cannot see the projected text. The speeches a President gives will often reflect national policy, define international relationships, and the press will scrutinize every syllable. It has to be more than brilliantly accurate; it has to be impeccably phased. Professional writers and policy experts compose the speech; and the President delivers it as though he not only wrote it, but made it up on the spot. That is the skill of a good politician, actor, or speaker. Those who are not skilled using a teleprompter or manuscript will sound stilted and boring.

memorized style

The **memorized style** of speaking is when the manuscript is committed to memory and recited to the audience verbatim (word for word). In the days when **elocution** was taught, this was a typical approach. A speech was a recitation. The Optimists Club (a national organization) used to have a “Oratory” contest for high school students. Contestants wrote essays on a given theme, to create a speech at a specific time length (e.g.: three minutes). The essay was memorized and the delivery was judged by 1) the quality of the writing, 2) the accuracy with which it was recited; and 3) the precise length of time. Such contests seem archaic by today’s more casual and somewhat less formal standards.

Where is a memorized delivery style still common? Due to copyright laws and licensing contract agreements (other than scripts that are in the public domain), actors on stage are obligated to memorize the script of the play and perform it **verbatim** exactly as written. It is typical for speakers on high school and university speech and debate teams to memorize their competitive speeches. Corporate conventions often use large LCD monitors on the front of the stage as teleprompters. This allows the speaker to move more freely across the stage while sticking to his or her script. Some monologists (such as the stand-up comics mentioned at the start of the chapter) also use a memorized delivery style. In all cases, they create the impression that the speech is

Try This! Manuscript Delivery

Watch the local or national 6 p.m., 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. newscasts on the same T.V. station. Make notes on which news items repeat and how closely, or exactly, the phrasing is, even if different personalities are presenting the same item.

spontaneous. You might consider using the memorized delivery style if your speech is relatively short, or you know you will have to deliver your speech repeatedly such as a tour operator would.

impromptu style

Theoretically, an “impromptu” speech is “made up on the spot.” It is unprepared and unrehearsed. Often ceremonial toasts, grace before meals, an acknowledgement, an introduction, offering thanks and so on, fall into this category. While there are some occasions when a speech in those categories is actually prepared (prepare your acceptance for the Academy Award BEFORE you are called!), there are many occasions when there is little or no opportunity to prepare.

Impromptu speeches are generally short and are often given with little or no notice. Notes are rare and the speaker generally looks directly at the audience. It would be presumptuous and arrogant to declare rules for Impromptu Speaking. It is fair to explain that “impromptu” describes a range from absolutely no preparation, to a modest amount of preparation (mostly thought) and rarely incorporates research or the formalities of outlines and citations that more formal speeches would include.

Be still when you have nothing to say; when genuine passion moves you, say what you've got to say, and say it hot.

~ D. H. Lawrence

An indelibly memorable example occurred to me when my siblings threw a surprise 10th anniversary party for my Mom (Margaret) and our stepdad (Lidio). It was the third marriage for both of them, and they were in their 60's. As soon as the yells of “surprise” subsided, Lidio picked up his wine glass and proposed a toast:

“I can't believe this surprise! I don't know what to say... um, Dino [his brother] when was that Yankee game Dad took us to when we were kids? It was 4th of July, wasn't it? 1939? And it was like it was yesterday; and today reminds me of that day, when Lou Gehrig came out to the mound. He was slow, but we were all cheering the ‘Pride of the Yankees.’ He wasn't playing anymore, he was too sick, but he looked around the crowd, and said ‘I'm the luckiest man alive.’ That's how I feel with you all here today; to celebrate our 10th anniversary. I'm here with you and with Margaret; and I'm the luckiest man alive.”



The speech was short, emotionally charged, wonderfully articulate, and absolutely unprepared. The speech had one central emotionally charged message; simple, in words and phrasing, but complex by bringing an image of great sentimentality to the occasion. He was able to react to the moment, and speak “from the heart.”

In contrast, legendary magician Harry Houdini was often asked to perform for the amusement of his fellow passengers when sailing to Europe. I always associate “impromptu” with the stories of Houdini's shipboard conjuring. Nothing was further from

“impromptu.” The skill of the great magician was in making his illusions seem spontaneous with what appeared to be ordinary items that “happened” to be on hand. Houdini spent endless hours planning and rehearsing. The true illusion was that they “appeared” to be impromptu.

Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift, the style, the sharpness, the clarity, and the emotions to affect other people.

~ Jim Rohn

extemporaneous style

Sandwiched between the *memorized* and *impromptu* delivery styles you find the extemporaneous speech style. For this style, the speech is not completely written out. It is usually delivered with keynotes for reference. Most public speaking courses and books describe **extemporaneous** speeches as carefully prepared and rehearsed, but delivered using notes of key words and phrases to support the speaker. Phrasing is pre-rehearsed, words are pre-chosen, and the organization is fluid and well constructed. There should be no fumbling for words, no rambling, and length of time should be carefully monitored. The style does offer the speaker flexibility to include references to the immediate surroundings, previous speeches, news of the day, and so on.

The trouble with talking too fast is you may say something you haven't thought of yet."

~ Ann Landers

How you develops the notes and what they look like are up to the individual, but a natural extemporaneous delivery is difficult if



you are relying on a manuscript. Under no circumstances should the speaker be spending more than 20% of the speaking time looking at the notes. It would be ideal to practice so you only glance at your notes approximately 5% of the time of the speech.

Those who have limited experience in formal speaking find it helpful to write out the speech as though it were an essay, then read it, edit it, then create speaking notes from the text. This helps with editing and with thinking through the phrases. This process of public speaking was taught decades ago to my contemporaries and me and has fallen out of fashion. But it is a useful way of thoroughly thinking through the speech. If this procedure is used, it is advisable to rehearse the speech with the notes without the essay prior to delivering the speech. But be warned: having the fully written essay at the podium might detract from the delivery.

The extemporaneous style is the method most often recommended (and often required) in today's public speaking courses, and is generally the best method in other settings as well. While it is not the only method of delivering a speech, it is the most useful for presentations in other courses, in the corporate world and in pursuing future careers.

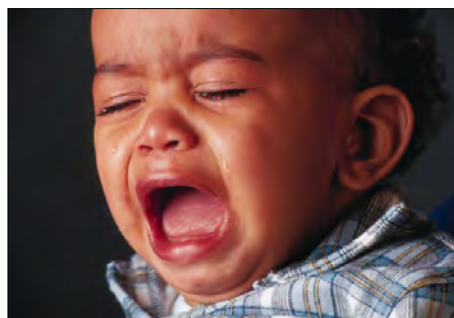
vocal aspects of delivery

Though we speak frequently during the course of a day, a formal speech requires extra attention to detail in preparation of a more formal speech presentation. What can one do in

advance to prepare for a speech? The challenge is partly determined by the speaker's experience, background and sometimes cultural influence and existing habits of speaking.

Articulation, Pronunciation, Dialect, Tone, Pitch, and Projection each depends on long-term practice for success. These aspects are like signatures, and should be developed and used by each speaker according to his own persona.

Voice, or vocal sound, is made when controlled air being exhaled from the lungs, passes over the vocal cords causing a controlled vibration. The vibrating air resonates in the body, chest cavity, mouth, and nasal passages. The vibrating air causes a chain reaction with the air in the room. The room's air, set in motion by the voice, is captured by the listener's ear. The vibration of the air against the eardrum is transferred to electrical impulses that are interpreted by the listener's brain. Thus, the sounds we can make are predicated on the breaths that we take.



Try This! Breathing

Talk without breathing. It cannot be done. So if you are screaming (like a baby), you are also breathing!

The first word of advice on speaking to an audience: BREATHE!

articulation

We are often judged by how well we speak in general. A measure of perceived intellect or education is how well we **articulate**. That is: how well and correctly we form our vowels and consonants using our lips, jaw, tongue, and palate to form the sounds that are identified as speech. **Diction** and **enunciation** are other terms that refer to the same idea. For instance, saying "going to" instead of "gonna" or "did not" instead of "dint" are examples of good versus poor articulation. Consonant and vowels are spoken with standard accepted precision, and serious students and speakers will strive to practice the clarity of their sounds. Proper diction is as integral to the English language as proper spelling, but it takes practice.

Try This! Pronunciation

1. Flip through a book, article or scholarly work until you come to a word that is unfamiliar and you can only guess its pronunciation.
2. Go to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary website, and look up the word.
3. When the definition appears, click the icon of the loudspeaker. The word is audibly pronounced for you.

The online dictionary is useful in both articulation as well as pronunciation.

pronunciation

Proper **articulation** applied to a given word is that word's **pronunciation**. The pronunciation includes how the vowels and consonants are produced as well as which syllable is emphasized. For



generations, speakers depended on “markings (such as the International Phonetics Alphabet or similar Dictionary Symbols) to discover or decide how words were officially pronounced. With online dictionaries now readily available, one needs only to “look up” a word and select “play” to hear an audible recording of the official and precise way a word should be pronounced. Now there is no excuse for mispronouncing a word in a speech. A mispronounced word will obliterate a speaker’s credibility, and the audience’s attention will be focused on the fault rather than the message.

accent, dialect, and regionalisms

Subtleties in the way we pronounce words and phrase our speech within a given language are evident in **accents**, **regionalisms** and **dialects**. An accent refers to the degree of prominence of the way syllables are spoken in words, as when someone from Australia says “undah” whereas we say “under.” A **regionalism** is a type of expression, as when someone says “The dog wants walked,” instead of “the dog wants to go for a walk.” Dialect is a variety of language where one is distinguished from others by grammar and vocabulary. In Pennsylvania you might hear people say that they are going to “red up the room,” which means “to clean the room.”

Those who depend on speaking for a career (broadcasters, politicians, and

entertainers) will often strive for unaccented General or Standard English. Listen to most major network newscasters for examples of **regionalism**-free speech. A given audience may be prejudiced towards or against a speaker with an identifiable accent or dialect. Though we would wish prejudice were not the case, the way we speak implies so much about our education, cultural background, and economic status, that prejudice is inevitable. Any speaker should be aware of how accent, **dialect** and regionalisms can be perceived by a given audience. If you speak in a way that the audience might find difficult to understand, make an extra effort to pay attention to the accent and phrasing of your speech. Ask a sympathetic and objective listener to help you when you practice.

We often refuse to accept an idea merely because the tone of voice in which it has been expressed is unsympathetic to us.

~ Friedrich Nietzsche

vocal quality

The quality of the voice, its **timbre** (distinctive sound) and texture, affects audibility and can affect the articulation. Our voices are unique to each of us. It is a result of our physical vocal instrument, including diaphragm, vocal cords, lungs and body mass. Some examples of vocal quality include warm, clear, soft, scratchy, mellow and breathy. Each speaker should practice at maximizing the vocal effect of his instrument, which can be developed with vocal exercises. There are numerous books, recordings and trainers available to develop one’s vocal quality when needed. The

quality of one’s voice is related to its range of pitch.

pitch and inflection

Identical to musical parlance, the **pitch** is the “highness” or “lowness” of the voice. Each of us has a range of **tone**. Vocal sounds are actually vibrations sent out from the vocal cords resonating through chambers in the body. The vibrations can literally be measured in terms of audio frequency in the same way music is measured. When the **pitch** is altered to convey a meaning (like raising the pitch at the end of a sentence that is a question), it is the inflection. **Inflections** are variations, turns and slides in pitch to achieve the meaning.

In his writing “Poetics,” Aristotle lists “Music” as an element of the Drama. Some scholars interpret that to include the musicalization of the spoken word with dramatic **inflection**. The meaning and effectiveness of a spoken line is greatly dependent on the “melody” of its inflection.

Though archaic, the study of **elocution** formalizes the conventions of inflection. In some contemporary cultures, inflection has been minimized because it sounds too “melodramatic” for the taste of the demographic group. It would be sensible to be aware of and avoid both extremes. With good animated inflection, a speaker is more interesting, and the inflection conveys energy and “aliveness” that compels the audience to listen.

When public speaking was known as elocution, sentences were “scored” like music, and spoken using formal rules. Sentences ending as a question went UP at the end. Sentences ending in a period, ended with a base note. And everyone had fun with exclamation points!

Try This! Inflection

Your voice goes UP, and then your voice goes down.

For most of music in history, including Opera, Broadway, and early Rock and Roll, songs were written so that the melody (raising and lowering the pitch) was consistent with what would be spoken. Many of today's songs, notably Rap songs, depend solely on rhythm. There is little if any inflection (melody) to enhance a lyric's meaning. Certain languages differ in their dependence on inflection. Japanese and German seem monotonous compared to Italian and French, which offer great variety of inflection.



The human voice is the most beautiful instrument of all, but it is the most difficult to play.

~ Richard Strauss

Even someone one who is not a singer can be expressive with inflection and pitch. Like the "Think System" of Professor Harold Hill in the musical *The Music Man*. If you THINK varied pitch, you can SPEAK varied pitch. Think of pitch inflections as seasoning spices that can make the speech more interesting. Sing "Happy Birthday." You do not have to concentrate or analyze how to create the melody in your voice. Your memory and instinct take over. Notice how the pitch also

Try This! Vocal Variation

Find a listening partner. Using only the sounds of "la" "ha," and "oh," convey the meaning of the following:

1. It's the biggest thing I've ever seen!
2. I've fallen and can't get up!
3. I've got a crush on him/her.
4. That soup is disgusting and spoiled.
5. I got an "A" in my Speech Final!

If you cannot relay the meaning with just sounds, try a second time (each) with gestures and facial expressions until the listener understands. Then say the lines with the expressive inflections you have developed using only the sounds.

provides an audible version of punctuation, letting the audience know if your sentence has ended, if it is a question, and so on. The melody lets the audience know that there is more to come (a comma) and when the phrase is ended (a period). Remember that in a speech, the audience does not have the written punctuation to follow, so you have to provide the punctuation with your inflection.

Those who do not use inflection, or use a range of pitch, are speaking in monotone. And, as the word implies, it can be monotonous, boring, and dull. A balance between melodramatic and monotonous would be preferred. The inflection should have a meaningful and interesting variety. Be careful not to turn a pattern of inflection into a repetitious sound. Think through each

phrase and its musicalization separately.

Many speakers have developed the habit of ending each sentence as though it is a question. It may be becoming increasingly common. In the wake of the Valley Girl syndrome of the 1980's, a bad inflection habit has entered the speech pattern: Some speakers end a declarative sentence with the inflection of a question.

Do you know what I mean?

A word of caution: Inflection and varied pitch must be "organic," that is to say, natural for the speaker. You cannot fake it, or it sounds artificial and disingenuous. It is a skill that needs to develop over a period of time.

rate of speaking

In order to retain clarity of the speech with articulation and inflection, the speaker must be aware that there is a range of appropriate **tempo** for speaking. If the tempo is too slow, the speech might resemble a monotonous peal. If it is too fast, the articulation could suffer if consonants or vowels are dropped or rushed to keep up the speed. An audience could become frustrated with either extreme. The tempo needs to be appropriate to the speaker's style, but neither paced like a Gilbertian Lyric (as in "Gilbert and Sullivan") patter nor a funeral dirge. A comfortable and clear pace is the best. An ideal speaking rate will allow you to comfortably increase your pace to create a sense of excitement, or slow down to emphasize the seriousness of a topic.

It is simple nonsense to speak of the fixed tempo of any particular vocal phrase. Each voice has its peculiarities.

~ Anton Seidl

pauses versus vocalized pauses

A text that is read has punctuation that the reader can see...miniature landmarks to define the text. When spoken, similar punctuation is needed

Table 12.1 Finding the Right Pace for Your Speech	
If you speak too quickly...	If you speak too slowly...
... the audience might get the impression you have nothing important to say.	... the audience might think you are too tired to be presenting.
... the audience has a difficult time catching up and comprehending what you are saying. They need time to “digest” the information. So plan on periodic pauses.	... the audience can forget the first part of your sentence by the time you get to the last! (It happens!) And they lose interest.
... the audience might think you really do not want to be there.	... the audience might think you are wasting their time by taking longer than necessary to relay your message.
As a speaker, you cannot race with the audience, nor drag their attention down. Like Goldilocks, look for the pace that is “just right.”	

for comprehension, and the speaker’s responsibility is to offer the text with pauses. Space between phrases, properly planted, gives the audience the opportunity to understand the structure of the speaker’s sentences and paragraphs. It also gives time for the audience to “digest” crucial phrases.

Generally, spoken sentences and paragraphs need to be simpler and shorter than what can be comprehended by reading. Pauses can help increase comprehension.

However, pauses that are filled with “uh’s, “um’s,” etc., are called **vocalized pauses, or fillers**, and should be avoided. They can be distracting and annoying, and give the impression of a lack of preparation if used excessively. Even worse is the use of vernacular phrases like, “y’ know” (a contraction of “Do You Know”) which gives the impression of lack of education or lack of concern for the audience. The use of vocalized pauses may be the result of a habit that

deserves an effort to be overcome. Avoid using phrases such as “Uh,” “OK?,” “y’know”, “like..., I mean, ”” “right?”

vocal projection

The volume produced by the vocal instrument is **projection**. Supporting the voice volume with good breathing and energy can be practiced, and helping a speaker develop the correct volume is a main task of a vocal trainer, teacher or coach. Good vocal support with good posture, breathing, and energy should be practiced regularly, long before a speech is delivered. There are numerous exercises devoted to developing projection capabilities.

While there is no need to shout, a speaker should project to be easily heard from the furthest part of the audience. Even if the speech is amplified with a microphone/sound system, one must speak with projection and energy. As with your rate of speech, you should speak at a volume

that comfortably allows you to increase the volume of your voice without seeming to shout or decrease the volume of your voice and still be heard by all audience members.

Do not expect to walk up to the podium and have a full voice. Actors spend about a half-hour doing vocal warm-ups, and singers warm up much more. You might not have an opportunity to warm up immediately before your speech, but when you can, warm up with humming, yawning (loudly) or singing scales: all while breathing deeply and efficiently. It will loosen your voice, prevent irritation, and fire up your vocal energy.

One final note: If public speaking is or will be an important part of your career, it would be sensible to have an evaluation of your voice, articulation and projection done by an objective professional so you can take any remedial action that might be recommended. There are courses of study, private lessons, and professional voice coaches to work with your voice projection, tone, and pitch.

Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.

~ Maya Angelou

Try This! Projection

Go to the room in which you are to speak. Have a friend sit as far away from the podium is possible. Rehearse your speech, talking loudly enough so your friend can hear you comfortably. That is the projection you will need. When you mentally focus on the distant listener, you will tend to project better.

nonverbal aspects of delivery

personal appearance

Here is the golden rule: Dress appropriately for the situation. You don't need to sport a power tie (the predictable red tie politicians wore in the 1980s), but you should be comfortable and confident knowing that you look good.

With the exception of wearing formal black-tie tuxedo to a hockey game, it is good practice to dress a bit more formal than less. Err on the side of formal. Most class speeches would be best in business casual (which can vary from place to place and in time). The culture or standards of the audience should be considered. For men, it is usually a button-down shirt and casual dress pants. For women, it may be skirt or slacks and blouse/shirt.

There are exceptions depending on the speech. A student once arrived in pajamas to deliver his 9 a.m. speech. At first, I thought he got up too late to dress for class. However, his speech was on Sleep Deprivation, and his costume was deliberate. What he wore contributed to his speech.

If you have long hair, be sure it is out of the way so it won't cover your face. Flipping hair out of your face is very distracting, so it is wise to secure it with clips, gel, or some other method. Be sure you can be seen, especially your eyes and your mouth, even as you glance down to the podium.

Think of it as an interview... just like in an interview, you will want to make



Table 12.2
Dressing Appropriately

What to Wear:

- A button-down shirt or blouse
- Trousers (khaki or dark) or a skirt
- A dress appropriate for a business setting
- A nice sweater
- Limited, tasteful jewelry
- A suit or jacket may be appropriate
- A tie or scarf (optional)

What NOT to Wear:

- T-shirts, sweat shirts or sweat suits
- Sleeveless tops
- Printed logos or sayings (unless appropriate to the speech)
- Caps or hats
- Torn jeans
- Visible underwear
- Noisy or dangling jewelry
- Flip flops
- Provocative clothing
- Pockets full of keys or change

a good first impression. The corporate culture of the business will determine the dress. Always dress at the level of the person conducting the interview. For example, a construction foreman (or project manager) will conduct an interview to hire you as a carpenter. Do not dress like a carpenter; dress like the project manager.

Actors know when they audition, the role is won by the time they step into the room. A speaker can launch success by stepping confidently to the podium.

Be tidy and clean. If you appear as though you took time to prepare



because your speech is important, then your audience will recognize and respect what you have to say.

movement and gestures

Overall movement and specific gestures are integral to a speech. Body stance, gestures and facial expressions can be generally categorized as **body language**. Movement should be relaxed and natural, and not excessive. How you move takes practice. Actors usually have the advantage of directors helping to make decisions about movement, but a good objective listener or a rehearsal in front of a large mirror can yield productive observations.

Moving around the performance space can be a very powerful component of a speech; however, it should be rehearsed as part of the presentation. Too much movement can be distracting. This is particularly true if the movement appears to be a result of nervousness. Avoid fidgeting, stroking your hair, and any other

Try This! Gestures

Using only your hands, convey the following:

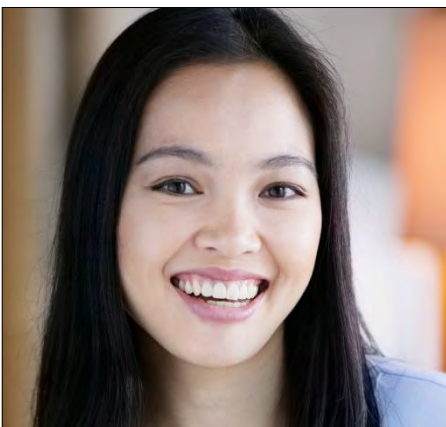
1. "It's OK."
2. "I give up."
3. "He's crazy."
4. "We will be victorious."

nervousness-related movement.

Among the traditional common fears of novice speakers is not knowing what to do with one's hands. Sometimes the speaker relies on clutching to the podium or keeping hands in pockets. Neither is a good pose. From my own observation, hand gestures are very common in Italy. We Italians can be seen in conversation from across the street, and an observer can often tell what is being said. There is no need to imitate an Italian in delivering a speech, but hand movement and the energy that the movement represents, can help hold attention as well as help express the message.

An actor practices using his whole body for expression, and regularly practices physical exercises to keep the body and hands and arms relaxed and in motion. An actor's hand gestures are developed in rehearsal. A speaker's gestures should also be considered during practice.

During the period when elocution was taught, hand gestures were regimented like a sign language. This is nonsense. Like inflections, gestures and movement should be organic and spontaneous, not contrived. If there is a hint of artificiality in your presentation, you will sacrifice your credibility.



facial expressions

Most readers are very familiar with emoticons like these:

😊, ☹️, 😬, 😏, 😬, 😬

Try This! Facial Expressions

While looking in a mirror, try to express these thoughts without words:

1. "I am thrilled that I am getting a raise."
2. "I am worried about tomorrow."
3. "Lemons are too sour for me."
4. "I am suspicious about what he did."

After you have determined a facial expression for each, say the phrase. And see how well the verbal expression goes with the nonverbal expression.

Emoticons were not casual inventions, but graphic depictions of facial expressions that convey various meanings of emotions. They are based on a nearly universal language of expression that we begin learning soon after birth. We smile, we frown, we roll our eyes, and we wink. We open eyes wide with astonishment. We raise our eyebrows...occasionally one at a time, in suspicion; both, in astonishment. Sometimes we pucker our lips, either to offer a kiss or express disapproval, disappointment, or grave concern.

I pretty much try to stay in a constant state of confusion just because of the expression it leaves on my face.

~ Johnny Depp

Since facial expression is a valid form of communication, it is integral to delivering a speech. The face supports the text, and the speaker's commitment to the material is validated. The press scrutinizes a politician for every twitch of insincerity. Detectives have created a science of facial communication for interviewing suspects. Like inflections, gestures and movement: facial expressions should be organic and spontaneous, not contrived. If there is

a hint of artificiality in your expression, you will sacrifice your credibility.

eye contact

Next to clearly speaking an organized text, eye contact is another very important element of speaking. An audience must feel interested in the speaker, and know the speaker cares about them.

Whether addressing an audience of 1000 or speaking across a "deuce" (table for two), eye contact solidifies the relationship between the speaker and audience. Good eye contact takes practice. The best practice is to be able to scan the audience making each member believe the speaker is speaking to him or her.

However, there are some eye contact failures.

head bobber:

This is a person who bobs his or her head looking down on the notes and up to the audience in an almost rhythmic pattern.

balcony gazer

A person who looks over the heads of his or her audience to avoid looking at any individual.

the obsessor

A person who looks at one or two audience members or who only looks in one direction.

The best way to develop good eye contact is to have an objective listener watch and comment on the eye contact.

The eyes are called the windows to the soul, and the importance of eye contact in communication cannot be overemphasized. Ideally, a speaker should include 80% to 90% of the delivery time with eye contact.

Eye contact is so important that modern teleprompters are designed to allow the speaker to look at the audience while actually reading the speech. The Presidential Teleprompter (two angled pieces of glass functioning like a periscope) is used so the politician can “connect” to the audience without missing a single syllable. Audience members will be much more attentive and responsive if they believe the speech is directed to them.

With good eye contact, the speaker can also observe and gauge the attention and response of the audience. This is actually part of the feedback process of communication. The ideal is that the audience is not overly aware of the speaker using notes.

How do you develop good eye contact? First, practice the speech with a generous amount of eye contact. Second, know the speech well enough to only periodically (and quickly) glance at your notes. Third, prepare your notes so they can be easily read and followed without hesitation.

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.

~ Colin Powell

mastering the location the room

Do not wait until the moment you step up to speak to see what it will be like. Check out the room (venue) and the podium before you need to speak.

Check the width of the room and where the audience will be seated.



Rehearse giving the imaginary audience eye contact.

Will you be lighted brighter than the audience? Will they be able to see your face? Can you easily project your voice to the back row? Will you have a microphone?

the podium

Check the podium. Approach it with the confidence you should exhibit when speaking. Touch it. Lean on it. Is it the right height? (It should be about the height of your elbow.) Is it sturdy? Are your feet visible? Is there enough light to see your notes placed on top? Will you be well lit? Is the podium easily visible to the entire audience? How far left and right do you need to look to see

the whole audience?

If you are using note cards, try placing them on the podium to be sure they will work, and you can maneuver them easily.

Plan where you will stand. It does not have to be behind the **lectern**. Practice standing with good posture; know where you will keep your hands and be sure your gestures are not hidden by the podium.

You might be a speaker who does not stay behind the podium, but you should still check it out. Every morsel of familiarity will contribute to your confidence in speaking.

the equipment

If you are using any multi-media such as PowerPoint, slides, video, or music, try it long before the speech. Of course, you would have practiced the speech with the media on your own, but if at all possible, run it in the venue in which you will speak.

Check the controls, slide clicker, and the relationship between the screen and the podium. Be sure the audience can see you as well as the screen. The screen should be positioned so you can glance at it without turning away from the audience. You should not be reading from the screen.

Check your own files to be sure the equipment in the room can play it





correctly. Do not assume that every file can be played. Always be prepared by having multiple versions of your audio/video. If you have only one version, and it does not play, you will be very frustrated.

Check all PowerPoint slides. Give a last look at the spelling, content, and watch for some typical issues such as changes of formatting and inserted video or audio files not playing.

Even seasoned presenters break into a cold sweat over equipment failures or unpleasant surprises, so avoid the stress by checking the equipment.

using a microphone

In some cases, rather than merely using live voice projection, there will be a microphone for amplification. If at all possible, test it before the performance. Be sure the amplification is suitable for your projection. Be sure how near or far you should be for proper audio pick-up.

It is important to note that amplification cannot make up for poor articulation or weak inflections, but it can compensate for a room that is large or acoustically insufficient for speech.

If you are prone to move away from the podium, or plan any movement, be aware that the microphone must be considered.

If it is a stationary microphone, be careful to maintain a consistent distance, or the volume of your speaking will pop from louder to softer. Changes in volume or position can result in distortion or feedback (an escalating humming sound). Be careful that consonants do not “ring” with amplification.

In some venues, the time delay with the reverberation can cause an overlap of vocal sounds. You may have to slow down or use more pauses to prevent syllables from overlapping.

*I drank some boiling water
because I wanted to whistle.
~ Mitch Hedberg*



water rules

Water is the only liquid that should be provided for a speaker. It should be cool, but not ice cold to prevent temperature shock to the throat and vocal cords. If it is poured into a glass, the glass should not be too full so the quantity does not overwhelm the speaker. Under no circumstances should there be ice in the glass or in the pitcher at the podium. Pieces of ice can be a choking hazard to a speaker who is focused on speaking rather than drinking. The current trend is to provide bottled water for a guest speaker. It should be opened, but the cap kept on assuring sanitation. The water should be placed on an absorbent tray that prevents suction from making raising the glass difficult to pick up.

Drinking water is necessary for the hydration of the vocal chords. The act of taking a sip is sometimes used to achieve a pause in a speech for effect.

preparation, practice and delivery

preparing notes

Once you have created a comprehensive outline and have thought through your speech, you should be able to create your note cards or whatever you might be using (notes or an iPad for instance). Every speaker is a bit different, and different speech topics and organizational patterns may require different notation techniques.

Your note cards (or cue sheets) must have enough information on them to be able to deliver the speech without missing details and organized in the precise order that you have planned. A common technique is to print the outline in a font that is large enough to be read from a distance.

You should be able to glance at the cards, get your bearings, and look back at the audience. If you are reading the cards word-for-word, there are too many words on them, unless it is an extended exact quote, or group of statistics that must be delivered precisely.



Be sure your notes or cards are numbered (e.g., boldly in the upper right hand corner), so you can keep them organized. Color-coding is often done to easily distinguish the cards at a glance. Losing your place can be very stressful to you and distracting to the audience.

Avoid writing or printing on two sides; flipping a page or card is distracting to the audience. The audience should not be aware of the notes. It is best to simply slide the cards aside to advance to the next card.

Rehearse your speech using the notes that you will bring to the podium. Be sure you can glance at the notes, get your information, and look up to have eye contact with the audience.

All the real work is done in the rehearsal period.

~ Donald Pleasence

rehearsing the speech

Remember how to get to Carnegie Hall. Rehearse your speech – aloud and ideally with a colleague or fellow student as an audience. Rehearse in front of a mirror if needed. There are some students who record a rehearsal speech so they can get a real sense of what the audience will hear. If you are using presentation aids, rehearse with them for timing and familiarity so you only have to glance at the screen or easel. Time the speech to be sure it within the assigned time. Phrase the speech as you will phrase it in the

actual delivery (and listen for the verbal fillers, awkward pauses, and other non-fluencies). Plan what to do with your hands.

You should also know exactly how your speech will begin and end. Regardless of how dependent on notes the speaker may be, here is one constant word of advice: know exactly how you are going to begin your speech. Not just an idea, but verbatim, with every inflection, every gesture, every eye contact with the audience. The first few sentences should be so ingrained, that you could perform it during an earthquake without batting an eye.

A memorized introduction accomplishes several goals. First, it gives you the opportunity to breathe,

and realize it's not so bad to be up there after all! Second, it lets the audience know you are prepared. Third, it signals to the audience that what you are about to say is important. Finally, it gives you the opportunity for direct eye contact (because you are not reading) and commands the audience's attention. Eye contact is a signal to the audience that you care about them!

The conclusion of your speech is equally important. In show business parlance, the end of a song or a scene is called a "button." It is a "TAH-DAH" moment that lets the audience know you are finished, and that it is their turn to applaud. The ending impression your speech leaves with the audience is greatly affected by how effective the ending is. The content and structure notwithstanding, you should also know *exactly* how you will end (verbatim), so there is no hesitation, no stumbling, no tentative "I guess that's all" feeling. A confident and decisive beginning will draw the audience to you; a confident logical ending will be very effective in preserving a lasting impression on the audience.

Stress is an important dragon to slay - or at least tame - in your life.

~ Marilu Henner

managing stress

As William Ball noted in his book for actors and directors, *A Sense of Direction*, getting in front of a group and speaking is people's greatest fear (greater than fear of death). Fear and stress result in psychological and physical manifestations that can affect a speech.

Stress physically causes muscles to tighten, often including vocal cords. This raises, and often limits, the vocal pitch of the speaker under stress. The tempo of the speech may also be affected. Novice speakers tend to rush as though to be anxious to "get it over with." It is a factor to remember in a corporate or business meeting: the speaker should speak slowly enough because what he has to say is

Figure 12. 1 Rehearsal Checklist

- ✓ Rehearse a few days before you are to deliver your speech
- ✓ Use the note sheets or cards you will be using for delivery
- ✓ Practice with the presentation aids you will be using
- ✓ Time your speech and cut or expand it if needed
- ✓ Rehearse with a colleague or an audience if possible
- ✓ If you can, rehearse in the room with the podium you will use
- ✓ Plan what you will do with your hands
- ✓ Plan and practice your opening and closing carefully, so you can deliver them exactly

important, and the audience should listen. Remember, as noted above, rushing gives the impression that the speaker thinks the message is not worth the time.

Stress can accelerate perspiration. It is wise to have a facial tissue or small towel handy for dabbing for comfort. Stress can also make the mouth and throat feel dry. Sipping water is a simple solution.

There are a myriad of solutions to relieving a speaker's stress: from hypnosis to imagining the audience to be naked. Among the simplest and most effective is to do a moderate amount of exercise prior to the speech, even as basic as walking. Exercising helps to naturally chemically relieve the tension; and helps deepen the breathing that supports the voice.

Simultaneously while exercising the body, it is a good idea to warm up the voice. The vocal cords are muscles, which should not be jump-started.

Physical exercises will likely help relaxing for better posture and hand and body gestures. As part of the relaxation process, actors "warm up" physically before performances and often do relaxation exercises to help concentration and relieve stress.

The best antidote for stress is to be well prepared and confident.



Figure 12.2 Steps for Effective Delivery

1. Approach the podium as you rehearsed.
2. Stand with confident posture.
3. Deliver your brilliant opening.
4. Realize you are a hit with the audience.
5. Breathe.
6. Spontaneously interject a humorous observation related to your topic.
7. Make all your points without hesitation, "um's," "like's," or "uh's."
8. Deliver your brilliantly prepared conclusion.
9. Leave the podium to thunderous applause.

delivering the speech

You have taken all of the right steps before stepping up to the podium or lectern. You have selected a good topic. You have researched the topic. You have organized the best information in a compelling way. You have rehearsed your speech. You have received feedback on your rehearsal from an objective listener. You have carefully constructed your notes and practiced with them. You have planned and practiced your speech introduction and conclusion verbatim. You have checked out the room and the equipment. You did something to reduce your stress before your speech. You did vocal warm-ups. You chose the perfect outfit to wear. You made sure your gum was discarded and your hair pulled back. You arrived at least 15 minutes before your speech. You leapt to the podium with great enthusiasm when introduced.

Now you must deliver. If you look up the word "deliver," you will find it means more than to just "give." To

"give" is a willingness to offer something without obligation or the expectation of something in return. To "give" also implies a pre-determined responsibility. You have a responsibility as a speaker to "deliver" information that will help your audience or enlighten them in some way. Speeches are *delivered*.

conclusion

The true test for this chapter is in the actual presentation of the speech. Like voice and diction, understanding what makes a speech effective without practice is insufficient. Merely knowing the best form for a golf swing is useless unless put into practice; and practice reinforces the knowledge. Comprehending the rules for driving on the road is moot (and/or dangerous) if the rules are not obeyed in practice. The same is true for this chapter. Practice speaking will make you a more effective speaker!



A speech is poetry: cadence, rhythm, imagery, sweep! A speech reminds us that words, like children, have the power to make dance the dullest beanbag of a heart.

~Peggy Noonan

module review questions and activities

review questions

1. Develop a list of ten potential speech topics. For each topic, think of a setting in which a speech on that topic might be delivered. Next, determine what type(s) of delivery (manuscript, memorized, impromptu, extemporaneous) would be most appropriate for the topic and setting.
2. What three aspects of vocal delivery do you believe are most important to a speaker's credibility? Explain.
3. How might a speaker's accent affect the audience's perception of him or her? Illustrate your answer with an example.
4. What guidelines did you find most useful in the section about what to wear for your speech?
5. How do you perceive speakers who do not make eye contact with their audience? What suggestions would you give these speakers to improve their eye contact?
6. What type of equipment is available in the space(s) where you plan to give your speeches? What kinds of presentations can be used with this type of equipment?
7. List three methods you would personally use to reduce your anxiety before your speeches.
8. What piece of advice from the chapter did you find most useful?

activities

1. Practice Inflection

Gather some children's books (aimed at ages 6-10) and read them aloud in class. Practice the use of inflection to indicate the punctuation, the energy, and the characters. Do not be afraid to seem foolish. Remember that this is how most children learn to read and speak.

2. Pronunciation

Bring in several books or publications of a variety of types and disciplines. Scan through the text and find words that are unusual. Look them up in an online dictionary and see how they are pronounced. This could be turned into a game of "stump the speaker" guessing how each word is pronounced. It can also be used to point out some simple yet often mispronounced words.

3. Projection

Stand in as large a circle as possible. Each person has a partner across the room. Partners introduce each other and carry a conversation over the noise of others doing the same thing. Do not shout. Keep it going for a few minutes (it will be loud), then quiz the partners about the conversation they had.

4. Find a partner and work on any of the "Try This" activities in the chapter.

glossary

Accent

The prominence of a syllable in terms of loudness, pitch, and/or length.

Articulation

The act of producing clear, precise and distinct speech.

Body Language

Body stance, gestures and facial expressions.

Dialect

A variety of language, cant or jargon that is set apart from other varieties of the same language by grammar, vocabulary or patterns of speech sounds.

Diction

The accent, inflection, intonation and sound quality of a speaker's voice. Also known as enunciation.

Elocution

The formal study and practice of oral delivery, especially as it relates to the performance of voice and gestures.

Extemporaneous Delivery

Learning your speech well enough so that you can deliver it from a key word outline.

Impromptu Speeches

A speech delivered without previous preparation.

Inflections

Variations, turns and slides in pitch to achieve meaning.

Manuscript Delivery

Reading the text of a speech word for word.

Memorized Delivery

Learning a speech by heart and then delivering it without notes.

Performance

The execution of a speech in front of an audience.

Pitch

The highness or lowness of one's voice or of sound.

Pronunciation

Saying words correctly, with the accurate articulation, stress and intonation, according to conventional or cultural standards.

Regionalism

A speech form, expression or custom that is characteristic to a particular geographic area.

Tempo

The rate, pace, or rhythm of speech.

Timbre

The characteristic quality of the sound of one's voice.

Tone

The particular sound quality (e.g. nasal or breathy) or emotional expression of the voice.

Verbatim

To say with exactly the same words.

Vocalized Pauses

Verbal fillers in speech such as "um," "uh," "like," "and," or "you know."

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