

# Public Speaking

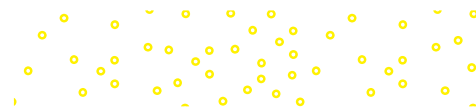
*for* College & Career

*12e*

Hamilton Gregory

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College

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## PUBLIC SPEAKING FOR COLLEGE & CAREER, TWELFTH EDITION

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Dedicated to the memory of Merrell,  
my beloved wife and best friend



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# Preface

*Public Speaking for College & Career* supports the skills students need to succeed in the course and in their future careers, across the growing range of public speaking contexts. Informed by the latest research, the twelfth edition provides students with practical guidance and fresh examples that are anchored in students' real-world experiences. These features are supported by a suite of personalized study tools, customizable assessments, and interactive learning resources in McGraw Hill Connect.

## McGraw Hill Connect: An Overview

McGraw Hill Connect offers full-semester access to comprehensive, reliable content and Learning Resources for the Public Speaking course. Connect's integration with most learning management systems (LMSs), including Blackboard and Desire2Learn (D2L), offers single sign-on and deep gradebook synchronization. Data from Assignment Results reports synchronize directly with many LMSs, allowing scores to flow automatically from Connect into school-specific gradebooks, if required.

## Instructor's Guide to Connect for *Public Speaking for College & Career*

When you assign Connect you can be confident—and have data to demonstrate—that the learners in your course, however diverse, are acquiring the skills, principles, and critical processes that constitute effective public speaking. This leaves you to focus on your highest course expectations.

**Tailored To You.** Connect offers on-demand, single sign-on access to learners—wherever they are and whenever they have time. With a single, one-time registration, learners receive access to McGraw Hill's trusted content. Learners also have a courtesy trial period during registration.

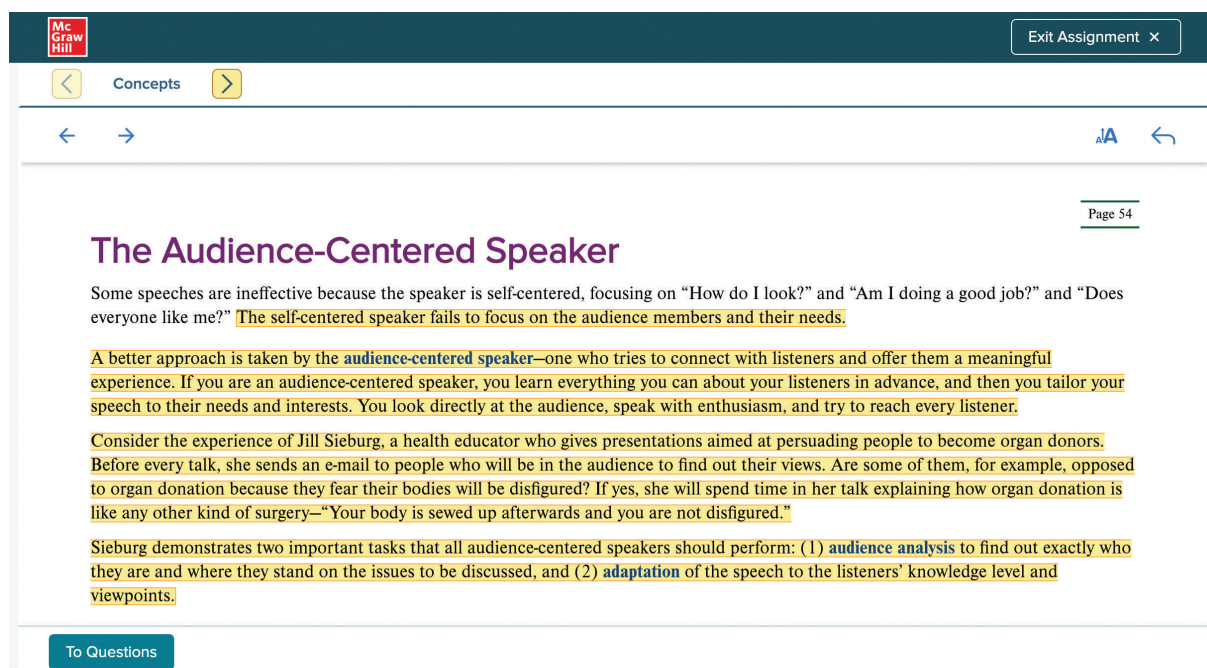
**Easy To Use.** Connect seamlessly supports all major learning management systems with content, assignments, performance data, and SmartBook 2.0, the leading adaptive learning system. With these tools you can quickly make assignments, produce reports, focus discussions, intervene on problem topics, and help at-risk learners—as you need to and when you need to.

## *Public Speaking for College & Career* SmartBook 2.0

**A Personalized and Adaptive Learning Experience with Smartbook 2.0.** Boost learner success with McGraw Hill's adaptive reading and study experience. The *Public Speaking for College & Career* SmartBook 2.0 highlights the most impactful public speaking concepts the student needs to learn at that moment in time. The learning path continuously adapts and, based on what the individual learner knows and does not know, provides focused help through targeted question probes and Learning Resources.

**Enhanced for the New Edition!** With a suite of new Learning Resources and question probes, as well as highlights of key chapter concepts, SmartBook 2.0's intuitive technology optimizes learner study time by creating a personalized learning path for improved course performance and overall learner success.

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SmartBook 2.0 highlights the key concepts of every chapter, offering the learner a high-impact learning experience.

**Hundreds of Interactive Learning Resources.** Presented in a range of interactive styles, *Public Speaking for College & Career* Learning Resources support learners who may be struggling to master, or simply wish to review, the most important public speaking concepts. Designed to reinforce the most important chapter concepts—from topic selection and research skills to the outlining and delivery of presentations—every Learning Resource is presented at the precise moment of need. Whether video, audio clip, or interactive mini-lesson, each of the 200-plus Learning Resources was created for the new edition and was designed to give learners a lifelong foundation in strong public speaking skills.

## Note Taking Strategies: Use a Note Taking Method

When taking notes, you should use a note taking method. This may be one you have developed yourself or one of the following options:

1. Create three columns and label them "Main Ideas," "Supports," and "Follow-Up." Place the speaker's key points and supporting details in the first two columns. The third column can be used as needed to record questions you might want to ask during a question and answer period or points of interest you would like to follow up on later.
2. Write one note per line. Later, use a highlighter to call out key points and a pen to circle anything you would like to follow up on. This method is useful if the speaker is talking quickly or does not clearly differentiate between main points and support.

**More Than 1,000 Targeted Assessments.** Class-tested at colleges and universities nationwide, a treasury of engaging question probes—new and revised, more than 1,000 in all—gives learners the information on public speaking they need to know, at every stage of the learning process, in order to thrive in the course. Designed to gauge learners’ comprehension of the most important *Public Speaking for College & Career* chapter concepts, and presented in a variety of interactive styles to facilitate student engagement, targeted question probes give learners immediate feedback on their understanding of the material. Each question probe identifies a learner’s familiarity with the instruction and points to areas where additional remediation is needed.

McGraw Hill

Exit Assignment x

0 of 30 Concepts completed ⓘ

Multiple Choice Question

A speaker who tries to connect with listeners and offers them a meaningful experience is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ speaker.

☐ self-centered

☐ self-critical

☐ audience-centered

☐ persuasive

ⓘ Need help? Review these concept resources.

ⓘ Read About the Concept

Rate your confidence to submit your answer.

HighMediumLow

ⓘ Reading

**A Suite of Application-Based Activities.** At the higher level of Bloom’s, McGraw Hill’s Application-Based Activities are highly interactive, automatically graded, online learn-by-doing exercises that provide students a safe space to apply their knowledge and problem-solving skills to real-world scenarios. Each scenario addresses key concepts that students must use to work through to solve communication problems, resulting in improved critical thinking and development of relevant skills.

**Informed by the Latest Research.** The best insights from today’s leading public speaking scholars infuse every lesson and are integrated throughout *Public Speaking for College & Career*.

**Fresh Examples Anchored in the Real World.** Every chapter of *Public Speaking for College & Career* opens with a vignette exploring both public speaking challenges and successes. Dozens of additional examples appear throughout the new edition, each demonstrating an essential element of the public speaking process. Whether learners are reading a chapter, working through a SmartBook 2.0 assignment, or reviewing key concepts in a Learning Resource, their every instructional moment is rooted in the real world. McGraw Hill research shows that high-quality examples reinforce academic theory throughout the course. Relevant examples and practical scenarios—reflecting interactions in school, the workplace, and beyond—demonstrate how effective public speaking informs and enhances students’ lives and careers.



## Examining Your Ethics

Suppose you are speaking in support of a good cause, but the statistics you want to use in your speech are complicated and hard to explain. You could convince your audience more easily if you made up some simplified statistics. Is it okay to fabricate a small amount of data so that they are easier for your audience to understand?

- A. Yes, it's okay if the data are close to being accurate.
- B. No, it is not okay.
- C. Sometimes yes, sometimes no—it depends on the context.

*For the answer, see the last page of this chapter.*

**Features.** Critical-thinking skills are vital in the classroom, on the job, and in the community. Students who build these skills will be better speakers, listeners, and citizens as they strive to understand and evaluate what they see, hear, and read. The new edition of *Public Speaking for College & Career* includes a variety of boxed and end-of-chapter features to support student learning and enhance critical-thinking skills.

- “**Examining Your Ethics**” exercises provide real-world scenarios that pose ethical dilemmas and ask students to make a choice. Students can check their answers at the end of the chapter.

## Tips for Your Career

### Express Appreciation to a Speaker

Whenever you find a speech enjoyable or profitable, let the speaker know. No matter how busy or important he or she is, genuine feedback will be greatly appreciated.

After giving a speech, some speakers are physically and emotionally exhausted, and they sit down with a nagging doubt: Did it go okay? A word of thanks or a compliment from a listener is refreshing and gratifying. (If you can't express your appreciation in person right after the speech, write the speaker a brief note or send an e-mail or text message.)

Be sure to say something positive and specific about the content of the speech. A corporation president told of a commencement address he had delivered to a college several years before. “I sweated blood for a whole month putting that speech together and then rehearsing it

dozens of times—it was my first commencement speech,” he said. “When I delivered the speech, I tried to speak straight from my heart. I thought I did a good job, and I thought my speech had some real nuggets of wisdom. But afterwards, only two people came by to thank me. And you know what? They both paid me the same compliment: they said they were grateful that I had kept the speech short! They said not one word about the ideas in my speech. Not one word about whether they enjoyed the speech itself. It's depressing to think that the only thing noteworthy about my speech was its brevity.”

Sad to say, there were probably dozens of people in the audience whose hearts and minds were touched by the eloquent wisdom of the speaker—but they never told him.

TIP 4

## Building Critical-Thinking Skills

1. When a person is truly and deeply listening to you, what behaviors do you detect in his or her tone of voice, facial expression, eyes, and overall body language?
2. Science writer Judith Stone wrote, “There are two ways to approach a subject that frightens you and makes you

- “**Tips for Your Career**” boxes in every chapter give students insight about the types of things they will need to think about as presenters in their professional lives.
- “**Building Critical-Thinking Skills**” features at the end of each chapter give students practice in this valuable skill.

## Video Capture Powered by GoReact

With just a smartphone, tablet, or webcam, students and instructors can capture video of presentations with ease. Video Capture Powered by GoReact, fully integrated in McGraw Hill's Connect platform, doesn't require any extra equipment or complicated training. Create your own custom Video Capture assignment, including in-class and online speeches and presentations, self-review, and peer review.

With our customizable rubrics, time-coded comments, and visual markers, students will see feedback at exactly the right moment, and in context, to help improve their speaking and presentation skills and confidence.

- The Video Capture tool allows instructors to easily and efficiently set up speech assignments for their course that can easily be shared and repurposed, as needed.
- Customizable rubrics and settings can be saved and shared, saving time and streamlining the speech assignment process.

- Allows both students and instructors to view videos during the assessment process. Feedback can be left within a customized rubric or as time-stamped comments within the video-playback itself.

**Access to just-in-time grammar and writing remediation, and originality detector.**

McGraw Hill's new Writing Assignment Plus tool delivers a learning experience that improves students' written communication skills and conceptual understanding with every assignment. Instructors can assign, monitor, and provide feedback on writing more efficiently and grade assignments within McGraw Hill Connect.

## Connect Reports

Instructor Reports allow instructors to quickly monitor learner activity, making it easy to identify which learners are struggling and to provide immediate help to ensure those learners stay enrolled in the course and improve their performance. The Instructor Reports also highlight the concepts and learning objectives that the class as a whole is having difficulty grasping. This essential information lets you know exactly which areas to target for review during your limited class time.

Some key reports include:

**Progress Overview report**—View learner progress for all modules, including how long learners have spent working in the module, which modules they have used outside any that were assigned, and individual learner progress.

**Missed Questions report**—Identify specific probes, organized by chapter, that are problematic for learners.

**Most Challenging Learning Objectives report**—Identify the specific topic areas that are challenging for your learners; these reports are organized by chapter and include specific page references. Use this information to tailor your lecture time and assignments to cover areas that require additional remediation and practice.

**Metacognitive Skills report**—View statistics showing how knowledgeable your learners are about their own comprehension and learning.

## Classroom Preparation Tools

Whether before, during, or after class, there is a suite of Gregory products designed to help instructors plan their lessons and to keep learners building upon the foundations of the course.

**Annotated Instructor's Edition.** The Annotated Instructor's Edition provides a wealth of teaching aids for each chapter in *Public Speaking for College & Career*. It is also cross-referenced with SmartBook 2.0, Connect, and other supplements that accompany *Public Speaking for College & Career*.

**PowerPoint Slides.** The PowerPoint presentations for *Public Speaking for College & Career* provide chapter highlights that help instructors create focused, yet individualized lesson plans.

**Test Bank and Test Builder.** The Test Bank offers multiple choice questions, true/false questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, and essay questions for each chapter. New to this edition and available within Connect, Test Builder is a cloud-based tool that enables instructors to format tests that can be printed and administered within a Learning Management System. Test Builder offers a modern, streamlined interface for easy

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- Access all test bank content from a particular title
- Easily pinpoint the most relevant content through robust filtering options
- Manipulate the order of questions or scramble questions and/or answers
- Pin questions to a specific location within a test
- Determine the preferred treatment of algorithmic questions
- Choose the layout and spacing
- Add instructions and configure default settings

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## Chapter-by-Chapter Changes to the New Edition

New and updated material in this edition of *Public Speaking for College & Career* reflects the latest research in the field and the current available technology. Chapter 4 presents an updated and increased focus on audience diversity in public speaking scenarios, including coverage of online presentations addressing international audiences. Integrated throughout Chapters 6 through 9, guidance for locating, evaluating, and documenting sources electronically reflects current research practices and helps students develop information literacy skills for a digital age. Chapters 15 and 16 feature two new sample student speeches with full video recordings available online, in the Connect Media Library.

**Chapter 1 Introduction to Public Speaking:** More examples relevant to students' lives, including examples reflecting diversity in public speaking scenarios

**Chapter 2 Managing Nervousness:** Updated coverage of public figures who experience speech anxiety; new chapter opening vignette

**Chapter 3 Listening:** New examples demonstrating the problems associated with poor listening skills; updated discussion of giving speakers a fair chance and showing respect as a listener in a different culture

**Chapter 4 Reaching the Audience:** Updated coverage for reaching a greater diversity of audiences, including guidance on customizing for different segments of the same audience, understanding gender and gender-biased language, addressing listeners with disabilities, an expanded explanation of the diversity of religious beliefs, and addressing audiences via online presentations; discussion of listeners with disabilities is now inclusive of disabilities that can't be seen, such as mental illnesses and psychological disorders

**Chapter 5 Selecting Topic, Purpose, and Central Idea:** Updated lists of general purposes to inform and persuade include topics aligned with student interest and current events

**Chapter 6 Locating Information:** Guidance for searching electronically better reflects current research practices; revised descriptions of types of periodicals distinguishes between mainstream and scholarly journals, and between opinion content and news content; updated coverage of search engines as a means of conducting research now includes tips for conducting advanced searches, as well as for searching for different types of content; updated section on conducting informal surveys and interviews electronically; Figure 5 and Table 1 examples reflect MLA 8e and APA 7e documentation guidelines

**Chapter 7 Evaluating Information:** Expanded and updated coverage of finding trustworthy information, applying critical-thinking skills, and analyzing Internet sites

**Chapter 8 Supporting Your Ideas and Avoiding Plagiarism:** Now includes section on avoiding plagiarism, in keeping with the chapter's focus on supporting ideas; refreshed examples of the types of support materials, and updated guidance around use of public domain, fair use, and royalty-free materials

**Chapter 9 Presentation Aids:** New guidance on making visual appeals to pathos; refreshed examples of effective and ineffective graphs, tables, and presentation slides feature throughout; updated section on using media includes definitions of synchronous, real-time, web-based presentations

**Chapter 10 The Body of the Speech:** New examples throughout, including new sample of the body of a speech on the topic of raising the driving age

**Chapter 11 Introductions and Conclusions:** New sample introduction and conclusion outlines on the topic of raising the driving age; new discussion of ethical use of hypothetical illustrations

**Chapter 12 Outlining the Speech:** New Tips for Your Career feature on speaking briefly when no time limit is set

**Chapter 13 Wording the Speech:** Revised section on the power of words warns against using loaded, deceptive, and inflated language; updated discussion and table illustrate proper use of gender-neutral pronouns and avoidance of gender-biased language; new Tips for Your Career feature examines the use of preferred gender pronouns in the professional sphere; new examples illustrate understanding denotation, controlling connotations, and using correct grammar

**Chapter 14 Delivering the Speech:** Updated discussion of volume explains how to make the best use of microphones; new examples illustrating the pitch and intonation, pauses, and rate of speech, as well as important forms of nonverbal communication; entirely new section on dialect and delivery; updated discussion of speaking in front of a camera; new chapter opening vignette

**Chapter 15 Speaking to Inform:** New table comparing and contrasting the different types of informative speeches; new student sample speech uses comparison-contrast pattern to present information on different types of health care plans (a video of the speech is available in the online Connect Media Library)

**Chapter 16 Speaking to Persuade:** New coverage of tackling controversial topics, including guidance on finding common ground, being respectful of opposing viewpoints, and striking a civil tone; new problem-solution outline on the topic of reducing the use of plastic shopping bags; new student sample persuasive speech on anti-bullying programs in schools (a video of the speech is available in the online Connect Media Library); new conflict-resolution exercise in Resources for Review and Skill Building

**Chapter 17 Persuasive Strategies:** Revised discussion of credibility including a new section on the importance of being accurate; updated examples illustrating deductive arguments and the range of fallacies; new chapter opening vignette

**Chapter 18 Speaking on Special Occasions:** Two new sample speeches of introduction; new model speeches of presentation and tribute

**Chapter 19 Speaking in Groups:** Entirely new section on showing respect during meetings; new Tips for Your Career feature explaining how to develop an “elevator speech”; new chapter opening vignette

## Speeches Online

To view 29 videos of full-length sample student speeches and dozens of video speech clips, visit the media bank in the Gregory Connect site. Included in the media bank are all the major speeches presented in this text, plus many more, including 13 videos that are brand new to this edition. See below for a list of many of the full-length speeches available in Connect:

- All Eyes on Saturn
- Animal Helpers (Needs Improvement Version)
- Animal Helpers (Improved Version)
- The Deadliest Natural Disaster
- Do You Need Detox? (Improved Version)
- Failed to Get the Job? (Needs Improvement)
- Failed to Get the Job? (Improved Version)
- Fair Trade
- The Four-Day Work Week—Pros and Cons
- Gold Fever
- Hold Me a Spot: Campus Parking App
- House Arrest
- How to Hide Valuables
- Humanoid Robots
- Not as Healthy as They Sound
- One Slip—and You're Dead
- PPO or HDHP? How to Choose a Health Plan
- Public Schools Should Mandate Anti-Bullying Education
- Say No to Pit Bull Ban (Needs Improvement Version)
- Scars and Bruises
- Share a Bike for a Better Ride (Needs Improvement Version)
- She Did It
- Sleep Deficiency
- Speech of Acceptance
- Speech of Introduction
- Speech of Tribute
- Toast (Needs Improvement Version)
- Wedding Crashers
- What Is Absentee Voting? (Needs Improvement Version)
- Would You Vote for Aardvark?
- Your Body Needs Detoxification (Needs Improvement)
- Zoo Elephants

## Acknowledgments

Over 200 instructors have reviewed this book in its successive editions. We are grateful to the reviewers for their insights, encouragement, and willingness to help.

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From the earliest days of this book, Betty Dvorson, an inspiring and popular instructor at City College of San Francisco, has shared lots of valuable advice and enthusiastic support. For their creative ideas, special thanks to Barbara Guess, Forsyth

## Preface

Technical Community College; Ruth Bennett, Betty Farmer, and Jim Manning, all of Western Carolina University; and Tom W. Gregory, Trinity College in Washington, D.C.

This edition profited from the contributions of subject-matter experts Adam Bulizak, Joe Dennis, and Carol Hayes, who drew on their own experience as instructors and professionals in the field of communication to adapt the book to the needs and interests of today's college students. This edition also benefited from the support and vision of Sarah Remington, Portfolio Manager; Dawn Groundwater, Product Development Manager; Meghan Campbell, Director of Product Development; and Elizabeth Murphy, Product Developer, as well as the wholehearted backing of McGraw Hill executives David Patterson, Managing Director, and Michael Ryan, President of Higher Education.

For guiding the book through the production stages, thanks to Rick Hecker, Content Project Manager; Beth Blech, Designer; and Sarah Flynn, Content Licensing Specialist.

Special thanks go out to the team behind the scenes who built and continue to maintain speech assignment functionality on Connect: Irina Blokh-Reznik, Vijay Kapu, Swathi Malathi, Rishi Mehta, Bob Myers, Bhumi Patel, Dan Roenstch, Ayesha Shaik, Kapil Shrivastava, and Udaya Teegavarapu.

A section in Chapter 14, "Speaking in Front of a Camera," was derived from the ideas and insights of three communication instructors: Stephanie O'Brien, a member of the Director's Guild of America who worked in Los Angeles on award-winning television series and motion pictures for 17 years as an assistant director and currently teaches communication and media studies courses at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College; Jan Caldwell, a communication instructor at the same college; and Melody Hays, Continuing Education Planner at Mountain Area Health Education Center in Asheville, North Carolina.

Thank you also to following individuals for ideas, inspiration, and support: Kenet Adamson, Jennifer Browning, Jan Caldwell, Angela Calhoun, Jim Cavener, Patricia Cutspec, Rebecca Davis, Michael Flynn, Lynne Gabai, Deborah L. Harmon, Cris Harshman, Melody Hays, Peggy Higgins, Patrizia Hoffman, David Holcombe, Rusty Holmes, Lisa Johnson, Dennis King, Erika Lytle, Deb Maddox, Mary McClurkin, Celia Miles, Stephanie O'Brien, Jim Olsen, Rolfe Olsen, Susan Paterson, Ellen Perry, Heidi Smathers, Beth Stewart, Mary Sugeir, and Heather Vaughn.

And to the hundreds of public speaking students who have made teaching this course a pleasant and rewarding task. From them most of the examples of classroom speeches have been drawn.

# Public Speaking

*for* College & Career

# Introduction to Public Speaking

## OUTLINE

Benefits of a Public Speaking Course

The Speech Communication Process

The Speaker's Responsibilities

Speech Introducing Yourself or a Classmate

Quick Guide to Public Speaking

## OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

1. Explain five benefits of a public speaking course.
2. Identify and explain the seven elements of the speech communication process.
3. Describe the main responsibilities that speakers have toward their listeners.
4. Prepare a speech introducing yourself or a classmate.

**UPSET WHEN THEY DISCOVERED** that African-American students were being barred from joining sororities on their campus, two University of Alabama students—Khortlan Patterson of Houston, Texas, and Yarden Wolf of Corvallis, Oregon—felt compelled to speak out. They led a march of 400 students and professors to the steps of the administration building, where they both gave speeches calling for an end to the segregated system.

Their message was heard loud and clear. University president Judy Bonner quickly proclaimed that “the University of Alabama will not tolerate discrimination of any kind,” and a few days later, she announced that traditionally white sororities had invited 11 African-American students to join.<sup>1</sup>



Both Patterson and Wolf had taken a public speaking course, so they knew how to plan a speech and manage their nerves. Patterson says she calmed herself by focusing on “the message [she] wanted to convey.”<sup>2</sup> Wolf used positive thoughts: “I realized that it wasn’t really about me, rather about the bigger picture, and that not speaking wasn’t an option.”<sup>3</sup> Patterson and Wolf not only displayed courage by speaking out, but they also demonstrated that public speakers can touch lives and make contributions to society.

University of Alabama students Khortlan Patterson, left, and Yardena Wolf speak out against the university’s segregated sorority system.

© Dave Martin/AP Images

## Benefits of a Public Speaking Course

Many college graduates say that of all the courses they took, public speaking proved to be one of the most valuable.<sup>4</sup> Here are some of the reasons:

1. **You learn how to speak to an audience.** Being able to stand up and give a talk to a group of people is a rewarding skill you can use throughout your life. Imagine yourself in these public speaking scenarios:
  - In one of your college classes, you must give a presentation for a group project.
  - At a training event in the workplace, you inform colleagues of a new policy or procedure.
  - You connect with college students across the nation by participating in a podcast focusing on how to adjust to college life.
2. **You learn skills that apply to one-on-one communication.** Although the emphasis of this course is on speaking to groups, the principles that you learn also apply to communication with individuals.<sup>5</sup> Throughout your lifetime you will be obliged to talk in situations such as these:
  - It is very common to be asked in a job interview, “Tell me about yourself.” You want to appear confident and charismatic as you share insight into who you are and highlight what sets you apart from others. In a public speaking course you will learn strategies to give an effective impromptu response presenting a well-organized and persuasive message.
  - You sit down with a bank executive to ask for a loan so that you can buy a new car. The skills of nonverbal communication (such as eye contact and facial expression) that you learn in a public speaking course should help you convey to the banker that you are a trustworthy and reliable person who will repay the loan.

After taking a public speaking course, many students report that their new skills help them as much in talking to one person as in addressing a large audience.

3. **You develop the oral communication skills that are prized in the job market.** With the advancement of technology and the ever-changing needs of business, what skills are employers looking for? According to LinkedIn’s 2019 survey, companies are looking for these five soft skills:
  1. Creativity
  2. Persuasion
  3. Collaboration
  4. Adaptability
  5. Time management

Technical knowledge in your field is important, but can you effectively communicate your expertise and work well with others?

- Paul Petrone of LinkedIn Learning tells us that “strengthening a soft skill is one of the best investments you can make in your career, as they never go out of style.”<sup>6</sup>
- Canadian business executive Dan Pontefract argues that we should not use the term *soft skills* to refer to professional leadership skills.<sup>7</sup>
- Elena Douglas, CEO of Knowledge Society, advises: “In a world of uncertainty and constant change, there is no doubt that having a full range of social and emotional skills will help young people thrive as citizens and employees.”<sup>8</sup>

**4. You learn in an ideal environment for gaining experience and building confidence.**

The classroom is a safe place to practice and develop your skills. No one will deny you a job or a loan on the basis of your classroom speeches. Your audience is friendly and sympathetic—all your classmates are going through the same experience.

The critiques given by your instructor and by fellow students are valuable parts of the course. If, for example, you say “um” or “uh” so often that it distracts your listeners, you are probably unaware of this unconscious habit. Being told of the problem is the first step toward correcting it.

If you are like most students, your public speaking class will help you gain self-confidence. You will enjoy the pride that comes from meeting a challenge and handling it successfully.

**5. You can make a contribution to the lives of other people.** While attending a funeral service for a beloved aunt, former student Karen Walker heard the minister give a brief eulogy and then say, “Would anyone like to say a few words?”

A few people went to the microphone and shared some memories, but most audience members were silent. “I wanted to pay tribute to my aunt, but I was too scared,” said Walker. “I felt really bad because there were a lot of important things about my aunt and her life that were never said.” A few years later, Walker took a public speaking class, and a year or so afterward, she attended another funeral—for her grandfather. “This time I vowed that I would not pass up the opportunity to honor a wonderful person. I asked to be part of the service, and I spoke about my childhood memories of my grandfather.”



Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old environmental activist with Asperger's, demonstrates how one voice can spark a global discussion through her impassioned speech at the UN to raise awareness about climate change. This young Swedish girl's speech was shared around the world and her words ignited discussions on both sides of the issue.

Stephanie Keith/Stringer/Getty images

The eulogy, said Walker, was appreciated by her family members, who told her that she had expressed beautifully what they would have said if they had possessed the courage and the skills to stand up and speak. “It gave me a good feeling to know that I could represent the family in this way,” she said.

Being able to speak in public—offering a toast, sharing information, providing encouragement, attempting persuasion—can bring pleasure and joy to yourself and to others. Walker said that her success was possible because of what she had learned in her public speaking class.

## The Speech Communication Process

When a speaker gives a speech, does communication take place?

Sometimes yes, sometimes no—because *speaking and communicating are not the same thing*. You can speak to a listener, but if the listener does not understand your message in the way you meant it to be understood, you have failed to communicate it.

For example, at a business dinner at a restaurant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Joe Lentini told the server that he knew little about wine and asked her to “recommend something decent.” She suggested a bottle of cabernet sauvignon sold under the name Screaming Eagle, and she said the price was “thirty-seven fifty.” Lentini thought she meant \$37.50, and he approved. But when the bill arrived at the end of the meal, he was astonished and dazed to see that the cost was \$3,750.<sup>9</sup>

This incident illustrates that speaking and communicating are not synonymous. As a slogan of the Hitachi Corporation puts it: “Communication is not simply sending a message. It is creating true understanding—swiftly, clearly, and precisely.”

To help you send messages that truly communicate, it is helpful to understand the process of speech communication. As we discuss the process, use Figure 1 as a visual reference.

## Elements of the Process

The speech communication process has seven distinct components.

### Speaker

When you are a **speaker**, you are the source of a message that is transmitted to a listener. Whether you are speaking to a dozen people or 500, you bear a great responsibility for the success of the communication. The key question that you must constantly ask yourself is not “Am I giving out good information?” or “Am I performing well?” but, rather, “Am I getting through to my listeners?”

### Listener

The **listener** is the recipient of the message sent by the speaker. The true test of communication is not whether a message is delivered by the speaker but whether it is accurately received by the listener. “A speech,” says management consultant David W. Richardson of Westport, Connecticut, “takes place in the minds of the audience.”<sup>10</sup>

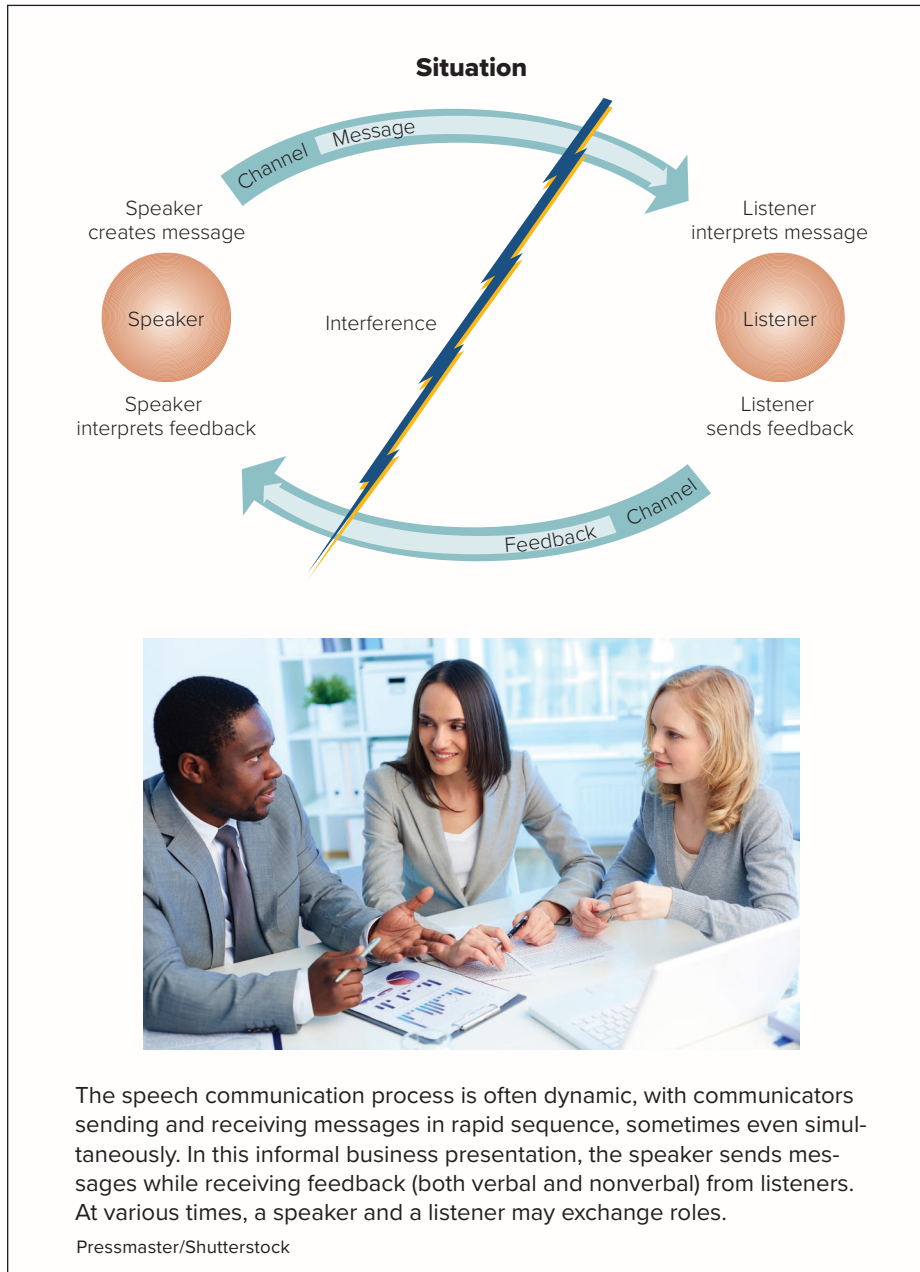
If communication fails, who is to blame—the speaker or the listener? It could be either, or both. Although speakers share part of the responsibility for communication, listeners also must bear some of the burden. They must focus on the speaker, not daydream or text a friend. They must listen with open minds, avoiding the tendency to prejudge the speaker or discount a speaker’s views without a fair hearing.

#### speaker

the originator of a message sent to a listener.

#### listener

the receiver of the speaker’s message.



**Figure 1**  
**The Speech Communication Process**

In this model of the speech communication process, a **speaker** creates a **message** and sends it via a **channel** to the **listener**, who interprets it and sends **feedback** via a channel to the speaker. **Interference** is whatever impedes accurate communication. The **situation** refers to the time and place in which communication occurs.

## Message

The **message** is whatever the speaker communicates to the listeners. The message is sent in the form of *symbols*—either *verbal* or *nonverbal*.

Verbal symbols are words. It's important for you to recognize that words are not things; they are *symbols* of things. If you give me an apple, you transfer a solid object from your hand to mine. But if you make a speech and you mention the word *apple*, you do not transfer a concrete thing. You transfer a verbal symbol.

## message

whatever is communicated verbally and nonverbally to the listener.

Nonverbal symbols are what you convey with your tone of voice, eyes, facial expression, gestures, posture, and appearance.

So far, the process sounds simple, but now we enter a danger zone. As a speaker transmits verbal and nonverbal symbols, the listeners must receive and interpret them. Unfortunately, listeners may end up with a variety of interpretations, some of them quite different from what the speaker intended. Consider our simple word *apple*. One listener may think of a small green fruit, while another conjures an image of a big red fruit. One listener may think of crisp tartness, while another thinks of juicy sweetness.

If such a simple word can evoke a variety of mental pictures, imagine the confusion and misunderstanding that can arise when abstract words such as *imperialism*, *patriotism*, and *censorship* are used. The term *censorship* may mean “stamping out filth” to some listeners, but it may mean “total government control of the news media” to others.

As a speaker, use symbols that are clear and specific. Don’t say, “Smoking may cause you a lot of trouble.” The phrase “a lot of trouble” is vague and might be interpreted by some listeners to mean “coughing,” by others to mean “stained teeth,” or by still others to mean “cancer.” Be specific: “Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer.”

Sometimes a speaker’s verbal symbols contradict his or her nonverbal symbols. If you say to an audience at the end of a speech, “Now I would like to hear your views on this subject,” but your expression is tense and your voice sounds irritated, the listeners are getting a mixed message. Which will they believe, your words or your nonverbal behavior? Listeners usually accept the nonverbal behavior as the true message. In this case, they will conclude that you do *not* welcome comments.

Make sure the nonverbal part of your message reinforces, rather than contradicts, the verbal part. In other words, smile and use a friendly tone of voice when you ask for audience participation.

## Channel

### channel

the pathway used to transmit a message.

The **channel** is the medium used to communicate the message. In everyday life, you receive messages via televisions, phones, the Internet, and direct voice communication. For public speaking, your main channels are auditory (your voice) and visual (gestures, facial expressions, visual aids). You can also use other channels—taste, smell, touch, and physical activity—which will be discussed in the chapter on presentation aids.

## Feedback

### feedback

verbal and nonverbal responses made by a listener to a speaker.

**Feedback** is the response that the listener gives the speaker. Sometimes it is *verbal*, as when a listener asks questions or makes comments. In most public speeches, and certainly in the ones you will give in the classroom, listeners wait to give verbal feedback until the question-and-answer period.

Listeners also give *nonverbal* feedback. If they are smiling and nodding their heads, they are obviously in agreement with your remarks. If they are frowning and sitting with their arms folded, they more than likely disagree with what you are saying. If they are yawning, they are probably bored or weary. “A yawn,” wrote English author G. K. Chesterton, “is a silent shout.”<sup>11</sup>

If you receive negative feedback, try to help your listeners. If, for example, you are explaining a concept but some of your listeners are shaking their heads and giving you looks that seem to say “I don’t understand,” try again, using different words to make your ideas clear.

## Tips for Your Career

### TIP 1

### Seek Feedback

Some speakers develop unconscious habits when they speak, such as smoothing their hair or straightening their clothes. The best way to discover and discard these quirks is to get feedback from your listeners in the form of an evaluation. Although feedback is valuable for pinpointing delivery problems, it is even more important as a way to assess the *content* of your speech: are your remarks enlightening or confusing to the listeners?

You don't need an evaluation of every speech in your career, but you should seek feedback occasionally. Strive to get both positive input and constructive suggestions so that you can keep the good and eliminate the bad. Here are four good methods:

1. **Ask several friends or colleagues to critique your speech.** Don't make an imprecise request like "Tell me how I do on this" because your evaluators will probably say at the end of your speech, "You did fine—good speech," regardless of what they thought of it, to avoid hurting your feelings. Instead give them a specific assignment: "Please make a note of at least three things that you like about the speech and my delivery, and at least three things that you feel need
2. **Use an evaluation form.** Distribute sheets to all listeners, asking for responses to a series of questions about your delivery and the content of your speech. To protect anonymity, you can have someone collect the forms.
3. **Ask a small group of listeners to sit down with you after a meeting to share their reactions.** This is especially useful in finding out whether the listeners understood and accepted your message. Try to listen and learn without becoming argumentative or defensive.
4. **Record your presentation on video.** Invite colleagues to watch the video with you and help you evaluate it. Because many people are *never* pleased with either themselves or their speeches on video, colleagues often can provide objectivity. For example, an introduction that now seems dull to you might strike your colleagues as interesting and captivating.

## Interference

**Interference** is anything that blocks or hinders the accurate communication of a message. There are three types:

- *External* interference comes from outside the listener: someone coughing, people talking on their smartphones, or broken air-conditioning that leaves the listeners hot and sticky.
- *Internal* interference comes from within the listener. Some listeners might be hungry or tired or sick, or they might be daydreaming or worrying about a personal problem. As a speaker, you can help such listeners by making your speech so engaging that audience members want to listen to you.
- *Speaker-generated* interference can occur if you distract your listeners with unfamiliar words, confusing concepts, or bizarre clothing.

Sometimes listeners will try to overcome interference—for example, straining to hear the speaker's words over the noise of other people talking. But too often, listeners will fail to make the extra effort.

When you are a speaker, stay alert for signs of interference and respond immediately. For example, if a plane roars overhead, you can either speak louder or pause while it passes.

### interference

anything that obstructs accurate communication of a message.

**situation**

the setting in which communication takes place.

**Situation**

The **situation** is the context—the time, place, and circumstances—in which communication occurs. Different situations call for different behaviors. In some settings, speakers can crack jokes and audiences can laugh, while in others, speakers must be serious and listeners should remain silent.

Time of day determines how receptive an audience is. Many listeners, for example, become sluggish and sleepy about an hour after a big meal. If you give a presentation during that period, you can enliven it by using colorful visual aids and hands-on activities.

When you prepare a speech, find out as much as possible about the situation: What is the nature of the occasion? How many people are likely to be present? Will the speech be given indoors or outdoors? Once you assess these variables, you can adapt your speech to make it effective for the situation.

**The Process in Everyday Life**

So far, our discussion might suggest that speech communication is a simple process: a speaker sends a message, a listener provides feedback—back and forth, like a tennis match. But in everyday life, the process is usually complex and dynamic. Instead of speaker and listener taking turns, communicators often send and receive messages at the same time.

For example, you go into your boss's office to ask for a raise. As you start your (verbal) message, she is giving you a friendly, accepting smile, a (nonverbal) message that seems to say that she is glad to see you. But as your message is spelled out, her smile fades and is replaced by a grim expression of regret—negative feedback. “I wish I could give you a big raise,” she says, “but I can’t even give you a little one.” As she is saying these last words, she interprets your facial expression as displaying disbelief, so she hastily adds, “Our departmental budget just won’t permit it. My hands are tied.” And so on—a lively give-and-take of verbal and nonverbal communication.

**The Speaker’s Responsibilities**

When you give a speech, you should accept certain responsibilities.

**Maintain High Ethical Standards**

The standards of conduct and moral judgment that are generally accepted in a society are called *ethics*. In public speaking, the focus on ethics is on how speakers handle their material and how they treat their listeners. Speakers should be honest and straightforward

with listeners, avoiding all methods and goals that are deceitful, unscrupulous, or unfair. “Examining Your Ethics” boxes throughout the book will help you exercise your skills at points where ethical issues are discussed.

Let’s examine three important ethical responsibilities of the speaker.

**Never Distort Information**

As an ethical speaker, you should always be honest about facts and figures. Distorting information is not only dishonest—it’s foolish. Let’s say that in your career, you persuade some colleagues to take a certain

**Examining Your Ethics**

Suppose you are speaking in support of a good cause, but the statistics you want to use in your speech are complicated and hard to explain. You could convince your audience more easily if you made up some simplified statistics. Is it okay to fabricate a small amount of data so that they are easier for your audience to understand?

- A. Yes, it’s okay if the data are close to being accurate.
- B. No, it is not okay.
- C. Sometimes yes, sometimes no—it depends on the context.

*For the answer, see the last page of this chapter.*

course of action but it is later discovered that you got your way by distorting facts and statistics. In the future, your colleagues will distrust everything you propose—even if you have sound logic and impeccable evidence on your side. “A liar will not be believed,” said the ancient Greek writer Aesop, “even when he [or she] speaks the truth.”<sup>12</sup>

### Respect Your Audience

Some speakers talk down to their listeners. Speaking in a scolding, condescending tone, one speaker told an audience of young job-seekers, “I know you people don’t believe me, but you’re wasting your time and money if you pay a consultant to critique your résumé.” When speakers are condescending or disrespectful, they are likely to lose the respect and attention of the audience. Their credibility is damaged.

Humorist Will Rogers once said, “Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects” and “There is nothing as stupid as an educated man if you get him off the thing he was educated in.”<sup>13</sup> When you are the expert on a subject, remember that your “ignorant” listeners are experts on topics within their own realm of knowledge and experience.

### Reject Stereotyping and Scapegoating

A **stereotype** is a simplistic or exaggerated image that humans carry in their minds about groups of people. If you were asked to give a speech to raise funds for a homeless shelter, you might have difficulty generating sympathy because many people have a negative stereotype of homeless people, referring to them as “bums” and assuming them to be addicted to alcohol or drugs.

Like all stereotypes, this one is unfair, as illustrated by the story of Dave Talley, a homeless man in Tempe, Arizona, who found a backpack containing a laptop computer and \$3,300 in cash. He turned in the backpack, which had been lost by Bryan Belanger, a student at Arizona State University. Belanger said he had withdrawn the money from his bank account to buy a new car after his old one had been wrecked. As for Dave Talley, he said he had no hesitation about turning in the lost items. “Not everybody on the streets is a criminal,” he said. “Most of us have honor and integrity.”<sup>14</sup>

You should reject stereotypes because they force all people in a group into the same simple pattern. They fail to account for individual differences and the wide range of characteristics among members of any group. For example, a popular stereotype depicts lawyers as dishonest. Some lawyers are dishonest, yes, but many are sincere advocates who make positive contributions to society.

While avoiding stereotyping, you also should reject its close cousin, scapegoating. A **scapegoat** is a person or a group unfairly blamed for some real or imagined wrong. In recent years, the alleged decline in the quality of education in the United States has been blamed on public school teachers, who have been vilified as incompetent and uncaring. While there may be some teachers who deserve such labels, most are dedicated professionals who care deeply about their students.

#### stereotype

an oversimplified or exaggerated image of groups of people.

#### scapegoat

an individual or a group that innocently bears the blame of others.

### Enrich Listeners’ Lives

Before a speech, some speakers make remarks such as these to their friends:

- “I hope not many people show up.”
- “When I ask for questions, I hope nobody has any.”
- “I want to get this over with.”

Often a speaker makes these comments out of nervousness. As you will see in the chapter on managing nervousness, speech anxiety is a normal occurrence that can be

motivated by a variety of understandable reasons. However, such remarks show that the speaker is focused on his or her own emotions rather than on the audience.

Instead of viewing a speech as an ordeal, consider it an opportunity to enrich the lives of your listeners. One of my students, Mary Crosby, gave a classroom speech on poisonous spiders—what they look like, how to avoid them, and what to do if bitten. She had spent six hours researching the topic. If the 17 of us in the audience had duplicated her research, spending six hours apiece, we would have labored for 102 hours. Thus, Crosby saved us a great deal of time and effort and, more importantly, gave us useful information. Most of us probably never would have taken the time to do this research, so her speech was all the more valuable.

## Take Every Speech Seriously

Consider two situations that some speakers erroneously assume are not worth taking seriously: classroom speeches and small audiences.

**Classroom speeches.** Contrary to what some students think, your classroom speeches are as important as any speeches that you may give in your career or community, and they deserve to be taken seriously. They deal with real human issues and are presented by real human beings. Teachers look forward to classroom speeches because they learn a lot from them, such as how to save the life of a person choking on food, how to garden without using pesticides, how to set up a tax-free savings account for their children, and so much more.

**Small audiences.** Some speakers mistakenly think that if an audience is small, they need not put forth their best effort. Wrong. You should try as hard to communicate with an audience of 5 as you would with an audience of 500. James “Doc” Blakely of Wharton, Texas, tells of a colleague who traveled to a small town in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan to give a speech and found that only one person had shown up to hear him. He gave the lone listener his best efforts, and later that listener started a national movement based on the speaker’s ideas.<sup>15</sup>

## Speech Introducing Yourself or a Classmate

A speech introducing yourself or a classmate to the audience is often assigned early in a public speaking class. The speech gives you an opportunity to use an easy topic to gain experience. It also gives you and other members of the class a chance to learn key information about one another so that future classroom speeches can be tailored to the needs and interests of the audience.

Strive to show your audience what makes you or your classmate interesting and unique. Unless your instructor advises otherwise, you may include the following items:

### *Background Information*

- Name
- Hometown
- Family information
- Work experience
- Academic plans
- Postgraduation goals

### *Unique Features*

- Special interests (hobbies, sports, clubs, etc.)
- One interesting or unusual thing about you or your classmate
- One interesting or unusual experience

The last three items are especially important because they give the audience a glimpse into the qualities, interests, and experiences that make you or your classmate unique.

## Sample Self-Introduction Speech

Rachel Chavez introduces herself to a public speaking class.

### The Sun Is Free

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Rachel Chavez, and I am from San Diego, California. I am majoring in environmental science.

#### BODY

I am very interested in solar energy. I have a part-time job installing solar panels for a company that is owned by my two older brothers. It is hard work, climbing up on roofs and installing panels, but it is very rewarding.

At the end of a job, I ask customers to turn on their system and then look at the electric meter. Because of the extra solar energy flowing in, they can see that

their meter has started running in the opposite direction. In other words, they are sending power back to the grid—they are now making money. In two or three years, they will have earned the equivalent of all the money they spent on buying and installing the solar system.

#### CONCLUSION

You can see why I love solar energy. I hope that in the years ahead, I can help move this country further and further down the road toward free energy from the sun for everybody.

## Sample Speech Introducing a Classmate

In this speech, Chris Richards introduces classmate Utsav Misra.

### A Grand Passion

#### INTRODUCTION

Utsav Misra, who is a sophomore, comes to us all the way from India, and he's the first person in his family to go to college. He is majoring in culinary arts.

#### BODY

At the moment, Utsav's grand passion in life is cricket, which is the most popular sport in India. He grew up playing cricket, and he's trying to organize a cricket club on our campus. Not only is he recruiting international students who know the sport well, but he's also trying to recruit students who have never played the sport. Cricket is becoming more and more popular in the United States. Today over 80 American colleges have cricket clubs.

For those of you who don't know what cricket is all about, it's similar to baseball. Pitchers are called

bowlers, and they throw the ball toward an opposing batsman, who tries to prevent the ball from hitting the wicket behind him. A wicket is made up of three upright wooden poles that are hammered into the ground.

Utsav tells me that cricket involves a lot more than what I've told you, and the rules can be a bit complicated for Americans. But it's like any sport. Once you learn the rules, it's fun to play and it's fun to watch.

#### CONCLUSION

For one of his speeches in this class, Utsav is planning to give you an introduction to cricket. He will show you a cricket ball and a bat, and he will use videos so that you can understand what's going on when you see a cricket match on TV. I, for one, am eager to learn about this intriguing sport.



If you are excited about vacationing in Hawaii—including jumping off Maui's famous Black Rock—you have a good speech topic.

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## Quick Guide to Public Speaking

To help you with any major speeches that you must give before you have had time to study this entire book, we will take a look at the key principles of preparation and delivery.

The guide below assumes that you will use the most popular method of speaking—extemporaneous—which means that you carefully prepare your speech but you don't read or memorize a script. Instead you look directly at your listeners and talk in a natural, conversational way, occasionally glancing at notes to stay on track.

The extemporaneous style and three other methods of speaking—manuscript (reading a document), memorization (speaking from memory), and impromptu (speaking with little or no time to prepare)—will be fully discussed in the chapter on delivering the speech.

### Preparation

**Audience.** The goal of public speaking is to gain a response from your listeners—to get them to think, feel, or act in a certain way. To reach the listeners, find out as much as you can about them. What are their ages, genders, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and educational levels? What are their attitudes toward you and the subject? How much do they already know about the subject? When you have completed a thorough analysis of your listeners, adapt your speech to meet their needs and interests.

**Topic.** Choose a topic that is interesting to you and about which you know a lot (either now or after doing research). Your topic

also should be interesting to the listeners—one they will consider timely and worthwhile. Narrow the topic so that you can comfortably and adequately cover it within the time allotted.

**Purposes and central idea.** Select a general purpose (to inform, to persuade, etc.), a specific purpose (a statement of exactly what you want to achieve with your audience), and a central idea (the message of your speech boiled down to one sentence). For example, suppose you want to persuade your listeners to safeguard their dental health. You could create objectives such as these:

*General Purpose:* To persuade

*Specific Purpose:* To persuade my listeners to take good care of their teeth and gums

Next, ask yourself, "What is my essential message? What big idea do I want to leave in the minds of my listeners?" Your answer is your central idea. Here is one possibility:

*Central Idea:* Keeping your mouth healthy can contribute to your overall health.

This central idea is what you want your listeners to remember if they forget everything else.

**Gathering of materials.** Gather information by reading books and periodicals (such as magazines and journals), searching for information on the Internet, interviewing knowledgeable people, or drawing from your own personal experiences. Look for interesting

items such as examples, statistics, stories, and quotations. Consider using visual aids to help the audience understand and remember key points.

**Organization.** Organize the body of your speech by devising two or three main points that explain or prove the central idea. To continue the example from above, ask yourself this question: “How can I get my audience to understand and accept my central idea?” Here are two main points that could be made:

- I. Medical researchers say that poor oral health can lead to diabetes, heart disease, pneumonia, and some types of cancer.
- II. Know how to protect your teeth and gums.

The next step is to develop each main point with support material such as examples, statistics, and quotations from experts. Underneath the first main point, these two items could be used to illustrate the health risks of poor oral health:

- Researchers at Columbia University’s School of Public Health tracked 9,296 men and women for 20 years and found that those participants who developed gum disease had a much greater risk of becoming diabetic than participants without gum disease.
- A recent study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* established that having gum disease significantly increases the chances of developing heart disease.

Under the second main point, discuss the needs to brush and floss daily, to use antibacterial mouthwash, and to get a professional cleaning from a dental hygienist twice a year.

**Transitions.** To carry your listeners smoothly from one part of the speech to another, use transitional words or phrases, such as “Let’s begin by looking at the problem,” “Now for my second reason,” and “Let me summarize what we’ve covered.”

**Introduction.** In the first part of your introduction, grab the attention of the listeners and make them want to listen to the rest of the speech. Attention-getters include fascinating stories, intriguing questions, and interesting facts or statistics. Next, prepare listeners for the body of the speech by stating the central idea and/or by previewing the main points. Give any background information or definitions that the audience would need in order to understand the speech. Establish credibility by stating your own expertise or by citing reliable sources.

**Conclusion.** Summarize your key points, and then close with a clincher (such as a quotation or a story) to drive home the central idea of the speech.

**Outline.** Put together all parts of the speech (introduction, body, conclusion, and transitions) in an outline. Make sure that everything in the outline serves to explain, illustrate, or prove the central idea.

**Speaking notes.** Prepare brief speaking notes based on your outline. These notes should be the only cues you take with you to the lectern.

**Practice.** Rehearse your speech several times. Don’t memorize the speech, but strive to rehearse ideas (as cued by your brief speaking notes). Trim the speech if you are in danger of exceeding the time limit.

## Delivery

**Self-confidence.** Develop a positive attitude about yourself, your speech, and your audience. Don't let fear cripple you: nervousness is normal for most speakers. Rather than trying to banish your jitters, use nervousness as a source of energy—it actually can help you come across as a vital, enthusiastic speaker.

**Approach and beginning.** When you are called to speak, leave your seat without sighing or mumbling, walk confidently to the front of the room, spend a few moments standing in silence (this is a good time to arrange your notes and get your first sentences firmly in mind), and then look directly at the audience as you begin your speech.

**Eye contact.** Look at all parts of the audience throughout the speech, glancing down at your notes only occasionally. Avoid staring at a wall or the floor; avoid looking out a window.

**Speaking rate.** Speak at a rate that makes it easy for the audience to absorb your ideas—neither too slow nor too fast.

**Expressiveness.** Your voice should sound as animated as it does when you carry on a conversation with a friend.



Gestures are an important part of delivery. Musician Jake Shimabukuro, a ukulele virtuoso and composer from Honolulu, Hawaii, uses effective gestures during a presentation in Pasadena, California.

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**Clarity and volume.** Pronounce your words distinctly and speak loud enough so that all listeners can clearly hear you. Avoid verbal fillers such as *uh, ah, um, er, okay, ya know*.

**Gestures and movement.** If it is appropriate and feels natural, use gestures to accompany your words. They should add to, rather than distract from, your message. You may move about during your speech, as long as your movements are purposeful and confident—not random and nervous. Don't do anything that distracts the audience, such as jingling keys or riffling note cards.

**Posture and poise.** Stand up straight. Try to be comfortable, yet poised and alert. Avoid leaning on the lectern or slouching on a desk.

**Use of notes.** Glance at your notes occasionally to pick up the next point. Don't read them or absent-mindedly stare at them.

**Enthusiasm.** Don't simply go through the motions of "giving a speech." Your whole manner—eyes, facial expression, posture, voice—should show enthusiasm for your subject, and you should seem genuinely interested in communicating your ideas.

**Ending and departure.** Say your conclusion, pause a few moments, and then ask—in a tone that shows that you sincerely mean it—"Are there any questions?" Don't give the appearance of being eager to get back to your seat, such as by pocketing your notes or by taking a step toward your seat.

## Tips for Your Career

### TIP 2

### Avoid the Five Biggest Mistakes Made by Speakers

In a survey, 370 business and professional leaders were asked to name the most common mistakes made by public speakers in the United States today. Here are the most common ones:

1. **Failing to tailor one's speech to the needs and interests of the audience.** A *poor* speaker bores listeners with information that is stale or useless. A *good* speaker sizes up the listeners in advance and gives them material that is interesting and useful.
2. **Using PowerPoint ineffectively.** If used wisely, PowerPoint slides can be wonderful, but if used poorly, they can irritate an audience. The chapter on aids will give you tips on creating effective slides.
3. **Speaking too long.** If you want to avoid alienating an audience, stay within your time limit. Time yourself when you practice, and refrain from ad-libbing and going off on tangents when you give your speech.
4. **Being poorly prepared.** A good speech does not just happen. The speaker must spend hours researching the topic, organizing material, and rehearsing the speech before he or she rises to speak. As many speakers have discovered, slapping together a presentation a few hours beforehand is not sufficient. You need at least two weeks to prepare.
5. **Being dull.** A speech can be made boring by poor content or by poor delivery. To avoid being dull, you should (a) choose a subject about which you are

enthusiastic, (b) prepare interesting material, (c) have a strong desire to communicate your message to the audience, and (d) let your enthusiasm shine during your delivery of the speech.

Source: Survey by the author of 370 business and professional leaders, February–March 2011.



Listeners get bored if a speech is uninteresting or too long.

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## Resources for Review and Skill Building

### Summary

A public speaking course helps you develop the key oral communication skills (speaking well and listening intelligently) that are highly prized in business, technical, and professional careers. You gain both confidence and experience as you practice those skills in an ideal environment—the classroom—where your audience is friendly and supportive.

The speech communication process consists of seven elements: speaker, listener, message, channel, feedback, interference, and situation. Communication does not necessarily take place just because a speaker transmits a message; the message must be accurately received by the listener. When the speaker sends a message, he or she must make sure that the

two components of a message—verbal and nonverbal—don’t contradict each other.

Communicators often send and receive messages at the same time, creating a lively give-and-take of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Speakers should maintain high ethical standards, never distorting information, even for a good cause. They should respect their audiences and avoid a condescending attitude. They should reject stereotyping and scapegoating.

Good communicators don’t view a speech as an ordeal to be endured, but as an opportunity to enrich the lives of their listeners. For this reason, they take every speech seriously, even if the audience is small.

## Key Terms

channel, 8	listener, 6	situation, 10
feedback, 8	message, 7	speaker, 6
interference, 9	scapegoat, 11	stereotype, 11

## Review Questions

1. Name five personal benefits of a public speaking course.

2. Why is speaking not necessarily the same thing as communicating?

3. What are the seven elements of the speech communication process?

4. If communication fails, who is to blame—the speaker or the listener?

5. If there is a contradiction between the verbal and nonverbal components of a speaker’s message, which
- component is a listener likely to accept as the true message?

6. What two channels are most frequently used for classroom speeches?

7. Why are communication skills important to your career?

8. What are the three types of interference?

9. What are stereotypes? Give some examples.

10. According to a survey, what are the five biggest mistakes made by public speakers?

## Building Critical-Thinking Skills

1. Describe an instance of miscommunication between you and another person (friend, relative, salesperson, etc.). Discuss what caused the problem and how the interchange could have been handled better.

2. Interference can block effective communication. Imagine you are a supervisor and you are giving important instructions at a staff meeting. You notice that a few
- employees are not receiving your message because they are carrying on a whispered conversation. What would you do? Justify your approach.

3. Who is the most engaging public communicator (politician, teacher, religious leader, etc.) you have ever encountered? What are the reasons for his or her success?

## Building Teamwork Skills

1. Working in a group, analyze a particular room (your classroom or some other site that everyone is familiar with) as a setting for speeches (consider the size of the room, seating, equipment, and potential distractions). Prepare a list of tips that speakers can follow to minimize interference and maximize communication.
2. For each member of a group, take turns stating your chosen (or probable) career. Then, working together, imagine scenarios in that career in which oral communication skills would play an important part.

## Examining Your Ethics

Answer: B. Making up data is never acceptable or ethical. It is okay to summarize complicated data for your audience, but be sure to tell them that you did so, and never alter data to suit your agenda.

## End Notes

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**Design Credits:** (sound waves) Jamie Farrant/Getty Images; (road sign) Last Resort/Getty Images

# Managing Nervousness

## OUTLINE

Reasons for Nervousness

The Value of Fear

Guidelines for Managing Nervousness

## OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

1. Identify and describe the five fears that can cause nervousness.
2. Explain why nervousness can actually help a public speaker.
3. Apply techniques that can be used before and during a speech to manage nervousness.

**EMMA WATSON**, an actor and activist best known for her role in the *Harry Potter* series of films, struggled with fear and anxiety before delivering a speech about feminism to the United Nations. Her nervousness is visible in her trembling hands and voice as she begins her speech. “I really didn’t think I had it in me,” she later said.

But as Watson continues her speech, she relaxes and trusts her abilities—and her extensive preparation. She displays confidence and passion, she delivers her message clearly and eloquently, and she keeps her audience engaged. After a dramatic call to action at the end of her speech, the audience members respond with applause and a standing ovation. Even though she had a shaky start, she overcame her nervousness and delivered a very successful speech. (You can watch her speech on YouTube by searching for “Emma Watson at the HeForShe Campaign 2014—Official UN Video.”)

If you experience nervousness as a public speaker, you are not alone. Most people—even public figures like Emma Watson—suffer from stage fright when called upon to



speak in public.<sup>1</sup> In fact, when researchers ask Americans to name their greatest fears, the fear of speaking to a group of strangers is listed more often than fear of snakes, insects, lightning, deep water, heights, or flying in airplanes.<sup>2</sup>

Using the tips offered in this chapter, you can manage your nervousness and become a confident speaker.

J. Countess / Contributor/Getty  
images

## Reasons for Nervousness

Is it ridiculous to be afraid to give a speech? The answer is, simply, no. It is not unusual for beginning speakers to feel nervous, even while chiding themselves that there's no good reason to be scared. But that is just plain wrong: there are many valid reasons to be scared about public speaking, including the five below.

1. **Fear of being stared at.** If you haven't had experience being the center of attention, it can be unnerving to have all eyes in a room focused on you.
2. **Fear of failure or rejection.** If you are like most people, you are afraid of looking stupid. You ask yourself, "What if I make a fool of myself?" or "What if I say something really dumb?"
3. **Fear of the unknown.** New events, such as your first job interview, can be scary because you cannot anticipate the outcome. Fortunately, this fear usually eases in public speaking as you gain experience. You develop enough confidence to know that nothing terrible will happen.
4. **A traumatic experience in the past.** You may have painful memories of a humiliating event in a classroom or a presentation that flopped.
5. **Social anxiety.** Because of your genetic makeup or temperament, you may be awkward, uneasy, or apprehensive in public. You may feel defensive around other people and fearful of being evaluated and judged.

All of these reasons are understandable, and you do not need to feel ashamed if any of them apply to you. Recognizing them is an important step in learning how to manage your nervousness.

## The Value of Fear

In the first hour of a public speaking class, many students express the same goal: to eliminate all traces of nervousness. They are often surprised to learn that a certain amount of fear can actually help them give a good speech. In other words, *you should not try to banish all your fear and nervousness.*

You *need* fear? Yes. When accepted and managed, fear energizes you; it makes you think fast. It gives you vitality and enthusiasm. Here is why: When you stand up to give a speech and fear hits you, your body's biological survival mechanisms kick in. You experience the same feeling of high alert that saved our cave-dwelling ancestors when they faced hungry wolves and either had to fight or flee to survive. Though these mechanisms are not as crucial in our day-to-day lives as they were to our ancestors, this system is still nice to have for emergencies: if you were walking down a deserted street one night and someone threatened you, your body would release a burst of **adrenaline** into your bloodstream, causing freshly oxygenated blood to rush to your muscles so you could fight ferociously or retreat quickly. The benefit of adrenaline can be seen in competitive sports; athletes *must* get their adrenaline flowing before a game begins. The great home-run slugger Reggie Jackson said during his heyday, "I have butterflies in my stomach almost every time I step up to the plate. When I don't have them, I get worried because it means I won't hit the ball very well."<sup>3</sup>

Many musicians, actors, and public speakers have the same attitude. Singer Beyoncé says, "I think it's healthy for a person to be nervous. It means you care—that you work hard and want to give a great performance. You just have to channel that nervous energy into the show."<sup>4</sup> In public speaking, adrenaline infuses you with energy. It enables you to

### adrenaline

a hormone, triggered by stress, that stimulates heart, lungs, and muscles and prepares the body for "fright, flight, or fight."

think with greater clarity and quickness. It makes you come across to your audience as someone who is alive and vibrant. Elayne Snyder, a speech teacher, uses the term **positive nervousness**, which she describes in this way: “It’s a zesty, enthusiastic, lively feeling with a slight edge to it. Positive nervousness is the state you’ll achieve by converting your anxiety into constructive energy. . . . It’s still nervousness, but you’re no longer victimized by it; instead you’re vitalized by it.”<sup>5</sup>

**positive nervousness**  
useful energy.

If you want proof that nervousness is beneficial, observe speakers who have absolutely no butterflies. Because they are 100 percent relaxed, they usually give speeches that are dull and flat, with no energy or zest. There is an old saying: “Speakers who say they are as cool as a cucumber usually give speeches about as interesting as a cucumber.” One speaker, the novelist I. A. R. Wylie, said, “I rarely rise to my feet without a throat constricted with terror and a furiously thumping heart. When, for some reason, I *am* cool and self-assured, the speech is always a failure. I need fear to spur me on.”<sup>6</sup>

Another danger of being too relaxed is you might get hit with a sudden bolt of panic. A hospital official told me that she gave an orientation speech to new employees every week for several years. “It became so routine that I lost all of my stage fright,” she said. Then one day, while in the middle of her talk, she was suddenly and inexplicably struck with paralyzing fear. “I got all choked up and had to take a break to pull myself together,” she recalled.

Many other speakers have had a similar experience. It is easy to get too relaxed, and then get blindsided by sudden panic. For this reason, if you find yourself overly calm before a speech, tell yourself to be alert for danger. Try to encourage “positive nervousness”—this can help you avoid being caught off-guard.

## Guidelines for Managing Nervousness

A complete lack of fear is undesirable, but what about the other extreme? Is *too much* nervousness bad for you? Of course it is, especially if you are so incapacitated that you forget what you were planning to say, or if your breathing is so labored that you cannot get your words out. Your goal is to keep your nervousness under control so that you have just the right amount—enough to energize you, but not enough to cripple you. You can achieve a good balance by following the tips below.

### In the Planning Stage

By giving time and energy to planning your speech, you can bypass many anxieties.

#### Choose a Topic You Know Well

Nothing will unsettle you more than speaking on a subject that is unfamiliar to you. If you are asked to do so, consider declining the invitation (unless, of course, it is an assignment from an instructor or a boss who gives you no choice). Choose a topic you are interested in and know a lot about—or want to learn more about. This will give you enormous self-confidence; if something terrible happens, like losing your notes, you can improvise because you know your subject. Also, familiarity with the topic will allow you to handle yourself well in the question-and-answer period after the speech.

#### Prepare Yourself Thoroughly

Here is a piece of advice given by many experienced speakers: *the very best precaution against excessive stage fright is thorough, careful preparation*. You may have heard the expression “I came unglued.” In public speaking, solid preparation is the “glue” that will hold you together.<sup>7</sup> Joel Weldon of Scottsdale, Arizona (who quips that he used



## Examining Your Ethics

Mick was nervous and lacked confidence in his ability to choose a good topic, so he gave a speech about meteors that his friend Aditya had created. Aditya was quite knowledgeable about astronomy and had created a good speech, but Mick himself did not know much about meteors. Which of the following are valid arguments against Mick's behavior?

- A. His delivery might be shaky because of unfamiliarity with the subject matter.
- B. He is guilty of plagiarism, passing off someone else's work as his own.
- C. Not knowing his topic very well, he risks embarrassment if he is unable to answer simple questions during the question-and-answer period.

*For the answer, see the last page of this chapter.*

to be so frightened of audiences that he was "unable to lead a church group in silent prayer"), gives his personal formula for managing fear: "I prepare and then prepare, and then when I think I'm ready, I prepare some more." Weldon recommends five to eight hours of preparation for each hour in front of an audience.<sup>8</sup>

Start your preparation far in advance of the speech date so that you have plenty of time to gather ideas, create an outline, and prepare speaking notes. Then practice, practice, practice. Don't just look over your notes—actually stand up and rehearse your talk in whatever way suits you: in front of a mirror, a video camera, or a live audience of family or friends. Don't rehearse just once—run through your entire speech at least four times. If you present your speech four times

at home, you will find that your fifth delivery—before a live audience—will be smoother and more self-assured than if you had not practiced at all.

## Never Memorize a Speech

Giving a speech from memory courts disaster. Winston Churchill, the British prime minister during World War II, is considered one of the greatest orators of the twentieth century, but even he had to learn this difficult lesson as a young man. In the beginning of his career, he would write out and memorize his speeches. One day, while giving a memorized talk to Parliament, he suddenly stopped. His mind went blank. He began his last sentence all over. Again his mind went blank. He sat down in embarrassment and shame. Never again did Churchill try to memorize a speech. This same thing has happened to many others who have tried to commit a speech to memory. Everything goes smoothly until they get derailed, and then they are hopelessly off the track.

Even if you avoid derailment, there is another reason for not memorizing: you will probably sound mechanical. Your audience will sense that you are speaking from your memory and not from your heart, and this will undermine your impact.

## Visualize Yourself Giving an Effective Speech

Let yourself daydream a bit: picture yourself going up to the lectern, a bit nervous but in control of yourself, and then giving a forceful talk to an appreciative audience. This visualization technique may sound silly, but it has worked for many speakers and it may work for you. Notice that the daydream includes nervousness. You need to have a realistic image in your mind: nervous, but nevertheless in command of the situation and capable of delivering a strong, effective speech.

This technique, often called **positive imagery**, has been used by athletes for years. Have you ever watched professional golf on TV? Before each stroke, golfers carefully study the distance from the ball to the hole, the rise and fall of the terrain, and so on. Many of them report that just before swinging, they imagine themselves hitting the ball with the right amount of force and watching it go straight into the cup. Then they try to execute the play just as they imagined it. The imagery, many pros say, improves their game.

**positive imagery**  
visualization of successful actions.

Positive imagery works best when you can couple it with *believing* that you will give a successful speech. Is it absurd to hold such a belief? If you fail to prepare, yes, it is absurd. But if you spend time in solid preparation and rehearsal, you are justified in believing you will be successful.

Whatever you do, don't let yourself imagine the opposite—a bad speech or poor delivery. Negative thinking will add unnecessary fear to your life in the days before your speech and rob you of creative energy—energy that you need for preparing and practicing.<sup>9</sup>

### Know That Shyness Is No Barrier

Some shy people think that their temperament blocks them from becoming good speakers, but this is erroneous. Many shy introverts like Kristin Stewart, Johnny Depp, Selena Gomez, Vanessa Hudgens, Justin Timberlake, Lady Gaga, and Beyoncé have prospered in show business.<sup>10</sup> Many less-famous people also have succeeded. “I used to stammer,” says Joe W. Boyd of Bellingham, Washington, “and I used to be petrified at the thought of speaking before a group of any size.” Despite his shyness, Boyd joined a Toastmasters club to develop his speaking skills. Two years later, he won the Toastmasters International Public Speaking Contest by giving a superb speech to an audience of more than 2,000 listeners.<sup>11</sup>



Kristen Stewart is a shy introvert.

Kristy Sparow/Contributor/  
Getty images

### Shift Focus from Self to Audience

Before a speech, some speakers worry about whether listeners will like them. This is a big mistake, says Johnny Lee, a specialist in preventing workplace violence who manages his nervousness by focusing on his audience rather than on himself. To worry about yourself and your image, he says, “is a kind of vanity—you are putting yourself above your audience and your message.”<sup>12</sup> To some experienced speakers, like Lee, focusing on yourself is an act of inexcusable selfishness. Instead of worrying about whether listeners like you, focus on the audience and try to fulfill their interests, needs, and desires.

One good way to shift the focus from self to audience is to change your “self-talk.” Whenever you have a self-centered thought such as “I will make a total idiot out of myself,” substitute an audience-centered thought such as “I will give my listeners information that will be useful in their lives.” This approach eases your anxiety and also empowers you to connect with your audience.

### Plan Visual Aids

In addition to adding spice and interest to a speech, visual aids reduce anxiety because you can shift the audience's stares from you to your illustrations. Also, moving about as you display your aids siphons off some of your excess nervous energy. Your aids don't have to be elaborate, and you don't need many—sometimes one or two will suffice.

### Make Arrangements

At least several days before you give your speech, inspect the location and anticipate any problems: Is there an extension cord for the multimedia projector? Do the windows have curtains or blinds so that the room can be darkened? Is there a whiteboard and a marker? Some talks have been ruined and some speakers turned into nervous wrecks because, at the last moment, they discover that there isn't an extension cord in the entire building.

### Devote Extra Practice to the Introduction

Because you will probably have the most anxiety at the beginning of your speech, you should spend a lot of time practicing your introduction.

Most speakers, actors, and musicians report that after the first minute or two, their nervousness eases and the rest of the event is relatively easy. German opera singer Ernestine Schumann-Heink said, “I grow so nervous before a performance, I become sick. I want to go home. But after I have been on the stage for a few minutes, I am so happy that nobody can drag me off.”<sup>13</sup> Perhaps happiness is too strong a word for what you will feel, but if you are a typical speaker, the rest of your speech will be smooth sailing once you have weathered the turbulent waters of the first few minutes.

## Immediately before the Speech

Here are a few tips for the hours preceding your speech.

### Verify Equipment and Materials

On the day of your speech, arrive early and inspect every detail of the arrangements you have made. Is the equipment you need in place and in good working order? If there is a public-address system, test your voice on it before the audience arrives so that you can feel at ease with it. Learn how to adjust the microphone.

### Get Acclimated to Audience and Setting

It can be frightening to arrive at the meeting place at the last moment and confront a sea of strange faces waiting to hear you talk. If you arrive at least one hour early, you can get acclimated to the setting and chat with people as they come into the room. In this way, you will see them not as a hostile pack of strangers but as ordinary people who wish you well.

If possible, during your talk, refer to some of the audience members with whom you have chatted: for example, “I was talking to Gabriela Ramirez before the meeting, and she told me about the problems you have been experiencing with getting customers to pay their bills on time.” In this way, you make your listeners feel valued, and you make yourself seem connected to them.

Danielle Kennedy of Sun Valley, Idaho, says that when she began her speaking career, she was so nervous she would hide out in a bathroom until it was time for her to speak. Now, she says, she mingles with the listeners as they arrive and engages them in conversation. “This reminds me that they are just nice people who want to be informed. I also give myself pleasant thoughts. Things like: ‘Can you imagine, these people drove 100 miles just to hear me. I am so lucky. These people are wonderful.’ I get real warm thoughts going by the time I get up there.”<sup>14</sup>



Greet listeners as they arrive.

Shutterstock / violetblue

### Use Physical Actions to Release Tension

Adrenaline can be beneficial, providing athletes and public speakers with helpful energy, but it also has a downside. When your body goes on high alert, you get pumped up and ready for action, but you also get a racing heart, trembling hands, and jittery knees. If you are an athlete, this is no problem because you will soon be engaged in vigorous play that will drain off excess nervous energy. As a public speaker, you don't have that outlet. Nevertheless, there are several tension releasers you can use:

- Take three slow, deep breaths and hold them. To prevent hyperventilating, be sure to inhale slowly and exhale slowly.
- Do exercises that can be performed without calling attention to yourself. Here are some examples: (1) Tighten and then relax your leg muscles. (2) Push your arm or hand muscles against a hard object (such as a desktop or a chair) for a few moments, and then release the pressure. (3) Press the palms of your hands against each other in the same way: tension, release . . . tension, release . . .

## During the Speech

Here are proven pointers to keep in mind as you deliver a speech.

### Pause before You Start

All good speakers pause a few seconds before they begin their talk. This silence is effective because (1) it is dramatic, building up the audience's interest and curiosity; (2) it makes you look poised and in control; (3) it calms you; and (4) it gives you a chance to look at your notes and get your first two or three sentences firmly in mind.

Many tense, inexperienced speakers rush up to the lectern and begin their speech at once, thus getting off to a frenzied, flustered start. They think that silence is an undesirable void that must be filled up immediately. To the contrary, silence is a good breathing space between what went before and what comes next. It helps the audience focus.

### Deal Rationally with Your Body's Turmoil

If you are a typical beginning speaker, you will suffer from some or all of the following symptoms as you begin your talk:

- Pounding heart
- Trembling hands
- Shaky knees
- Dry, constricted throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Quivering voice
- Flushed face

You are likely to suffer the most during the first few minutes of a speech, and then things get better. However, if your symptoms get worse as you proceed, it might be because your mind has taken a wrong path. Examine the two paths diagrammed in Figure 1. If you take Route A, you are trapped in a vicious circle. Your mind tells your body that disaster is upon you, and your body responds by feeling worse. This, in turn, increases your brain's perception of disaster.

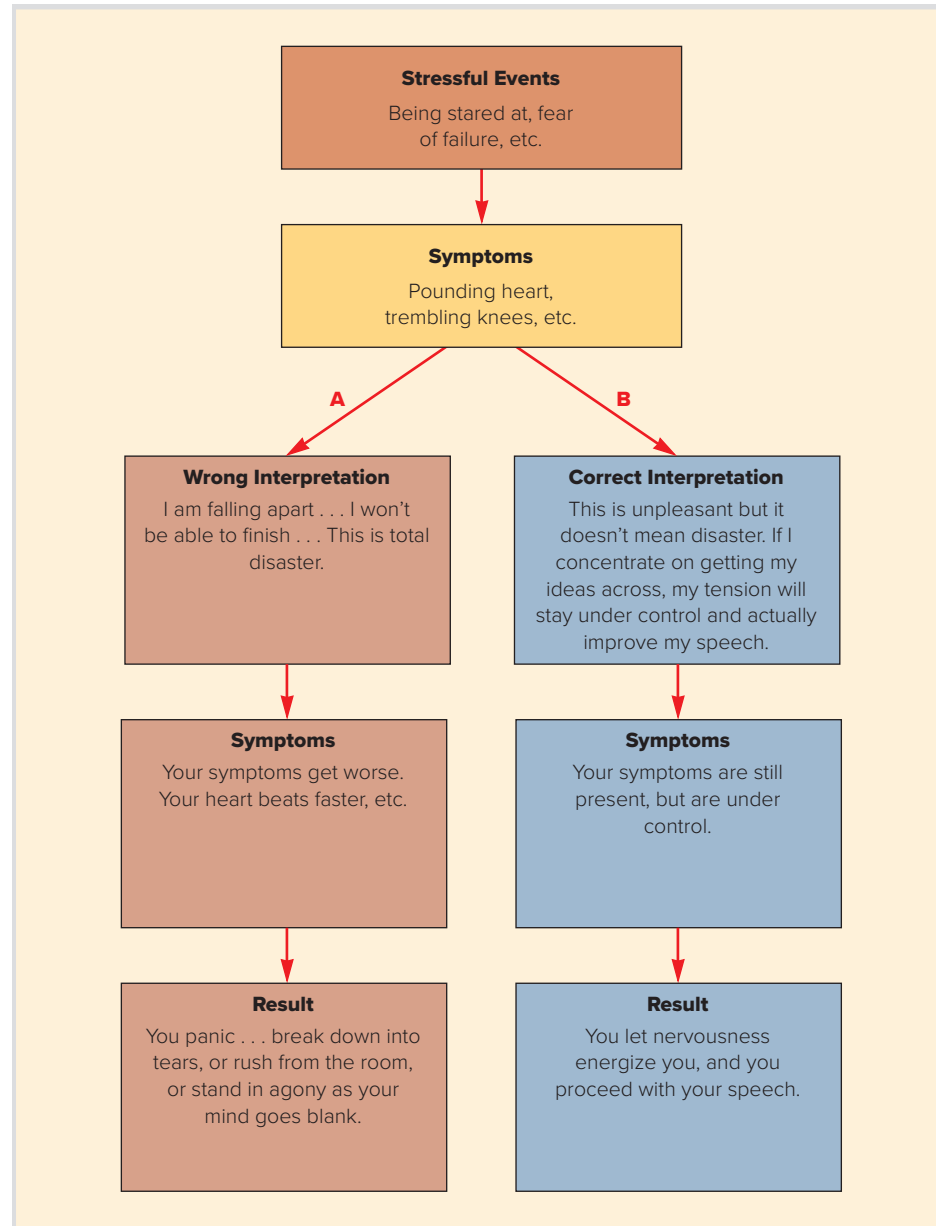
You can avoid this rocky road by choosing Route B, in which your mind helps your body stay in control. The mental trick is to remind yourself that nervousness is an ally that can help energize you. Tell yourself that your symptoms, rather than being a prelude to disaster, are evidence that you are energized enough to give a good speech.

### Think of Communication, Not Performance

Regard your challenge as *communication* rather than *performance*. Dr. Michael T. Motley of the University of California, Davis, says that speakers who suffer from excessive anxiety make the mistake of thinking of themselves as *performing* for listeners, whom they see as hostile evaluators. Such people say, "The audience will ridicule me if I make a mistake. I'll be embarrassed to death." But in fact, says Dr. Motley, audiences are more interested in hearing what you have to say "than in analyzing or criticizing how [you] say it." Audiences "usually ignore errors and awkwardness as long as they get something out of a speech."<sup>15</sup>

When you stop worrying about "How well am I performing?" and start thinking about "How can I share my ideas with my audience?" two things usually happen: (1) your anxiety comes down to a manageable level and (2) your delivery improves dramatically.

**Figure 1**  
**The Alternative Paths**  
**That a Speaker Feeling**  
**Stressed Might Take**



If you treat speechmaking as a dialogue with your listeners rather than as a performance, you will tend to talk *with* them instead of *to* them; you will tend to speak conversationally rather than in a stiff, unnatural way.

When one student, Maxine Jones, began her first classroom speech, her voice sounded artificial and cold; but after a few moments, she sounded animated and warm, as if she were carrying on a lively conversation. This caused her to become more interesting and easier to follow. Later she explained her transformation: "At first I was scared to death, but then I noticed that everyone in the room was looking at me with curiosity in their eyes, and I could tell that they really wanted to hear what I was saying. I told myself, 'They really *care* about this information—I can't let them down.'

So I settled down and talked to them as if they were my friends. I got so involved with explaining things to them that I didn't worry too much about being scared."

What Jones discovered is confirmed by athletes. Most tennis players, for example, are gripped by nervous tension before a match, but if they concentrate on hitting the ball, their tension recedes into the background. Likewise, public speakers may be filled with anxiety before a speech, but if they concentrate on communicating with the audience, their anxiety moves to a back burner, where it provides energy for the task.

### Know That Most Symptoms Are Not Seen

Some speakers get rattled because they think the audience is keenly aware of their thumping heart and quaking hands. You, of course, are painfully aware of those symptoms, but—believe it or not—your audience is usually oblivious to your body's distress. Remember that people are sitting out there wanting to hear your ideas. They are not saying to themselves, "Let's see, what signs of nervousness is this person displaying?"

Some students, after a speech, report being embarrassed about their jittery performance, whereas the other listeners in the class saw no signs of nervousness. Everyone was listening to the ideas and failed to notice the speaker's discomfort. Various studies have found the same thing to be true: audiences are unaware of the symptoms that speakers think are embarrassingly obvious.<sup>16</sup> In other words, you are probably the only one who knows that your knees are shaking and your heart is pounding.

Olivia Mitchell, a presentation trainer and member of the Toastmasters club, notes, "You don't look as nervous as you feel." After a speech, Mitchell will often ask her students to rate their anxiety on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the most nervous. She writes, "The presenter might say they were '8' on the scale. Then we ask the other participants what they thought [of the speaker's nervousness]. They'll say '3.'" Mitchell observes that the audience can't see your heart racing, they can't tell your mouth is dry, and they don't know that your shaky voice isn't how you normally sound. If you're a nervous presenter, it's likely your audience can't tell.<sup>17</sup>

### Never Mention Nervousness or Apologize

Though most signs of nervousness are not visible, there may be times when an audience does notice your nervousness—when, for example, your breathing is audibly labored. In such a case, resist the temptation to comment or apologize. Everyone knows that most people get nervous when they talk in public, so why call attention to it or apologize for it?

Commenting about nervousness can create two big dangers. First of all, you might get yourself more rattled than you were to begin with. Take the case of a teacher who was giving a talk to a PTA meeting one night. In the middle of her remarks, she suddenly blurted out, "Oh my god, I knew I would fall apart." Up to that time, the audience had not been aware of any discomfort or nervousness. She tried to continue her talk, but she was too flustered. She gave up the effort and sat down with a red face. Whatever internal distress she was suffering, had she said nothing about her nervousness, she could have dragged herself through the speech. When she sat down, it was clear that several members of the audience felt irritated and disappointed because they had been keenly interested in her remarks. Perhaps they even thought her selfish for depriving them of the second half of her speech, simply because she was nervous. This may sound insensitive, but it underscores an important point: your listeners don't care about your emotional distress; they only want to hear your message.

The second risk of mentioning symptoms is that your audience might have been unaware of your nervousness before you brought it up, but now you have distracted

## Tips for Your Career

TIP 1

### Prepare for Memory Lapses

A psychologist tells of the time when he was speaking at a convention as the presiding officer. At one point, he wanted to praise an associate who was sitting next to him at the head table for her hard work in planning the convention. “As I began my words of tribute,” he said, “my mind suddenly went blank, and I couldn’t remember her name! It was awful. This was a woman I had worked with for years. She was like a sister.”

Fortunately, he said, everyone was wearing name tags, so he leaned over, saw her name, and used it in his remarks—without the audience suspecting his memory lapse.

Such lapses are common, but don’t be alarmed. There is a simple solution: prepare a card with all basic information—names, dates, websites—and keep the card with your other notes for easy access.

This “card trick” is used by many ministers, politicians, and other public speakers. “When I perform weddings, even if I’m an old friend of the couple,” says one minister, “I have their names printed in big letters on a card that I keep in front of me.”

Use a card for any familiar passages, such as the Lord’s Prayer or the Pledge of Allegiance, that you are supposed to recite or to lead the audience in reciting. You may never need to read the card, but it’s nice to have a backup in case of emergency.

Please don’t misinterpret this tip to mean that you should write out an entire speech. Brief notes—a few words or phrases—are still recommended. Use the “card trick” only for names, numbers, and wordings that must be recalled with complete accuracy.



At public ceremonies, like this wedding, many ministers avoid embarrassment by having key information (such as the names of the bride and groom) on a card in front of them.

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them from your speech and they are watching the very thing you don’t want them to scrutinize: your body’s behavior. If you say, “I’m sorry that my hands are shaking,” what do you think the audience will pay close attention to, at least for the next few minutes? Your hands, of course, instead of your speech. Keep your audience’s attention focused on your ideas, and they will pay little or no attention to your emotional and physical distress.

### Don't Let Your Audience Upset You

If you are like some speakers, you get rattled when you look out at the audience and observe that most listeners are poker-faced and unsmiling. Does this mean they are displeased with your speech? No. Their solemn faces have nothing to do with you and your speech. This is just one of those peculiarities of human nature: in a conversation, people will smile and nod and encourage you, but when listening to a speech in an audience, most of them wear a blank mask. The way to deal with those stony faces is to remind yourself that your listeners want you to succeed; they hope that you will give them a worthwhile message. If you are lucky, you will notice two or three listeners who obviously appreciate your speech—they nod in agreement or give you looks of approval. Let your eyes go to them frequently. They will give you courage and confidence.

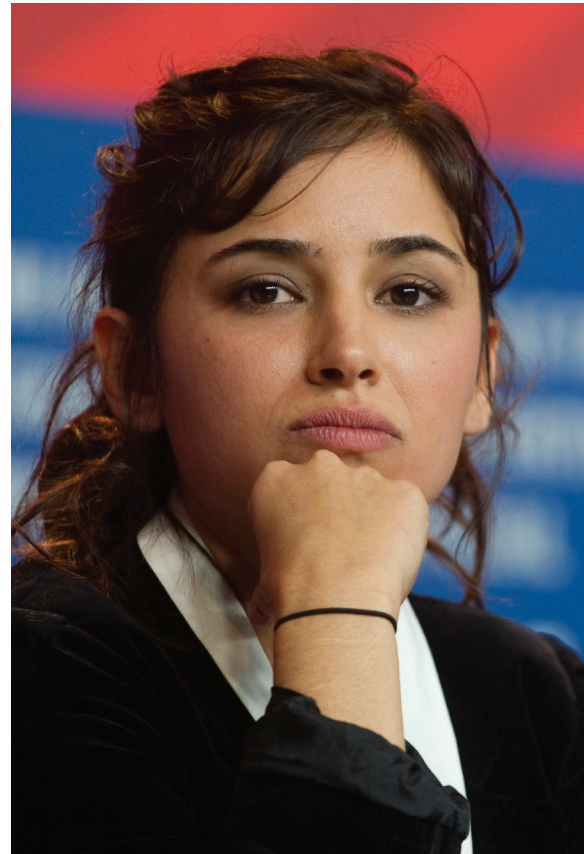
If you are an inexperienced public speaker, you may get upset if you see members of an audience whispering to one another. You may wonder, “Are these people making negative comments about me?” If the listeners are smiling, it can be even worse. You ask yourself, “Did I say something dumb? Is there something wrong with my clothes?” If this happens to you, keep in mind that your rude listeners are probably just sharing some personal gossip. If they *are* whispering about something you’ve said, it’s not necessarily negative. They may be whispering that they agree with you 100 percent.

What if you see faces that look angry or displeased? Don’t assume the worst. Some people get a troubled look on their face whenever they concentrate on a speaker’s message. Michelle Roberts, a defense attorney in Washington, DC, studies the facial expressions of every juror when she addresses the jury during a trial, but she has learned that frowning faces do not necessarily signify disapproval. She says about jurors, “Sometimes they seem like they’re scowling and actually they’re with you.”<sup>18</sup>

What if a listener stands up and walks out of the room? For some inexperienced public speakers, this feels like a stunning personal defeat. Before you jump to conclusions, bear in mind that the listener’s behavior is probably not a response to your speech: he or she may have another meeting to attend, may need to use the rest room, or may need to take an emergency phone call. But what if the listener is indeed storming out of the room in a huff, obviously rejecting your speech? In such a case, advises veteran speaker Earl Nightingale, “don’t worry about it. On controversial subjects, you’re bound to have listeners who are not in agreement with you—unless you’re giving them pure, unadulterated pap. Trying to win over every member of the audience is an impossible and thankless task. Remember, there were those who disagreed with wise, kind Socrates.”<sup>19</sup>

### Act Poised

To develop confidence when you face an audience, act as if you already are confident. Why? Because playing the role of the self-assured speaker can often transform you



Actress Moran Rosenblatt listens to a speaker at a film festival in Berlin. Is she displeased with the speaker’s remarks? Is she bored? Don’t jump to conclusions. Perhaps this is just her habitual expression when listening to an interesting topic.

©John MacDougall/AFP/Getty Images

into a speaker who is genuinely confident and poised. In various wars, soldiers have reported that they were terrified before going into combat, but nevertheless they acted brave in front of their buddies. During the battle, to their surprise, what started off as a pretense became a reality. Instead of pretending to be courageous, they actually became so. The same thing often happens to public speakers.

### Look Directly at the Audience

If you are frightened of your audience, it is tempting to stare at your notes or the back wall or the window, but these evasions will only add to your nervousness, not reduce it.

Force yourself to establish eye contact, especially at the beginning of your speech. Good eye contact means more than just a quick, furtive glance at various faces in front of you; it means “locking” your eyes with a listener’s for a couple of seconds. Locking eyes may sound frightening, but it actually helps calm you. In an article about a public speaking course that she took, writer Maggie Paley said, “When you make contact with one other set of eyes, it’s a connection; you can relax and concentrate. The first time I did it, I calmed down 90 percent, and spoke . . . fluently.”<sup>20</sup>

### Don’t Speak Too Fast

Because of nervous tension and a desire to “get it over with,” many speakers race through their speeches. “Take it slow and easy,” advises Dr. Michael T. Motley of the University of California, Davis. “People in an audience have a tremendous job of information-processing to do. They need your help. Slow down, pause, and guide the audience through your talk by delineating major and minor points carefully. Remember that your objective is to help the audience understand what you are saying, not to present your information in record time.”<sup>21</sup>

To help yourself slow down, rehearse your speech in front of friends or relatives and ask them to raise their hands whenever you talk too rapidly. For the actual delivery of the speech, write reminders for yourself in large letters on your notes (such as “SLOW DOWN”). While you are speaking, look at your listeners and talk directly to them in the same calm, patient, deliberate manner you would use if you were explaining an idea to a friend.

### Get Audience Action Early in the Speech

While it’s a bit unnerving to see your listeners’ expressionless faces, in some speeches, you can change those faces from blank to animated by asking a question. (Tips on how to ask questions will be discussed in the chapter on introductions and conclusions.) When the listeners respond with answers or a show of hands, they show themselves to be friendly and cooperative, which reduces your apprehension. When they loosen up, you loosen up.

### Eliminate Excess Energy

For siphoning off excess energy during the speech, you can use visual aids (as mentioned earlier) and these two tension releasers:

- Let your hands make gestures. You will not have any trouble making gestures if you simply allow your hands to be free. Don’t clutch note cards or thrust your hands into your pockets or grip the lectern. If you let your hands hang by your side or rest on the lectern, you will find that they will make gestures naturally. You will not have to think about it.

- Walk around. Though you obviously should not pace back and forth like a caged animal, you can walk a few steps at a time. For example, you can walk a few steps to the left of the lectern to make a point, move back to the lectern to look at your notes for your next point, and then walk to the right of the lectern as you speak.

In addition to reducing tension, gestures and movement make you a more exciting and interesting speaker than someone who stands frozen to one spot.

### Accept Imperfection

If you think that you must give a perfect, polished speech, you put enormous—and unnecessary—pressure on yourself. Your listeners don't care whether your delivery is perfect; they simply hope that your words will enlighten or entertain them. Think of yourself as a package deliverer; the audience is more interested in the package than in how skillfully you hand it over.

Making a mistake is not the end of the world. Even experienced speakers commit a fair number of blunders and bloopers. If you completely flub a sentence or mangle an idea, you might say something like, "No, wait. That's not the way I wanted to explain this. Let me try again." If you momentarily forget what you were planning to say, don't despair. Pause a few moments to regain your composure and find your place in your notes. If you can't find your place, ask the audience for help: "I've lost my train of thought—where was I?" There is no need to apologize. In conversation, you pause and correct yourself all the time; to do so occasionally in a speech makes you sound spontaneous and natural.

If you make a mistake that causes your audience to snicker or laugh, try to join in. If you can laugh at yourself, your audience will love you—they will see that you are no "stuffed shirt." Some comedians deliberately plan "mistakes" as a technique for gaining rapport with their audiences.

### Welcome Experience

If you are an inexperienced public speaker, please know that you will learn to manage your nervousness as you get more and more practice in public speaking, both in your speech class and in your career. You should welcome this experience as a way to further your personal and professional growth.

One student, at the beginning of the course, said that she just *knew* she would drop out of the class right before her first speech. She stayed, though, and developed into a fine speaker. She later got a promotion in her company partly because of her speaking ability. "I never thought I'd say this," she admitted, "but the experience of giving speeches—plus learning how to handle nervousness—helped me enormously. Before I took the course, I used to panic whenever I started off a talk. I had this enormous lump in my throat, and I thought I was doing terrible. I would hurry through my talk just to get it over with." But as a result of the course, she said, "I learned to control my nervousness and use it to my advantage. Now I'm as nervous as ever when I give a speech, but I make the nervousness work *for* me instead of *against* me."

In your career, rather than shying away from speaking opportunities, seek them out. An old saying is true: experience is the best teacher.



Like most public speakers, singer Shawn Mendes sometimes makes mistakes. Regarding a concert in Philadelphia, he says, "I fumbled my words on stage. I was between songs and meant to tell the fans to 'sing along if you know the words,' but it came out as an entirely jumbled sentence of gibberish."

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## Resources for Review and Skill Building

### Summary

Nervousness is a normal, understandable emotion experienced by most public speakers. There are many reasons for jitters, but five of the most common are fear of being stared at, fear of failure or rejection, fear of the unknown, a traumatic experience in the past, and social anxiety. There is no reason to be ashamed if any of them apply to you.

Instead of trying to eliminate nervousness, welcome it as a source of energy. Properly channeled, “positive nervousness” can help you give a better speech than you would deliver if you were completely relaxed.

The best way to avoid excessive, crippling nervousness is to pour time and energy into preparing and practicing your

speech. Then, when you stand up to speak, deal rationally with your nervous symptoms (such as trembling knees and dry throat). Remind yourself that the symptoms are not a prelude to disaster but instead are evidence that you are energized enough to give a good speech. Never call attention to your nervousness and never apologize for it; the listeners are more interested in your message than your emotional state. Focus on getting your ideas across to the audience. This will get your mind where it belongs (on your listeners, not yourself), and it will help you move your nervousness to a back burner, where it can still simmer and energize you without hindering your effectiveness.

### Key Terms

adrenaline, 22

positive imagery, 24

positive nervousness, 23

### Review Questions

1. What are the five common reasons for speakers' nervousness?
2. Why are fear and nervousness beneficial to the public speaker?
3. Why is delivering a speech from memory a bad method?
4. Is shyness a liability for a speaker? Explain your answer.
5. How can a speaker reduce excessive tension before a speech?
6. Explain the idea “Think of communication, not performance.”
7. Does an audience detect most of a speaker's nervous symptoms? Explain your answer.
8. Why should you never call attention to your nervousness?
9. Why should speakers not be upset when they see the unsmiling faces of their listeners?
10. Why should a speaker act as if he or she is confident?

### Building Critical-Thinking Skills

1. In an experiment, psychologist Rowland Miller asked college students to do something embarrassing, such as singing “The Star-Spangled Banner,” while classmates watched. Those students who reported a great degree of embarrassment thought that their classmates would consider them fools and like them less, but Miller found just the opposite: the classmates expressed greater regard for the easily embarrassed students after the performance than before. What lessons can a public speaker draw from this research?
2. Imagine that while you are speaking to an audience, you notice that (a) everyone is very quiet, (b) a man in the front is rubbing his neck, and (c) a woman is looking in her purse. Using two columns on a piece of paper, give a negative interpretation of these events in the left column, and then give a positive interpretation in the right column.
3. Many musicians make a distinction between “good nervousness” and “bad nervousness.” What does this distinction mean? How does it apply to public speakers?

4. Is it a good idea for speakers to focus during their speech on whether their clothes, grooming, and overall image are pleasing to the audience? Defend your answer.

## Building Teamwork Skills

1. In a group, make a list of the nervous symptoms that group members have experienced before and during oral communication in public. (This may include being asked for comments during a class discussion.) Then, discuss ways to control nervousness.
2. Worrying about future events, say mental-health therapists, can be helpful at certain times and harmful at other times. In a group, discuss the pros and cons of worrying using examples from everyday life. Then, decide which aspects of speech preparation and delivery deserve to be worried about and which do not.

## Examining Your Ethics

Answer: A, B, and C. Not knowing much about the topic can worsen speech anxiety and can cause embarrassment in the question-and-answer period. Plagiarism is a form of theft and is always unethical.

## End Notes

1. "Conquering Stage Fright," Anxiety and Depression Association of America, [www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/social-anxiety-disorder/treatment/conquering-stage-fright](http://www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/social-anxiety-disorder/treatment/conquering-stage-fright) (accessed January 7, 2016).
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