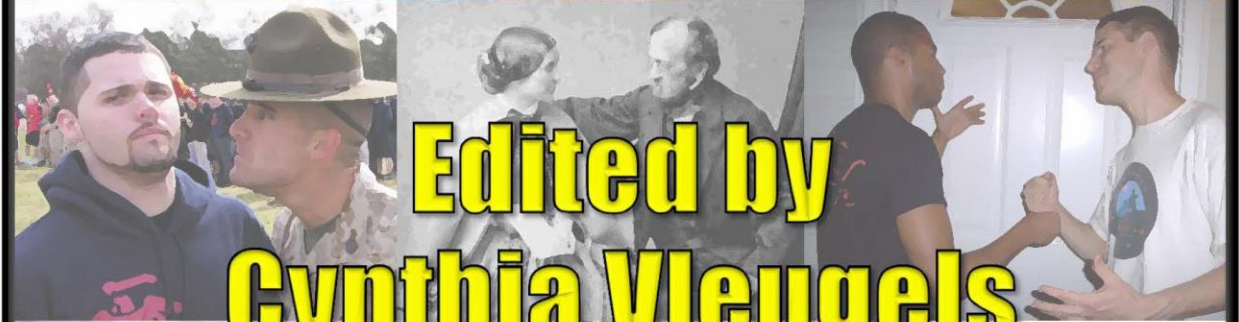




# HUMAN COMMUNICATION



Edited by  
Cynthia Vleugels



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*Additions and edits C. Vleugels.*

# Chapter 1

## Study of Communication

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain Communication Study.
- Define Communication.
- Explain the linear and transactional models of communication.
- Discuss the benefits of studying Communication.

You are probably reading this book because you are taking an introductory Communication course at your college or university. Many colleges and universities around the country require students to take some type of communication course in order to graduate. Introductory Communication classes include courses on public speaking, interpersonal communication, or a class that combines both. While these are some of the most common introductory Communication courses, many Communication departments are now offering an introductory course that explains what Communication is, how it is studied as an academic field, and what areas of specialization make up the field of Communication. In other words, these are survey courses similar to courses such as Introduction to Sociology or Introduction to Psychology. Our goal in this text is to introduce you to the field of Communication as an academic discipline of study.

### What is Communication Study?

Bruce Smith, Harold Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey provided a good and simple answer to the question, “What is Communication study?” They state that, **communication study** is an academic field whose primary focus is “*who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results.*”

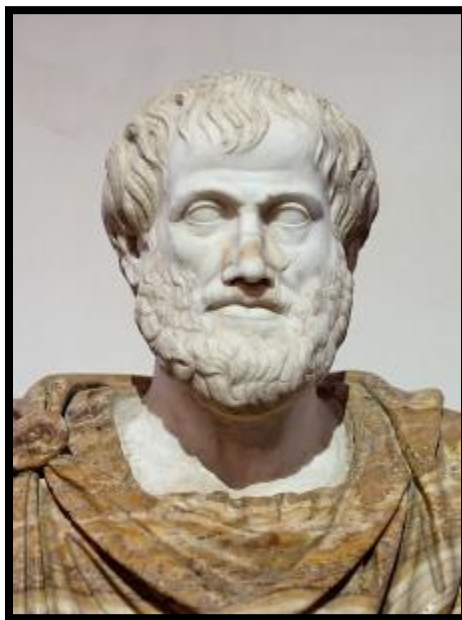


*Egyptian antiquities in the Brooklyn Museum*

Although they gave this explanation almost 70 years ago, to this day it succinctly describes the focus of Communication scholars and professionals. As professors and students of Communication, we extensively examine the various forms and outcomes of human communication. On its website, the **National Communication Association** (NCA), states that **communication study** “*focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels and media. The discipline promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication.*” They go on to say, “*Communication is a diverse discipline which includes inquiry by social scientists, humanists, and critical and cultural studies scholars.*” Now, if people ask you what you’re studying in a Communication class, you have an answer!

In this course we will use Smith, Lasswell, and Casey’s definition to guide how we discuss the content in this book. Now that you know how to define communication study, are you able to develop a simple definition of communication? Try to write a one-sentence definition of communication!

We’re guessing it’s more difficult than you think. Don’t be discouraged. For decades communication professionals have had difficulty coming to any consensus about how to define the term communication (Hovland; Morris; Nilsen; Sapir; Schramm; Stevens). Even today, there is no single agreed-upon definition of communication. In 1970 and 1984 Frank Dance looked at 126 published definitions of communication in our literature and said that the task of trying to develop a single definition of communication that everyone likes is like trying to nail Jello to a wall. Thirty years later, defining communication still feels like nailing Jello to a wall.



**Aristotle**

Aristotle said, “Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making — speaker, subject, and person addressed — it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech’s end and object.”

For Aristotle it was the “to whom” that determined if communication occurred and how effective it was. Aristotle, in his study of “who says what, through what channels, to whom, and what will be the results” focused on persuasion and its effect on the audience. Aristotle thought it was extremely important to focus on the audience in communication exchanges.

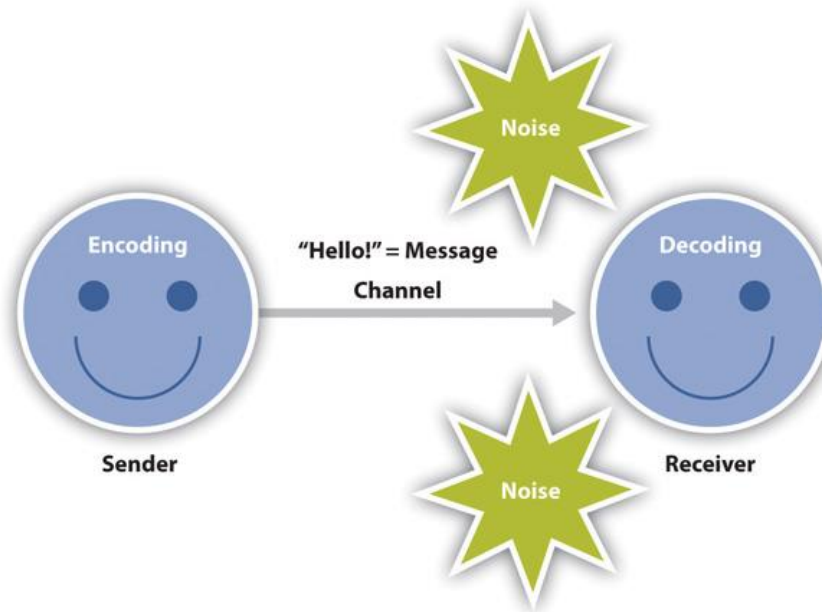


What is interesting is that when we think of communication we are often, “more concerned about ourselves as the communication’s source, about our message, and even the channel we are going to use. Too often, the listener, viewer, or reader fails to get any consideration at all (Lee, 2008).

For the purpose of this text we define **communication** as *the process of using symbols to exchange meaning*. Let’s examine two models of communication to help you further grasp this definition. Shannon and Weaver proposed a Mathematical Model of Communication (often called the Linear Model) that serves as a basic model of communication. This model suggests that communication is simply the transmission of a message from one source to another. Watching YouTube videos serves as an example of this. You act as the receiver when you watch videos, receiving messages from the source (the YouTube video). To better understand this, let’s break down each part of this model.

## The Linear Model of Communication

The Linear Model of Communication is a model that suggests communication moves only in one direction. The **Sender** encodes a **Message**, then uses a certain **Channel** (verbal/nonverbal communication) to send it to a **Receiver** who decodes (interprets) the message. **Noise** is anything that interferes with, or changes, the original encoded message.

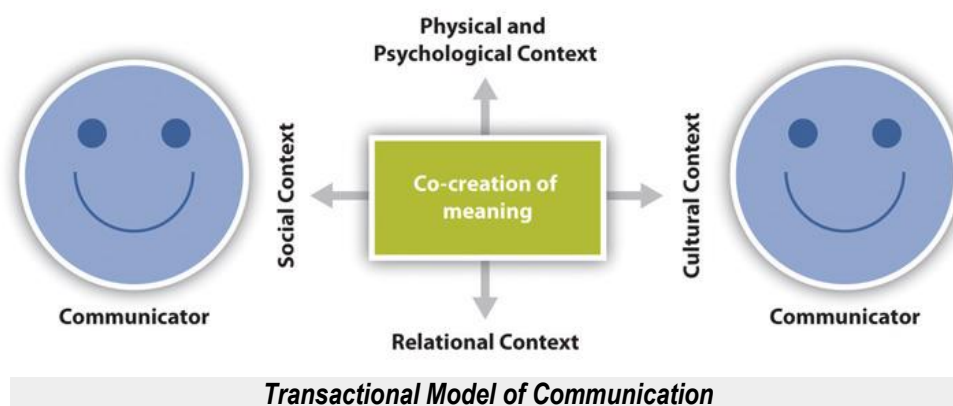


### **Linear Model of Communication**

- A **sender** is *someone who encodes and sends a message to a receiver through a particular channel*. The sender is the initiator of communication. For example, when you text a friend, ask a teacher a question, or wave to someone you are the sender of a message.
- A **receiver** is *the recipient of a message*. Receivers must decode (interpret) messages in ways that are meaningful for them. For example, if you see your friend make eye contact, smile, wave, and say “hello” as you pass, you are receiving a message intended for you. When this happens you must decode the verbal and nonverbal communication in ways that are meaningful to you.

- A **message** is the particular meaning or content the sender wishes the receiver to understand. The message can be intentional or unintentional, written or spoken, verbal or nonverbal, or any combination of these. For example, as you walk across campus you may see a friend walking toward you. When you make eye contact, wave, smile, and say “hello,” you are offering a message that is intentional, spoken, verbal and nonverbal.
- A **channel** is the method a sender uses to send a message to a receiver. The most common channels humans use are **verbal** and **nonverbal** communication which we will discuss in detail in later in the book. Verbal communication relies on language and includes speaking, writing, and sign language. Nonverbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, paralanguage, and touch. We also use communication channels that are mediated (such as television or the computer) which may utilize both verbal and nonverbal communication. Using the greeting example above, the channels of communication include both verbal and nonverbal communication.
- **Noise** is anything that interferes with the sending or receiving of a message. Noise is external (a jack hammer outside your apartment window or loud music in a nightclub), and internal (physical pain, psychological stress, or nervousness about an upcoming test). External and internal noise make encoding and decoding messages more difficult. Using our ongoing example, if you are on your way to lunch and listening to music on your phone when your friend greets you, you may not hear your friend say “hello,” and you may not wish to chat because you are hungry. In this case, both internal and external noise influenced the communication exchange. Noise is in every communication context, and therefore, NO message is received exactly as it is transmitted by a sender because noise distorts it in one way or another.

A major criticism of the Linear Model of Communication is that it suggests communication only occurs in one direction. It also does not show how context, or our personal experiences, impact communication. Television serves as a good example of the linear model. Have you ever talked back to your television while you were watching it? Maybe you were watching a sporting event or a dramatic show and you talked at the people in the television. Did they respond to you? We're sure they did not. Television works in one direction. No matter how much you talk to the television it will not respond to you. Now apply this idea to the communication in your relationships. It seems ridiculous to think that this is how we would communicate with each other on a regular basis. This example shows the limits of the linear model for understanding communication, particularly human to human communication. Given the limitations of the Linear Model, Barnlund adapted the model to more fully represent what occurs in most human communication exchanges. The Transactional Model demonstrates that communication participants act as senders AND receivers simultaneously, creating reality through their interactions. Communication is not a simple one-way transmission of a message: The personal filters and experiences of the participants impact each communication exchange. The **Transactional Model** demonstrates that we are simultaneously senders and receivers, and that noise and personal filters always influence the outcomes of every communication exchange.



## The Transactional Model of Communication

The Transactional Model of Communication adds to the Linear Model by suggesting that *both parties in a communication exchange act as both sender and receiver simultaneously, encoding and decoding messages to and from each other at the same time.*

This model takes into account your previous communication. So, while it might be common to hear that an argument or previous conversations was “in the past”, communication never just disappears. All of your previous interactions are part of each new interaction.

While these models are overly simplistic representations of communication, they illustrate some of the complexities of defining and studying communication. Going back to Smith, Lasswell, and Casey, as Communication scholars we may choose to focus on one, all, or a combination of the following: senders of communication, receivers of communication, channels of communication, messages, noise, context, and/or the outcome of communication. We hope you recognize that studying communication is simultaneously detail-oriented (looking at small parts of human communication), and far-reaching (examining a broad range of communication exchanges).

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# Chapter 2

## Verbal Communication

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define verbal communication and explain its main characteristics.
- Understand the three qualities of symbols.
- Describe the rules governing verbal communication.
- Explain the differences between written and spoken communication.
- Describe the functions of verbal communication.

***“Consciousness can’t evolve any faster than language” – Terence McKenna***



Imagine for a moment that you have no language with which to communicate. It's hard to imagine isn't it? It's probably even harder to imagine that with all of the advancements we have at our disposal today, there are people in our world who actually do not have, or cannot use, language to communicate.

Just a few decades ago, the Nicaraguan government started bringing deaf children together from all over the country in an attempt to educate them. These children had spent their lives in remote places and had no contact with other deaf people. They had never learned a language and could not understand their teachers or each other. Likewise, their teachers could not understand them. Shortly after bringing these students together, the teachers noticed that the students communicated with each other in what appeared to be an organized fashion: they had literally brought together the individual gestures they used at home and composed them into a new language. Although the teachers still did not understand what the kids were saying, they were astonished at what they were witnessing—the birth of a new language in the late 20th century! This was an unprecedented discovery.

In 1986 American linguist Judy Kegl went to Nicaragua to find out what she could learn from these children without language. She contends that our brains are open to language until the age of 12 or 13, and then language becomes difficult to learn. She quickly discovered approximately 300 people in Nicaragua who did not have language and

says, “They are invaluable to research – among the only people on Earth who can provide clues to the beginnings of human communication.” To access the full transcript, view the following link: [CBS News: Birth of a Language](#). Adrien Perez, one of the early deaf students who formed this new language (referred to as Nicaraguan Sign Language), says that without verbal communication, “You can’t express your feelings. Your thoughts may be there but you can’t get them out. And you can’t get new thoughts in.” As one of the few people on earth who has experienced life with and without verbal communication, his comments speak to the heart of communication: it is the essence of who we are and how we understand our world. We use it to form our identities, initiate and maintain relationships, express our needs and wants, construct and shape world-views, and achieve personal goals (Pelley).

In this chapter, we want to provide and explain our definition of verbal communication, highlight the differences between written and spoken verbal communication, and demonstrate how verbal communication functions in our lives.

## Defining Verbal Communication

When people ponder the word communication, they often think about the act of talking. We rely on verbal communication to exchange messages with one another and develop as individuals. The term verbal communication often evokes the idea of spoken communication, but written communication is also part of verbal communication. Reading this book you are decoding the authors’ written verbal communication in order to learn more about communication. Let’s explore the various components of our definition of verbal communication and examine how it functions in our lives.

Verbal communication is about language, both written and spoken. In general, verbal communication refers to our use of words while nonverbal communication refers to communication that occurs through means other than words, such as body language, gestures, and silence. Both verbal and nonverbal communication can be spoken and written. Many people mistakenly assume that verbal communication refers only to spoken communication. However, you will learn that this is not the case. Let’s say you tell a friend a joke and he or she laughs in response. Is the laughter verbal or nonverbal communication? Why? As laughter is not a word we would consider this vocal act as a form of nonverbal communication. For simplification, the box below highlights the kinds of communication that fall into the various categories. You can find many definitions of verbal communication in our literature, but for this text, we define **Verbal Communication** as *an agreed-upon and rule-governed system of symbols used to share meaning*. Let’s examine each component of this definition in detail.

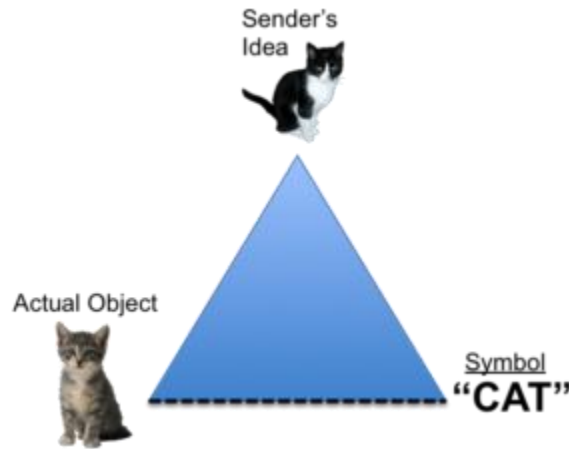
	Verbal Communication	Nonverbal Communication
Oral	Spoken Language	Laughing, Crying, Coughing, etc.
Nonverbal	Written Language/Sign Language	Gestures, Body Language, etc.

## A System of Symbols

**Symbols** are *arbitrary representations of thoughts, ideas, emotions, objects, or actions used to encode and decode meaning* (Nelson & Kessler Shaw). Symbols stand for, or represent, something else. For example, there is nothing inherent about calling a cat a cat.

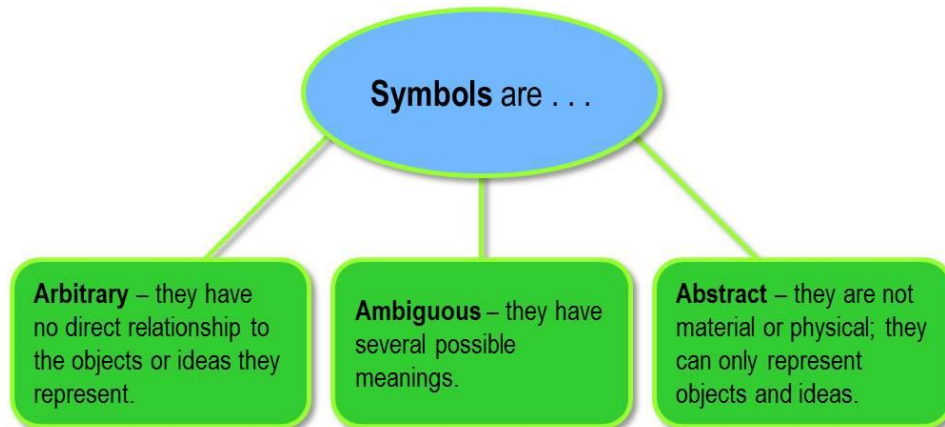
Rather, English speakers have agreed that these symbols (words), whose components (letters) are used in a particular order each time, stand for both the actual object, as well as our interpretation of that object. This idea is illustrated by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards’ triangle of meaning. The word “cat” is not the actual cat. Nor does it

have any direct connection to an actual cat. Instead, it is a symbolic representation of our idea of a cat, as indicated by the line going from the word “cat” to the speaker’s idea of “cat” to the actual object.



Symbols have three distinct qualities: they are arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract. Notice that the picture of the cat on the left side of the triangle more closely represents a real cat than the word “cat.” However, we do not use pictures as language, or verbal communication. Instead, we use words to represent our ideas. This example demonstrates our agreement that the word “cat” represents or stands for a real cat AND our idea of a cat. The symbols we use are **arbitrary** and have *no direct relationship to the objects or ideas they represent*. We generally consider communication successful when we reach agreement on the meanings of the symbols we use.

Not only are symbols arbitrary, they are **ambiguous** — that is, they have *several possible meanings*. Imagine your friend tells you she has an apple on her desk. Is she referring to a piece of fruit or her computer? If a friend says that a person he met is cool, does he mean that person is cold or awesome? The meanings of symbols change over time due to changes in social norms, values, and advances in technology. You might be asking, “If symbols can have multiple meanings then how do we communicate and understand one another?” We are able to communicate because there are a finite number of possible meanings for our symbols, a range of meanings which the members of a given language system agree upon. Without an agreed-upon system of symbols, we could share relatively little meaning with one another.



A simple example of ambiguity can be represented by one of your classmates asking a simple question to the teacher during a lecture where she is showing PowerPoint slides: “can you go to the last slide please?” The teacher is half way through the presentation. Is the student asking if the teacher can go back to the previous slide? Or does

the student really want the lecture to be over with and is insisting that the teacher jump to the final slide of the presentation? Chances are the student missed a point on the previous slide and would like to see it again to quickly take notes. However, suspense may have overtaken the student and they may have a desire to see the final slide. Even a simple word like “last” can be ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation.

The verbal symbols we use are also **abstract**, meaning that, *words are not material or physical. A certain level of abstraction is inherent in the fact that symbols can only represent objects and ideas.* This abstraction allows us to use a phrase like “the public” in a broad way to mean all the people in the United States rather than having to distinguish among all the diverse groups that make up the U.S. population. Similarly, in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* book series, wizards and witches call the non-magical population on earth “muggles” rather than having to define all the separate cultures of muggles. Abstraction is helpful when you want to communicate complex concepts in a simple way. However, the more abstract the language, the greater potential there is for confusion.

## Rule-Governed

Verbal communication is **rule-governed**. *We must follow agreed-upon rules to make sense of the symbols we share.* Let’s take another look at our example of the word cat. What would happen if there were no rules for using the symbols (letters) that make up this word? If placing these symbols in a proper order was not important, then cta, tac, tca, act, or atc could all mean cat. Even worse, what if you could use any three letters to refer to cat? Or still worse, what if there were no rules and anything could represent cat? Clearly, it’s important that we have rules to govern our verbal communication. There are four general rules for verbal communication, involving the sounds, meaning, arrangement, and use of symbols.

### **SOUNDS AND LETTERS: A POEM FOR ENGLISH STUDENTS**

When in English class we speak,  
Why is break not rhymed with freak?  
Will you tell me why it’s true  
That we say sew, but also few?  
When a poet writes a verse  
Why is horse not rhymed with worse?  
Beard sounds not the same as heard  
Lord sounds not the same as word

Cow is cow, but low is low  
Shoe is never rhymed with toe.  
Think of nose and dose and lose  
Think of goose, but then of choose.

Confuse not comb with tomb or bomb,  
Doll with roll, or home with some.  
We have blood and food and good.  
Mould is not pronounced like could.

There’s pay and say, but paid and said.  
“I will read”, but “I have read”.  
Why say done, but gone and lone –  
Is there any reason known?

To summarise, it seems to me  
Sounds and letters disagree.

Taken from: <http://www.ukstudentlife.com/Ideas/Fun/Wordplay.htm>



- **Phonology** is *the study of speech sounds*. The pronunciation of the word cat comes from the rules governing how letters sound, especially in relation to one another. The context in which words are spoken may provide answers for how they should be pronounced. When we don't follow phonological rules, confusion results. One way to understand and apply phonological rules is to use syntactic and pragmatic rules to clarify phonological rules.
- **Semantic rules** help us understand *the difference in meaning between the word cat and the word dog*. Instead of each of these words meaning any four-legged domestic pet, we use each word to specify what four-legged domestic pet we are talking about. You've probably used these words to say things like, "I'm a cat person" or "I'm a dog person." Each of these statements provides insight into what the sender is trying to communicate. "A Poem for English Students," not only illustrates the idea of phonology, but also semantics. Even though many of the words are spelled the same, their meanings vary depending on how they are pronounced and in what context they are used. We attach meanings to words; meanings are not inherent in words themselves. As you've been reading, words (symbols) are arbitrary and attain meaning only when people give them meaning. While we can always look to a dictionary to find a *standardized definition of a word*, or its **denotative meaning**, meanings do not always follow standard, agreed-upon definitions when used in various contexts. For example, think of the word "sick." The denotative definition of the word is ill or unwell. However, **connotative meanings**, *the meanings we assign based on our experiences and beliefs*, are quite varied. Sick can have a connotative meaning that describes something as good or awesome as opposed to its literal meaning of illness, which usually has a negative association. The denotative and connotative definitions of "sick" are in total contrast of one another which can cause confusion. Think about an instance where a student is asked by their parent about a friend at school. The student replies that the friend is "sick." The parent then asks about the new teacher at school and the student describes the teacher as "sick" as well. The parent must now ask for clarification as they do not know if the teacher is in bad health, or is an excellent teacher, and if the friend of their child is ill or awesome.
- **Syntactics** is *the study of language structure and symbolic arrangement*. Syntactics focuses on the rules we use to combine words into meaningful sentences and statements. We speak and write according to agreed-upon syntactic rules to keep meaning coherent and understandable. Think about this sentence: "The pink and purple elephant flapped its wings and flew out the window." While the content of this sentence is fictitious and unreal, you can understand and visualize it because it follows syntactic rules for language structure.
- **Pragmatics** is *the study of how people actually use verbal communication*. For example, as a student you probably speak more formally to your professors than to your peers. It's likely that you make different word choices when you speak to your parents than you do when you speak to your friends. Think of the words "bowel movements," "poop," "crap," and "shit." While all of these words have essentially the same denotative meaning, people make choices based on context and audience regarding which word they feel comfortable using. These differences illustrate the pragmatics of our verbal communication. Even though you use agreed-upon symbolic systems and follow phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules, you apply these rules differently in different contexts. Each communication context has different rules for "appropriate" communication. We are trained from a young age to communicate "appropriately" in different social contexts.

It is only through an agreed-upon and rule-governed system of symbols that we can exchange verbal communication in an effective manner. Without agreement, rules, and symbols, verbal communication would not work. The reality is, after we learn language in school, we don't spend much time consciously thinking about all of these rules, we simply use them. However, rules keep our verbal communication structured in ways that make it useful for us to communicate more effectively.

## Listening

Because Verbal Communication is the starting point and foundation of our survey of communication, we will begin with the fundamental counterpoint to verbal communication; the practice of listening.

### SUMMARY

Listen first and acknowledge what you hear, even if you don't agree with it, before expressing your experience or point of view. In order to get more of your conversation partner's attention in tense situations, pay attention first: listen and give a brief restatement of what you have heard (especially feelings) before you express your own needs or position. The kind of listening recommended here separates **acknowledging** from **approving** or **agreeing**. Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings **does not have to mean** that you **approve of or agree with** that person's actions or way of experiencing, or that you will do whatever someone asks.



By listening and then repeating back in your own words the essence and feeling of what you have just heard, from the speaker's point of view, you allow the speaker to feel the satisfaction of being understood, (a major human need). Listening responsively is always worthwhile as a way of letting people know that you care about them. Our conversation partners do not automatically know how well we have understood them, and they may not be very good at asking for confirmation. When a conversation is tense or difficult it is even more important to listen first and acknowledge what you hear. Otherwise, your chances of being heard by the other person may be very poor.

**Listening to others helps others to listen.** In learning to better coordinate our life activities with the life activities of others, we would do well to resist two very popular (but terrible) models of communication: arguing a case in court and debating. In courts and debates, each side tries to make its own points and listens to the other side only to tear down the other side's points. Since the debaters and attorneys rarely have to reach agreement or get anything done together, it doesn't seem to matter how much ill will their conversational style generates. But most of us are in a very different situation. We probably spend most of our lives trying to arrange agreement and cooperative action, so we need to be concerned about engaging people, not defeating them. *In business (and in family life, too) the person we defeat today will probably be the person whose cooperation we need tomorrow!*

As Marshall Rosenberg reported in his book, *Nonviolent Communication*, "studies in labor-management negotiations demonstrate that the time required to reach conflict resolution **is cut in half** when each negotiator agrees, before responding, to repeat what the previous speaker had said" (emphasis added).

When people are upset about something and want to talk about it their capacity to listen is greatly diminished. Trying to get your point across to a person who is trying to express a strong feeling will usually cause the other person to try even harder to get that emotion recognized. On the other hand, once people feel that their messages and feelings have been heard, they start to relax and they have more attention available for listening. For example, in a hospital a nurse might say, after listening to a patient: **"I hear that you are very uncomfortable right now, Susan, and you would really like to get out of that bed and move around. But your doctor says your bones won't heal unless you stay put for another week."** The patient in this example is much more likely to listen to the nurse than if the nurse simply said: **"I'm really sorry, Susan, but you have to stay in bed. Your doctor says your bones won't heal unless you stay put for another week."** What is missing in this second version is any acknowledgment of the patient's present experience.

**The power of simple acknowledging.** The practice of responsive listening described here separates **acknowledging** the thoughts and feelings that a person expresses from **approving, agreeing, advising, or persuading**. Acknowledging another person's thoughts and feelings . . .

- . . . still leaves you the option of agreeing or disagreeing with that person's point of view, actions or way of experiencing.
- . . . still leaves you with the option of saying yes or no to a request.
- . . . still leaves you with the option of saying more about the matter being discussed.

One recurring problem in conflict situations is that many people don't separate acknowledging from agreeing. They are joined together in people's minds, somewhat like a two-boxes-of-soap "package deal" in a supermarket. The effect of this is, let us say, that John feels that any acknowledgment of Fred's experience implies agreement and approval, therefore John will not acknowledge any of Fred's experience. Fred tries harder to be heard and John tries harder not to hear. Of course, this is a recipe for stalemate (if not disaster).

People want both: to be understood and acknowledged on the one hand, and to be approved and agreed with, on the other. With practice, you can learn to respond first with a simple acknowledgment. As you do this, you may find that, figuratively speaking, you can give your conversation partners half of what they want, even if you can't give them all of what they want. In many conflict situations that will be a giant step forward. Your conversation partners will also be more likely to acknowledge your position and experience, even if they don't sympathize with you. This mutual acknowledgment can create an emotional atmosphere in which it is easier to work toward agreement or more gracefully accommodate disagreements. Here are three examples of acknowledgments that do not imply agreement:

- Counselor to a drug abuse client:  
***"I hear that you are feeling terrible right now and that you really want some drugs. And I want you to know that I'm still concerned this stuff you're taking is going to kill you."***
- Mother to seven-year-old:  
***"I know that you want some more cake and ice cream, Jimmy, because it tastes so good, but you've already had three pieces and I'm really worried that you'll get an upset tummy. That's why I don't want you to have any more."***
- Union representative to company owner's representative:  
***"I understand from your presentation that you see XYZ Company as short of cash, threatened by foreign competition, and not in a position to agree to any wage increases. Now I would like us to explore contract arrangements that would allow my union members to get a wage increase and XYZ Company to advance its organizational goals."***

In each case a person's listening to and acknowledgment of his or her conversation partner's experience or position increases the chance that the conversation partner will be willing to listen in turn. The examples given above are all a bit long and include a declaration of the listener's position or decision. In many conversations you may simply want to reassure your conversation partner with a word or two that you have heard and understood whatever they are experiencing. For example, saying, "You sound really happy [or sad] about that," etc.

As you listen to the important people in your life, give very brief summaries of the experiences they are talking about and name the want or feeling that appears to be at the heart of the experience. For example:

*"So you were really happy about that . . ."*

*“So you drove all the way over there and they didn’t have the part they promised you on the phone. What a let-down . . .”*

*“Sounds like you wanted a big change in that situation . . .”*

*“Wow. Your dog got run over. You must be feeling really terrible . . .”*

The point here is to empathize, not to advise. If you added to that last statement, **“That total SLOB!!! You should sue that person who ran over your dog. People need to pay for their mistakes, etc.”**, you would be taking over the conversation and also leading the person away from her or his feelings and toward your own.

**Other suggestions about listening more responsively:**

As a general rule, do not just repeat another person’s exact words. Summarize their experience in your own words. But in cases where people actually scream or shout something, sometimes you may want to repeat a few of their exact words in a quiet tone of voice to let them know that you have heard it just as they said it.

If the emotion is unclear, make a tentative guess, as in **“So it sounds like maybe you were a little unhappy about all that . . .”** The speaker will usually correct your guess if it needs correcting.

Listening is an art and there are very few fixed rules. Pay attention to whether the person speaking accepts your summary by saying things such as “yeah!”, “you got it,” “that’s right,” and similar responses.

If you can identify with what the other person is experiencing, then in your tone of voice (as you summarize what another person is going through), express a little of the feeling that your conversation partner is expressing. (Emotionally flat summaries feel strange and distant.)

Such compassionate listening is a powerful resource for navigating through life, and it also makes significant demands on us as listeners. We may need to learn how to hold our own ground while we restate someone else’s position. That takes practice. We also have to be able to listen to people’s criticisms or complaints without becoming disoriented or totally losing our sense of self-worth. That requires cultivating a deeper sense of self-worth, which is no small project. In spite of these difficulties, the results of compassionate, responsive listening have been so rewarding in my life that I have found it to be worth all the effort required.

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John Gottman describes his discovery that listening really works:

“I remember the day I first discovered how Emotion Coaching [the author’s approach to empathic listening] might work with my own daughter, Moriah. She was two at the time and we were on a cross-country flight home after visiting with relatives. Bored, tired, and cranky, Moriah asked me for Zebra, her favorite stuffed animal and comfort object. Unfortunately, we had absentmindedly packed the well-worn critter in a suitcase that was checked at the baggage counter.

“I’m sorry, honey, but we can’t get Zebra right now. He’s in the big suitcase in another part of the airplane,” I explained.” I want Zebra,” she whined pitifully.

“I know, sweetheart. But Zebra isn’t here. He’s in the baggage compartment underneath the plane and Daddy can’t get him until we get off the plane. I’m sorry.”

“I want Zebra! I want Zebra!” she moaned again. Then she started to cry, twisting in her safety seat and reaching futilely toward a bag on the floor where she’d seen me go for snacks.

“I know you want Zebra,” I said, feeling my blood pressure rise. “But he’s not in that bag. He’s not here and I can’t do anything about it. Look, why don’t we read about Ernie,” I said, fumbling for one of her favorite picture books.

“Not Ernie!” she wailed, angry now. “I want Zebra. I want him NOW!”

By now, I was getting “do something” looks from the passengers, from the airline attendants, from my wife, seated across the aisle. I looked at Moriah’s face, red with anger, and imagined how frustrated she must feel. After all, wasn’t I the guy who could whip up a peanut butter sandwich on demand? Make huge purple dinosaurs appear with the flip of a TV switch? Why was I withholding her favorite toy from her? Didn’t I understand how much she wanted it?

I felt bad. Then it dawned on me: I couldn’t get Zebra, but I could offer her the next best thing — a father’s comfort. “You wish you had Zebra now,” I said to her. “Yeah,” she said sadly.

“And you’re angry because we can’t get him for you.”

“Yeah.”

“You wish you could have Zebra right now,” I repeated, as she stared at me, looking rather curious, almost surprised. “Yeah,” she muttered. “I want him now.”

“You’re tired now, and smelling Zebra and cuddling with him would feel really good. I wish we had Zebra here so you could hold him. Even better, I wish we could get out of these seats and find a big, soft bed full of all your animals and pillows where we could just lie down.” “Yeah,” she agreed.

“We can’t get Zebra because he’s in another part of the airplane,” I said. “That makes you feel frustrated.” “Yeah,” she said with a sigh.

“I’m so sorry,” I said, watching the tension leave her face. She rested her head against the back of her safety seat. She continued to complain softly a few more times, but she was growing calmer. Within a few minutes, she was asleep.

Although Moriah was just two years old, she clearly knew what she wanted — her Zebra. Once she began to realize that getting it wasn’t possible, she wasn’t interested in my excuses, my arguments, or my diversions. My validation, however, was another matter. Finding out that I understood how she felt seemed to make her feel better. For me, it was a memorable testament to the power of empathy.”

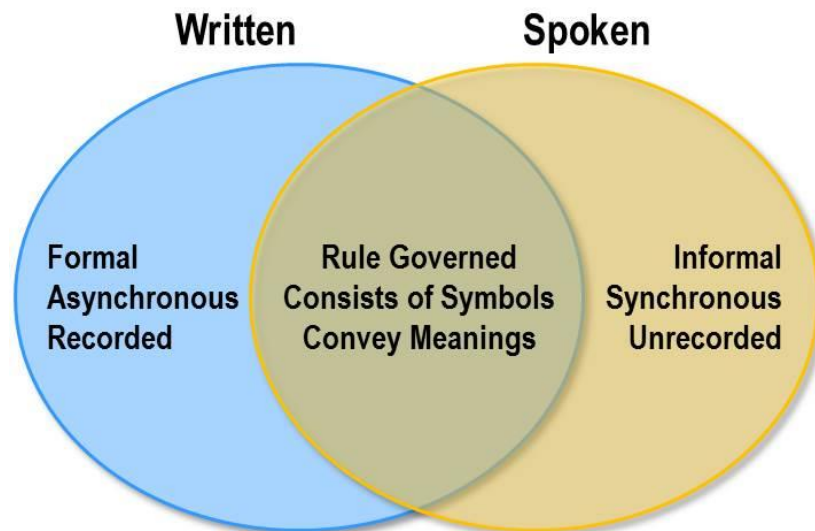
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## Spoken Versus Written Communication

While both spoken and written communication function as agreed-upon rule-governed systems of symbols used to convey meaning, there are enough differences in pragmatic rules between writing and speaking to justify discussing some of their differences. Imagine for a moment that you’re a college student who desperately needs money. Rather than looking for a job you decide that you’re going to ask your parents for the money you need to make it through the end of the semester. Now, you have a few choices for using verbal communication to do this. You might choose to call your parents or talk to them in person. You may take a different approach and write them a letter or send them an email. You can probably identify your own list of pros and cons for each of these approaches. But really, what’s the



difference between writing and talking in these situations? Let's look at four of the major differences between the two: 1) formal versus informal, 2) synchronous versus asynchronous, 3) recorded versus unrecorded, and 4) privacy.



## Informal Versus Formal Communication



### Text Version

*FYI... we're meeting on friday. wanna go to the office party after? its byob so bring w/e you want. Last years was sooo fun. Your dancing made everyone lol! hope to see ya there :) -T*

### Letter Version

*Ann,*

*For your information, we are having a meeting on Friday, November 6th. Afterwards, there will be an office party. Do you want to go? It will be a Bring Your Own Beverage party, so feel welcome to bring whatever you like. Last year's was so fun, your dancing made everyone laugh out loud!*

*I hope to see you there,*

*Tesia*

The first difference between spoken and written communication is that we generally use spoken communication **informally** while we use written communication **formally**. Consider how you have been trained to talk versus how you have been trained to write. Have you ever turned in a paper to a professor that “sounds” like how you talk? How was that paper graded compared to one that follows the more formal structures and rules of the English language? In western societies like the U.S., we follow more formal standards for our written communication than our spoken communication. With a few exceptions, we generally tolerate verbal mistakes (e.g. “should of” rather than “should have”) and qualifiers (e.g. “uh” “um” “you know,” etc.) in our speech, but not our writing. Consider a written statement such as, “I should of, um, gone and done somethin’ ‘bout it, but, um, I didn’t do nothin’.”

In most written contexts, this is considered unacceptable written verbal communication. However, most of us would not give much thought to hearing this statement spoken aloud by someone. While we may certainly notice mistakes in another’s speech, we are generally not inclined to correct those mistakes as we would in written contexts. Even though most try to speak without qualifiers and verbal mistakes, there is something to be said about those utterances in our speech while engaging in an interpersonal conversation. According to John Du Bois, the way two people use utterances and structure their sentences during conversation creates an opportunity to find new meaning within the language and develop “parallelism” which can lead to a natural feeling of liking or sympathy in the conversation partner. So, even though it may seem like formal language is valued over informal, this informal language that most of us use when we speak inadvertently contributes to bringing people closer together.

While writing is generally more formal and speech more informal, there are some exceptions to the rule, especially with the growing popularity of new technologies. For the first time in history, we are now seeing exceptions in our uses of speech and writing. Using text messaging and email, people are engaging in forms of writing using more informal rule structures, making their writing “sound” more like conversation. Likewise, this style of writing often attempts to incorporate the use of “nonverbal” communication (known as emoticons) to accent the writing. Consider the two examples in the box. One is an example of written correspondence using text while the other is a roughly equivalent version following the more formal written guidelines of a letter.

Notice the informality in the text version. While it is readable, it reads as if Tesia was actually speaking in a conversation rather than writing a document. Have you noticed that when you turn in written work that has been written in email programs, the level of formality of the writing decreases? However, when students use a word processing program like Microsoft Word, the writing tends to follow formal rules more often. As we continue using new technologies to communicate, new rule systems for those mediums will continue altering the rule systems in other forms of communication.

The second difference between spoken and written forms of verbal communication is that spoken communication or speech is almost entirely synchronous while written communication is almost entirely asynchronous. **Synchronous** communication is *communication that takes place in real time*, such as a conversation with a friend. When we are in conversation and even in public speaking situations, immediate feedback and response from the receiver is the rule. For instance, when you say “hello” to someone, you expect that the person will respond immediately. You do not expect that the person will get back to you sometime later in response to your greeting. In contrast, **asynchronous** communication is *communication that is not immediate and occurs over longer periods of time*, such as letters, email, or even text messages at times. When someone writes a book, letter, email, or text, there is no expectation from the sender that the receiver will provide an immediate response. Instead, the expectation is that the receiver will receive the message, and respond to it when they have time. This is one of the reasons people sometimes choose to send an email instead of calling another person, because it allows the receiver to respond when they have time rather than “putting them on the spot” to respond right away.

Just as new technologies are changing the rules of formality and informality, they are also creating new situations that break the norms of written communication as asynchronous and spoken communication as synchronous. Voicemail has turned the telephone and our talk into asynchronous forms of communication. Even though we speak in these contexts, we understand that if we leave a message on voicemail we will not get an immediate reply.

Instead, we understand that the receiver will call us back at their convenience. In this example, even though the channel of communication is speaking, there is no expectation for immediate response to the sent message.

Similarly, texting is a form of written communication that follows the rules of spoken conversation in that it functions as synchronous communication. When you type a text to someone you know, the expectation is that they will respond almost immediately. The lines continue to blur when video chats were introduced as communication technologies. These are a form of synchronous communication that mimics face-to-face interaction and in some cases even have an option to send written messages to others. The possible back and forth between written and spoken communication has allowed many questions to arise about rules and meaning behind interactions. Maria Sindoni explains in her article, "Through the Looking Glass" that even though people are having a synchronous conversation and are sharing meaning through their words, they are ultimately in different rooms and communicating through a machine which makes the meaning of their exchanges more ambiguous.

## Verbal Communication Then

Historians have come up with a number of criteria people should have in order to be considered a civilization. One of these is writing, specifically for the purposes of governing and pleasure. Written verbal communication is used for literature, poetry, religion, instruction, recording history and governing. Influential written verbal communication from history includes:

1. The *Ten Commandments* that Jews used as a guide to their faith.
2. *Law Code of Hammurabi* which was the recorded laws of the Ancient Babylonians.
3. The *Quran* which is core to the Islam faith.
4. The *Bible* which is followed by Christians.
5. The *Declaration of Independence* which declared the U.S. independent from Britain.
6. *Mao's Little Red Book* which was used to promote communist rule in China.

- Global Virtual Classroom

The third difference between spoken and written communication is that written communication is generally *archived and recorded for later retrieval*, while spoken communication is generally not recorded. When we talk with friends, we do not tend to take notes or tape record our conversations. Instead, conversations tend to be ongoing and catalogued into our personal memories rather than recorded in an easily retrievable written format. On the other hand, it is quite easy to reference written works such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and electronic sources such as web pages and emails for long periods after the sender has written them.

New communication applications add to the confusion. An app might allow users to record themselves and post it to their profile. This would be considered a form of spoken communication, yet it is archived and asynchronous so others can look at the videos years after the original posting. To make the matter more complicated, Snapchat's many functions come into play. On Snapchat you have the option of sending videos or photos that are traditionally not archived since the sender decides how long the receiver has to view it, then will theoretically disappear forever. Most recently with the addition of My Story, users of the app can post a picture for 24 hours and have their friends view it multiple times. The feeling of technological communication not being archived can lead to a false sense of privacy, which can lead to some negative consequences. Social media will be discussed more in-depth in later chapters.

As with the previous rules we've discussed, new technologies are changing many of the dynamics of speech and writing. For example, many people use email and texting informally like spoken conversation, as an informal form of verbal communication. Because of this, they often expect that these operate and function like a spoken conversation

with the belief that it is a private conversation between the sender and receiver. However, many people have gotten into trouble because of what they have “spoken” about others through email and text.

The corporation Epson (a large computer electronics manufacturer) was at the center of one of the first lawsuits regarding the recording and archiving of employees’ use of email correspondence. Employees at Epson assumed their email was private and therefore used it to say negative things about their bosses. What they didn’t know was their bosses were saving and printing these email messages, and using the content of these messages to make personnel decisions. When employees sued Epson, the courts ruled in favor of the corporation, stating that they had every right to retain employee email for their records.

While most of us have become accustomed to using technologies such as texting and instant messaging in ways that are similar to our spoken conversations, we must also consider the repercussions of using communication technologies in this fashion because they are often archived and not private. We can see examples of negative outcomes from archived messages in recent years through many highly publicized sexting scandals. One incident that was very pertinent was former congressman and former candidate for Mayor of New York, Anthony Weiner, and a series of inappropriate exchanges with women using communication technologies. Because of his position in power and high media coverage, his privacy was very minimal. Since he had these conversations in a setting that is recorded, he was not able to keep his anonymity or confidentiality in the matter. These acts were seen as inappropriate by the public, so there were both professional and personal repercussions for Weiner. Both the Epson and Anthony Weiner incidents, even though happening in different decades, show the consequences when assumed private information becomes public.

As you can see, there are a number of differences between spoken and written forms of verbal communication. Both forms are rule-governed as our definition points out, but the rules are often different for the use of these two types of verbal communication. However, it’s apparent that as new technologies provide more ways for us to communicate, many of our traditional rules for using both speech and writing will continue to blur as we try to determine the “most appropriate” uses of these new communication technologies. Practical problems of the day will continue to guide the directions our field takes as we continue to study the ways technology changes our communication. As more changes continue to occur in the ways we communicate with one another, more avenues of study will continue to open for those interested in being part of the development of how communication is conducted. Now that we have looked in detail at our definition of verbal communication, and the differences between spoken and written forms of verbal communication, let’s explore what our use of verbal communication accomplishes for us as humans.

## Functions of Verbal Communication

Our existence is intimately tied to the communication we use, and verbal communication serves many functions in our daily lives. We use verbal communication to define reality, organize, think, and shape attitudes.

***Verbal communication helps us define reality.*** We use verbal communication to define everything from ideas, emotions, experiences, thoughts, objects, and people (Blumer). Think about how you define yourself. You may define yourself as a student, employee, son/daughter, parent, advocate, etc. You might also define yourself as moral, ethical, a night-owl, or a procrastinator. Verbal communication is how we label and define what we experience in our lives. These definitions are not only descriptive, but evaluative. Imagine you are at the beach with a few of your friends. The day starts out sunny and beautiful, but the tides quickly turn when rain clouds appeared overhead. Because of the unexpected rain, you define the day as disappointing and ugly. Suddenly, your friend comments, “What are you talking about, man? Today is beautiful!” Instead of focusing on the weather, he might be referring to the fact that he was having a good day by spending quality time with his buddies on the beach, rain or shine. This statement reflects that we have choices for how we use verbal communication to define our realities. We make choices about what to focus on and how to define what we experience and its impact on how we understand and live in our world.

***Verbal communication helps us organize complex ideas and experiences into meaningful categories.***

Consider the number of things you experience with your five primary senses every day. It is impossible to comprehend everything we encounter. We use verbal communication to organize seemingly random events into understandable categories to make sense of our experiences. For example, we all organize the people in our lives into categories. We label these people with terms like, friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, family, peers, colleagues, and strangers. We highlight certain qualities, traits, or scripts to organize outwardly haphazard events into meaningful categories to establish meaning for our world.

***Verbal communication helps us think.*** Without verbal communication, we would not function as thinking beings. The ability most often used to distinguish humans from other animals is our ability to reason and communicate. With language, we are able to reflect on the past, consider the present, and ponder the future. We develop our memories using language. Try recalling your first conscious memories. Chances are, your first conscious memories formed around the time you started using verbal communication. The example we used at the beginning of the chapter highlights what a world would be like for humans without language. In the 2011 *Scientific American* article, “How Language Shapes Thought,” the author, Lera Boroditsky, claims that people “rely on language even when doing simple things like distinguishing patches of color, counting dots on a screen or orienting in a small room: my colleagues and I have found that limiting people’s ability to access their language faculties fluently – by giving them a competing demanding verbal task such as repeating a news report, for instance – impairs their ability to perform these tasks.” This may be why it is difficult for some people to multitask – especially when one task involves speaking and the other involves thinking.

***Verbal communication helps us shape our attitudes about our world.*** The way you use language shapes your attitude about the world around you. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf developed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to explain that language determines thought. People who speak different languages, or use language differently, think differently (Whorf; Sapir; Mandelbaum; Maxwell; Perlovsky; Lucy; Simpson; Hussein). The argument suggests that if a native English speaker had the exact same experiences in their life, but grew up speaking Chinese instead of English, their worldview would be different because of the different symbols used to make sense of the world. When you label, describe, or evaluate events in your life, you use the symbols of the language you speak. Your use of these symbols to represent your reality influences your perspective and attitude about the world. So, it makes sense then that the more sophisticated your repertoire of symbols is, the more sophisticated your world view can be for you. While the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is highly respected, there have been many scholarly and philosophical challenges to the viewpoint that language is what shapes our worldview. For example, Agustin Vicente and Fernando Martinez-Manrique did a study regarding the “argument of explicitness,” which has two premises. The first premise is that “the instrument of thought must be explicit” in order for thought and language to be connected; the second is that natural languages – languages that humans can learn cognitively as they develop – are not explicit (Vicente and Martinez-Manrique, 384). The authors conclude that thoughts “demand a kind of completeness and stability of meaning that natural language sentences, being remarkably underdetermined, cannot provide” (Vicente and Martinez-Manrique, 397). It makes sense that something as arbitrary and complicated as the connection between thought and language is still being debated today.

While we have overly-simplified the complexities of verbal communication for you in this chapter, when it comes to its actual use—accounting for the infinite possibilities of symbols, rules, contexts, and meanings—studying how humans use verbal communication is daunting. When you consider the complexities of verbal communication, it is a wonder we can communicate effectively at all. But, verbal communication is not the only channel humans use to communicate. In the next chapter we will examine the other most common channel of communication we use: nonverbal communication.

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter we defined verbal communication as an agreed-upon and rule-governed system of symbols used to share meaning. These symbols are arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract. The rules that dictate our use and



understanding of symbols include phonology, semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics. As you recall there are distinct differences between written and spoken forms of verbal communication in terms of levels of formality, synchronicity, recording, and privacy. Yet, new technologies are beginning to blur some of these differences. Finally, verbal communication is central to our identity as humans and it allows us to define reality, organize ideas and experiences into categories, help us think, and shape out attitudes about the world.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do you define yourself as a person? What kinds of definitions do you have for yourself? What do you think would happen if you changed some of your self-definitions?
2. How do advances in technology impact verbal communication? What are some examples?
3. How does popular culture impact our verbal communication? What are some examples?
4. When you use text messages or email, are you formal or informal?
5. In what situations/contexts would it be appropriate to speak formally rather than informally? Why?
6. To what extent do you believe that verbal communication drives thought, or vice versa?

## KEY TERMS

- abstract
- ambiguous
- arbitrary
- archived
- asynchronous
- connotative meaning
- context
- denotative meaning
- formal
- informal
- phonology
- pragmatics
- reclaim
- rule-governed
- semantics
- symbols
- synchronous
- syntactics
- verbal communication

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### Communication Challenge: Explaining

**First exercise for Challenge 2: Explaining the kind of conversation you want to have.** With your practice partner, try starting each of the conversations on the list. Note which feel easy to start and which feel more challenging. Begin with: “Right now I’d like to . . .” or “I’d like to take about 1/5/30 minutes and . . .”

## AN EXPLORATORY LIST OF FULFILLING CONVERSATIONAL INTENTIONS

***“Right now I’d like to take about 5 minutes and . . .”***

1. . . . tell you about my experiences/feelings . . .  
    . . . that involve no implied requests or complaints toward you.  
    OR  
    . . . so that you will understand the request, offer, complaint, etc., I want to make.
2. . . . hear what’s happening with you. (More specific: . . . hear how you are doing with [topic] . . .)
3. . . . entertain you with a story.
4. . . . explore some possibilities concerning . . . (requiring your empathy but not your advice or permission)
5. . . . plan a course of action for myself (with your help or with you as listener/witness only)
6. . . . coordinate/plan our actions together concerning . . .
7. . . . express my affection for you (or appreciation of you concerning . . .)
8. . . . express support for you as you cope with a difficult situation.
9. . . . complain/make a request about something you have done (or said)  
    (for better resolution of conflicts, translate complaints into requests)
10. . . . confirm my understanding of the experience or position you just shared. (this usually continues with  
    “I hear that you . . .” “Sounds like you . . .” “So you’re feeling kinda . . .” or “Let me see if I understand you . . .”)
11. . . . resolve a conflict that I have with you about . . .
12. . . . negotiate or bargain with you about . . .
13. . . . work with you to reach a decision about . . .
14. . . . give you permission or consent to . . . / . . . get your permission or consent to . . .
15. . . . give you some information about . . . / . . . get some information from you about . . .
16. . . . give you some advice about . . . / . . . get some advice from you about . . .
17. . . . give you directions, orders or work assignments . . . / get directions or orders from you
18. . . . make a request of you (for action, time, information, object, money, promise, etc.)
19. . . . consent to (or refuse) a request you have made to me.

20. . . . make an offer to you (for action, information, object, promise, etc.)
21. . . . accept or decline an offer you have made to me.
22. . . . persuade or motivate you to adopt (a particular) point of view.
23. . . . persuade or motivate you to choose (a particular) course of action.
24. . . . forgive you for . . . / ask for your forgiveness concerning...
25. . . . make an apology to you about. . . / request an apology from you about...
26. . . . offer an interpretation of . . . (what . . . means to me) / ask for your interpretation of . . .
27. . . . offer an evaluation of . . . (how good or bad I think . . . is) / ask for your evaluation of . . .
28. . . . change the subject of the conversation and talk about . . .
29. . . . have some time to think things over.
30. . . . leave/end this conversation so that I can...\_\_\_\_\_

**Second exercise for Challenge 2: Exploring conversational intentions that create problems.** (to be explored with as much privacy as you need, or with a therapist) To what degree do you find yourself relying on these kinds of conversations to influence the people in your life? What possibilities do you see for change? To what degree are you or were you an unwilling participant in such conversations? What possibilities do you see for change as you become more aware of conversational intentions?

## **AN EXPLORATORY LIST OF UN-FULFILLING CONVERSATIONAL INTENTIONS**

*(These conversational intentions and related actions are unfulfilling, at the very least, because we would not like someone to do these things to us. And when we do any of these things, we teach and encourage others to do them to us and/or to avoid contact with us.)*

1. To lie, deceive or mislead (sometimes partly redeemed by good overall intentions, but usually not)
2. To threaten
3. To hurt or abuse
4. To punish (creates resentment, avoidance and desire for revenge)
5. To blame (focuses on past instead of present and future)
6. To control or coerce (force, influence someone against their will and consent)
7. To manipulate (to influence someone without his or her knowledge and consent)

- To demean, humiliate or shame . . .
8. . . . to try to make someone look bad in eyes of others OR  
. . . to try to make people doubt themselves or feel bad about themselves
  9. “Stonewalling:” To deny the existence of a problem in the face of strong evidence and sincere appeals from others
  10. To hide what is important to me from you (if you are an important person in my life)
  11. To suppress or invalidate someone’s emotional response to a given event or situation (as in “Don’t cry!” or the even more coercive “You stop crying or I’ll *really* give you something to cry about!”)
  12. To withdraw from interaction in order to avoid the consequences of something I have done. \_\_\_\_\_
- 

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# Chapter 3

## Nonverbal Communication

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define nonverbal communication and explain its main characteristics.
- Understand the qualities of symbols.
- Describe the rules governing nonverbal communication.
- Describe the functions of nonverbal communication.

Your brother comes home from school and walks through the door. Without saying a word, he walks to the fridge, gets a drink, and turns to head for the couch in the family room. Once there, he plops down, stares straight ahead, and sighs. You notice that he sits there in silence for the next few minutes. In this time, he never speaks a word. Is he communicating? If your answer is yes, how would you interpret his actions? How do you think he is feeling? What types of nonverbal communication was your brother using? Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is essential in our everyday interactions. Remember that verbal and nonverbal communication are the two primary channels we study in the field of Communication. While nonverbal and verbal communications have many similar functions, nonverbal communication has its own set of functions for helping us communicate with each other. Before we get into the types and functions of nonverbal communication, let's define nonverbal communication to better understand how it is used in this text.

### Defining Nonverbal Communication

Like verbal communication, we use nonverbal communication to share meaning with others. Just as there are many definitions for verbal communication, there are also many ways to define nonverbal communication, let's look at a few.

Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall define nonverbal communication similar to how we defined verbal communication in Chapter 2. They state that nonverbal behaviors are “typically sent with intent, are used with regularity among members of a social community, are typically interpreted as intentional, and have consensually recognized interpretations” (113). In our opinion, this sounds too much like verbal communication, and might best be described as symbolic and systematic nonverbal communication.

Mead differentiated between what he termed as “gesture” versus “significant symbol,” while Buck and VanLear took Mead's idea and argued that “gestures are not symbolic in that their relationship to their referents is not arbitrary,” a fundamental distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication (524). Think of all the ways you unconsciously move your body throughout the day. For example, you probably do not sit in your classes and think constantly about your nonverbal behaviors. Instead, much of the way you present yourself nonverbally in your classes is done unconsciously. Even so, others can derive meaning from your nonverbal behaviors whether they are intentional or not. For example, professors watch their students' nonverbal communication in class (such as slouching, leaning back in the chair, or looking at their watch) and make assumptions about them (they are bored, tired, or worrying about a test in another class). These assumptions are often based on acts that are typically done unintentionally.



While we certainly use nonverbal communication consciously at times to generate and share particular meanings, when examined closely, it should be apparent that this channel of communication is not the same as verbal communication which is “an agreed-upon rule-governed system of symbols.” Rather, nonverbal communication is most often spontaneous, unintentional, and may not follow formalized symbolic rule systems.

### Differences Between Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

There are four fundamental differences between verbal and nonverbal communication. The first difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that we use a **single channel** (words) when we communicate verbally versus **multiple channels** when we communicate nonverbally. Try this exercise! Say your first and last name at the same time. You quickly find that this is an impossible task. Now, pat the top of your head with your right hand, wave with your left hand, smile, shrug your shoulders, and chew gum at the same time. While goofy and awkward, our ability to do this demonstrates how we use multiple nonverbal channels simultaneously to communicate.

#### Verbal Communication



■ Language

#### Nonverbal Communication



- Kinesics
- Objects/Artifacts/Appearance
- Chronemics
- Silence
- Haptics
- Proxemics
- Paralanguage
- Environment



In Chapter 2 we learned how difficult it can be to decode a sender's single verbal message due to the arbitrary, abstract, and ambiguous nature of language. But, think how much more difficult it is to decode the even more ambiguous and multiple nonverbal signals we take in like eye contact, facial expressions, body movements, clothing, personal artifacts, and tone of voice all at the same time. Despite this difficulty, Motley found that we learn to decode nonverbal communication as babies. Hall found that women are much better than men at accurately interpreting the many nonverbal cues we send and receive (Gore). How we interpret these nonverbal signals can also be influenced by our gender as the viewer.



*How do you interpret this student's nonverbals?*



*How do you interpret this student's nonverbals?*

A second difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that verbal communication is **distinct** (linear) while nonverbal communication is **continuous** (in constant motion and relative to context). Distinct means that messages have a clear beginning and end, and are expressed in a linear fashion. We begin and end words and sentences in a linear way to make it easier for others to follow and understand. If you pronounce the word "cat" you begin with the letter "C" and proceed to finish with "T." Continuous means that messages are ongoing and work in relation to other nonverbal and verbal cues. Think about the difference between analog and digital clocks. The analog clock represents nonverbal communication in that we generate meaning by considering the relationship of the different arms to each another (context). Also, the clock's arms are in continuous motion. We notice the speed of their movement, their position in the circle and to each other, and their relationship with the environment (is it day or night?).

Nonverbal communication is similar in that we evaluate nonverbal cues in relation to one another and consider the context of the situation. Suppose you see your friend in the distance. She approaches, waves, smiles, and says "hello." To interpret the meaning of this, you focus on the wave, smile, tone of voice, her approaching movement, and the verbal message. You might also consider the time of day, if there is a pressing need to get to class, etc.



***What might this driver be trying to convey?***

Now contrast this to a digital clock, which functions like verbal communication. Unlike an analog clock, a digital clock is not in constant motion. Instead, it replaces one number with another to display time (its message). A digital clock uses one distinct channel (numbers) in a linear fashion. When we use verbal communication, we do so like the digital clock. We say one word at a time, in a linear fashion, to express meaning.

A third difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that we use verbal communication **consciously** while we generally use nonverbal communication **unconsciously**. Conscious communication means that we think about our verbal communication before we communicate. Unconscious communication means that we do not think about every nonverbal message we communicate. If you ever heard the statement as a child, “Think before you speak” you were being told a fundamental principle of verbal communication. Realistically, it’s nearly impossible not to think before we speak. When we speak, we do so consciously and intentionally. In contrast, when something funny happens, you probably do not think, “Okay, I’m going to smile and laugh right now.” Instead, you react unconsciously, displaying your emotions through these nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal communication can occur as unconscious reactions to situations. We are not claiming that all nonverbal communication is unconscious. At times we certainly make conscious choices to use or withhold nonverbal communication to share meaning. Angry drivers use many conscious nonverbal expressions to communicate to other drivers! In a job interview you are making conscious decisions about your wardrobe, posture, and eye contact.

## **Case In Point**

Body language expert and author, Vanessa Van Edwards reveals some interesting facts about body language in western culture in an interview with AM Northwest Today on September 18, 2013. She explains that men are not as good at reading body language cues as women because they use different areas of their brain when decoding. She states, “Women might be better at reading body language because . . . [they] have 14 to 16 active brain areas while evaluating others, whereas men only have 4 to 6 active.” Edwards also explains how men and women nonverbally lie differently because they tend to lie for different reasons; “Men lie to appear more powerful, interesting, and successful . . . [whereas] women lie . . . more to protect others feelings.”

A fourth difference between verbal and nonverbal communication is that some nonverbal communication is universal (Hall, Chia, and Wang; Tracy & Robins). Verbal communication is exclusive to the users of a particular language dialect, whereas some nonverbal communication is recognized across cultures. Although cultures most certainly have particular meanings and uses for nonverbal communication, there are universal nonverbal behaviors that almost everyone recognizes. For instance, people around the world recognize and use expressions such as smiles, frowns, and the pointing of a finger at an object. Note: Not all nonverbal gestures are universal! For example, if you travel to different regions of the world, find out what is appropriate! For example if you go to South Korea don’t offer payment with only one hand.

Let us sum up the ways in which nonverbal communication is unique:

- Nonverbal communication uses multiple channels simultaneously.
- Nonverbal communication is continuous.
- Nonverbal communication can be both conscious and unconscious.
- Certain nonverbal communication is universally understood.

Now that you have a definition of nonverbal communication, and can identify the primary differences between verbal and nonverbal communication, let's examine what counts as nonverbal communication. In this next section, we show you eight types of nonverbal communication we use regularly: kinesics, haptics, appearance, proxemics, environment, chronemics, paralanguage, and silence.

## Types of Nonverbal Communication

**Kinesics** is *the study of how we use body movement and facial expressions*. We interpret a great deal of meaning through body movement, facial expressions, and eye contact. Many people believe they can easily interpret the meanings of body movements and facial expressions in others. The reality is, it is almost impossible to determine an exact meaning for gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Even so, we rely a great deal on kinesics to interpret and express meaning. We know that kinesics can communicate liking, social status, and even relational responsiveness (Mehrabian). Facial expressions are a primary method of sharing emotions and feelings (Ekman & Friesen; Scherer, Klaus, & Scherer). For example, imagine yourself at a party and you see someone across the room you are attracted to.



***Tattoos, hair style, dress, and makeup are all part of personal appearance.***

What sort of nonverbal behaviors do you engage in to let that person know? Likewise, what nonverbal behaviors are you looking for from them to indicate that it's safe to come over and introduce yourself? We are able to go through exchanges like this using only our nonverbal communication.

**Haptics** is *the study of touch*. Touch is the first type of nonverbal communication we experience as humans and is vital to our development and health (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield; Wilson, et al.). Those who don't have positive touch in their lives are less healthy both mentally and physically than those who experience positive touch. We use touch to

share feelings and relational meanings. Hugs, kisses, handshakes, or even playful roughhousing demonstrate relational meanings and indicate relational closeness. In western society, touch is largely reserved for family and romantic relationships. Generally girls and women in same-sex friendships have more liberty to express touch as part of the relationship than men in same-sex friendships. However, despite these unfortunate social taboos, the need for touch is so strong that men are quite sophisticated at finding ways to incorporate this into their friendships in socially acceptable ways. One such example is wrestling among adolescent and young-adult males. Do you ever wonder why you don't see as many women doing this? Perhaps it's because wrestling is socially acceptable for men whereas women are more likely to hug, hold hands, and sit touching one another. In contrast, an exchange student from Brazil recognized the differences in touch between cultures when arriving in the United States. She was surprised when someone hesitated to remove an eyelash from her face and apologized for touching her. In her country, no one would hesitate to do this act. She realized how much more physical touch is accepted and even expected in her culture. Cultural norms around touch and gender constructs, and everyone can prevent and limit touching behaviors in ways that are comfortable to them.

**Personal Appearance, Objects, and Artifacts** are types of *nonverbal communication we use on our bodies and surroundings communicate meaning to others*. Consider your preferences for hair-style, clothing, jewelry, and automobiles, as well the way you maintain your body. Your choices express meanings to those around you about what you value and the image you wish to put forth. As with most communication, our choices for personal appearance, objects, and artifacts occur within cultural contexts, and are interpreted in light of these contexts. Consider the recent trendiness and popularity of tattoos. While once associated primarily with prison and armed services, tattoos have become mainstream and are used to articulate a variety of personal, political and cultural messages.

**Proxemics** is *the study of how our use of space influences the ways we relate with others*. It also demonstrates our relational standing with those around us (May). Edward Hall developed four categories of space we use in the U.S. to form and maintain relationships. Intimate space consists of space that ranges from touch to eighteen inches. We use intimate space with those whom we are close (family members, close friends, and intimate partners). Intimate space is also the context for physical fighting and violence. Personal space ranges from eighteen inches to four feet and is reserved for most conversations with non-intimate others (friends and acquaintances). Social space extends from four to twelve feet and is used for small group interactions such as sitting around a dinner table with others or a group meeting. Public space extends beyond twelve feet and is most often used in public speaking situations. We use space to regulate our verbal communication and communicate relational and social meanings. A fun exercise to do is to go to a public space and observe people. Based on their use of the above categories of space, try to determine what type of relationship the people are in: Romantic, Family, or Friends.

Our **environment** are *nonverbal acts through our use of spaces we occupy* like are homes, rooms, cars, or offices. Think of your home, room, automobile, or office space. What meanings can others perceive about you from these spaces? What meanings are you trying to send by how you keep them? Think about spaces you use frequently and the nonverbal meanings they have for you. Most educational institutions intentionally paint classrooms in dull colors. Why? Dull colors on walls have a calming effect, theoretically keeping students from being distracted by bright colors and excessive stimuli. Contrast the environment of a classroom to that of a fast food restaurant. These establishments have bright colors and hard plastic seats and tables. The bright colors generate an upbeat environment, while the hard plastic seats are just uncomfortable enough to keep patrons from staying too long – remember, it's FAST food (Restaurants See Color As Key Ingredient). People and cultures place different emphasis on the use of space as a way to communicate nonverbally.

## Case In Point FENG SHUI

Feng Shui, which means wind and water, is the ancient Chinese art of living in harmony with our environment. Feng Shui can be traced as far back as the Banpo dwellings in 4000 BCE. The ideas behind Feng Shui state that how we use our environment and organize our belongings affects the energy flow (chi) of people in that space, and the person/people who created the environment. The inclusion or exclusion, and placement, of various objects in our environments are used to create a positive impact on others. The theory is to use the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire and earth to design a space. Feng Shui is applicable to cities, villages, homes, and public spaces. The Temple of Heaven in Beijing, China is an example of Feng Shui architecture. To keep harmony with the natural world, the Temple houses the Hall of Annual Prayer which is comprised of four inner, 12 middle, and 12 outer pillars representing the four seasons, 12 months, and 12 traditional Chinese hours.



**Chronemics** is the study of how people use time. Are you someone who is always early or on-time? Or, are you someone who arrives late to most events? Levine believes our use of time communicates a variety of meanings to those around us. Think about the person you know who is most frequently late. How do you describe that person based on their use of time? Now, think about someone else who is always on time. How do you describe that person? Is there a difference? If so, these differences are probably based on their use of time. In the U.S., we place high value on being on time, and respond more positively to people who are punctual. But, in many Arab and Latin American countries, time is used more loosely, and punctuality is not necessarily a goal to achieve. You may have heard the expression, “Indian time” to refer to “the perception of time [that] is circular and flexible” (Harris, Shutiva). This is the belief that activities will commence when everyone is present and ready; not according to an arbitrary schedule based on a clock or calendar. Neither approach is better than the other, but the dissimilar uses of time can create misunderstandings among those from different cultural groups.

**Paralanguage** is the term we use to describe *vocal qualities such as pitch, volume, inflection, rate of speech, and rhythm*. While the types of nonverbal communication we’ve discussed so far are non-vocal, some nonverbal communication is actually vocal (noise is produced). How we say words often expresses greater meaning than the actual words themselves. Sarcasm and incongruence are two examples of this. The comedian Stephen Wright bases much of his comedy on his use of paralanguage. He talks in a completely monotone voice throughout his act and frequently makes statements such as, “I’m getting really excited” while using a monotone voice, accompanied by a blank facial expression. The humor lies in the incongruency—his paralanguage and facial expression contradict his verbal message.

## Nonverbal Communication Now

### WOMEN IN BLACK

An organization of women called Women in Black uses silence as a form of protest and hope for peace; particularly, peace from war and the unfair treatment of women. Women in Black began in Israel in 1988 by women protesting Israel's Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Women in Black continues to expand and now functions in the United States, England, Italy, Spain, Azerbaijan and Yugoslavia. Women gather in public spaces, dressed in black, and stand in silence for one hour, once a week. Their mission states, "We are silent because mere words cannot express the tragedy that wars and hatred bring. We refuse to add to the cacophony of empty statements that are spoken with the best intentions yet have failed to bring lasting change and understanding, or to the euphemistic jargon of the politicians which has perpetuated misunderstanding and fear that leads to war.our silence is visible." Whenever you use sarcasm, your paralanguage is intended to contradict the verbal message you say. As Professors we have found that using sarcasm in the classroom can backfire when students do not pick up our paralinguistic cues and focus primarily on the verbal message. We have learned to use sarcasm sparingly so as not to hurt anyone's feelings.

Finally, **silence** serves as a type of nonverbal communication when we *do not use words or utterances to convey meanings*. Have you ever experienced the "silent treatment" from someone? What meanings did you take from that person's silence? Silence is powerful because the person using silence may be refusing to engage in communication with you. Likewise, we can use silence to regulate the flow of our conversations. Silence has a variety of meanings and, as with other types of nonverbal communication; context plays an important role for interpreting the meaning of silence. For example, the Day of Silence protest which has taken place every year since 1996 is a day which students use their silence as a tool to get people to stand up for LGBT rights. Here, like in the Women in Black movement, the participants believe that silence sends a louder message than anything they could say. Do you think they are right? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of using silence as a political strategy? If you wish to participate or read further, [click this link](#).

You should now recognize the infinite combination of verbal and nonverbal messages we can share. When you think about it, it really is astonishing that we can communicate effectively at all. We engage in a continuous dance of communication where we try to stay in step with one another. With an understanding of the definition of nonverbal communication and the types of nonverbal communication, let's consider the various functions nonverbal communication serves in helping us communicate. (Ekman; Knapp; Malandro & Barker).

## Functions of Nonverbal Communication

You learned that we use verbal communication to express ideas, emotions, experiences, thoughts, objects, and people. But what functions does nonverbal communication serve as we communicate (Blumer)? Even though it's not through words, nonverbal communication serves many functions to help us communicate meanings with one another more effectively.

- **We use nonverbal communication to duplicate verbal communication.** When we use nonverbal communication to duplicate, we use nonverbal communication that is recognizable to most people within a particular cultural group. Obvious examples include a head-nod or a head-shake to duplicate the verbal messages of "yes" or "no." If someone asks if you want to go to a movie, you might verbally answer "yes" and at the same time nod your head. This accomplishes the goal of duplicating the verbal message with a nonverbal message. Interestingly, the head nod is considered a "nearly universal indication of accord, agreement, and understanding" because the same muscle in the head nod is the same one a baby uses to lower its head to accept milk from its mother's breast (Givens). We witnessed a two year old girl who was learning the duplication function of nonverbal communication, and didn't always get it right. When asked if she wanted something, her "yes" was shaking her head side to side as if she was communicating "no." However,

her “no” was the same head-shake but it was accompanied with the verbal response “no.” So, when she was two, she thought that the duplication was what made her answer “no.”

- ***We use nonverbal communication to replace verbal communication.*** If someone asks you a question, instead of a verbal reply “yes” and a head-nod, you may choose to simply nod your head without the accompanying verbal message. When we replace verbal communication with nonverbal communication, we use nonverbal behaviors that are easily recognized by others such as a wave, head-nod, or head-shake. This is why it was so confusing for others to understand the young girl in the example above when she simply shook her head in response to a question. This was cleared up when someone asked her if she wanted something to eat and she shook her head. When she didn’t get food, she began to cry. This was the first clue that the replacing function of communication still needed to be learned. Consider how universal shaking the head side-to-side is as an indicator of disbelief, disapproval, and negation. This nonverbal act is used by human babies to refuse food or drink; rhesus monkeys, baboons, bonnet macaques and gorillas turn their faces sideways in aversion; and children born deaf/blind head shake to refuse objects or disapprove of touch (Givens).
- ***We use nonverbal cues to complement verbal communication.*** If a friend tells you that she recently received a promotion and a pay raise, you can show your enthusiasm in a number of verbal and nonverbal ways. If you exclaim, “Wow, that’s great! I’m so happy for you!” while at the same time smiling and hugging your friend, you are using nonverbal communication to complement what you are saying. Unlike duplicating or replacing, nonverbal communication that complements cannot be used alone without the verbal message. If you simply smiled and hugged your friend without saying anything, the interpretation of that nonverbal communication would be more ambiguous than using it to complement your verbal message.
- ***We use nonverbal communication to accent verbal communication.*** While nonverbal communication complements verbal communication, we also use it to accent verbal communication by emphasizing certain parts of the verbal message. For instance, you may be upset with a family member and state, “I’m very angry with you.” To accent this statement nonverbally you might say it, “I’m VERY angry with you,” placing your emphasis on the word “very” to demonstrate the magnitude of your anger. In this example, it is your tone of voice (paralanguage) that serves as the nonverbal communication that accents the message. Parents might tell their children to “come here.” If they point to the spot in front of them dramatically, they are accenting the “here” part of the verbal message.

## Nonverbal Communication and You

### NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND ROMANCE

If you don’t think the things that Communication scholars study (like nonverbal communication) applies to you, think again! A quick search of nonverbal communication on Google will yield a great many sites devoted to translating nonverbal research into practical guides for your personal life. One example on BuzzFeed.com is the article “10 Things You Can Tell About Your Date Through Body Language” written by Reveal Calvin Klein (2014). In the article, Klein outlines 10 nonverbal cues to read to see if someone is interested in you romantically. While we won’t vouch for the reliability of these types of pieces, they do show the relevance of studying areas like nonverbal communication has in our personal lives

- ***We use nonverbal communication to regulate verbal communication.*** Generally, it is pretty easy for us to enter, maintain, and exit our interactions with others nonverbally. Rarely, if ever, would we approach a person and say, “I’m going to start a conversation with you now. Okay, let’s begin.” Instead, we might make eye contact, move closer to the person, or face the person directly — all nonverbal behaviors that indicate our desire to interact. Likewise, we do not generally end conversations by stating, “I’m done talking to you now” unless there is a breakdown in the communication process. We are generally proficient enacting nonverbal



communication such as looking at our watch, looking in the direction we wish to go, or being silent to indicate an impending end in the conversation. When there is a breakdown in the nonverbal regulation of conversation, we may say something to the effect, "I really need to get going now." In fact, we've seen one example where someone does not seem to pick up on the nonverbal cues about ending a phone conversation. Because of this inability to pick up on the nonverbal regulation cues, others have literally had to resort to saying, "Okay, I'm hanging up the phone right now" followed by actually hanging up the phone. In these instances, there was a breakdown in the use of nonverbal communication to regulate conversation.

- ***We use nonverbal communication to contradict verbal communication.*** Imagine that you visit your boss's office and she asks you how you're enjoying a new work assignment. You may feel obligated to respond positively because it is your boss asking the question, even though you may not truly feel this way. However, your nonverbal communication may contradict your verbal message, indicating to your boss that you really do not enjoy the new work assignment. In this example, your nonverbal communication contradicts your verbal message and sends a mixed message to your boss. Research suggests that when verbal and nonverbal messages contradict one another, receivers often place greater value on the nonverbal communication as the more accurate message (Argyle, Alkema & Gilmour). One place this occurs frequently is in greeting sequences. You might say to your friend in passing, "How are you?" She might say, "Fine" but have a sad tone to her voice. In this case, her nonverbal behaviors go against her verbal response. We are more likely to interpret the nonverbal communication in this situation than the verbal response.

## Nonverbal Communication and You

### NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND GETTING A JOB

You may be thinking that getting the right degree at the right college is the way to get a job. Think again! It may be a good way to get an interview, but once at the interview, what matters? College Journal reports that, "Body language comprises 55% of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content only provides 7%, and paralanguage, or the intonation – pauses and sighs given when answering – represents 38% of the emphasis." If you show up to an interview smelling of cigarette smoke, chewing gum, dressed inappropriately, and listening to music on your phone, you're probably in trouble.

About.Com states that these are some effective nonverbal practices during interviews:

- Make eye contact with the interviewer for a few seconds at a time.
- Smile and nod (at appropriate times) when the interviewer is talking, but, don't overdo it. Don't laugh unless the interviewer does first.
- Be polite and keep an even tone to your speech. Don't be too loud or too quiet.
- Don't slouch.
- Do relax and lean forward a little towards the interviewer so you appear interested and engaged.
- Don't lean back. You will look too casual and relaxed.
- Keep your feet on the floor and your back against the lower back of the chair.
- Pay attention, be attentive and interested.
- Listen.

- Don't interrupt.
- Stay calm. Even if you had a bad experience at a previous position or were fired, keep your emotions to yourself and do not show anger or frown.
- Not sure what to do with your hands? Hold a pen and your notepad or rest an arm on the chair or on your lap, so you look comfortable. Don't let your arms fly around the room when you're making a point.
- **We use nonverbal communication to mislead others.** We can also use nonverbal communication to deceive, and often, focus on a person's nonverbal communication when trying to detect deception. Recall a time when someone asked your opinion of a new haircut. If you did not like it, you may have stated verbally that you liked the haircut and provided nonverbal communication to further mislead the person about how you really felt. Conversely, when we try to determine if someone is misleading us, we generally focus on the nonverbal communication of the other person. One study suggests that when we only use nonverbal communication to detect deception in others, 78% of lies and truths can be detected (Vrij, Edward, Roberts, & Bull). However, other studies indicate that we are really not very effective at determining deceit in other people (Levine, Feeley & McCornack), and that we are only accurate 45 to 70 percent of the time when trying to determine if someone is misleading us (Kalbfleisch; Burgoon, et al.; Horchak, Giger, Pochwatko). When trying to detect deception, it is more effective to examine both verbal and nonverbal communication to see if they are consistent (Vrij, Akehurst, Soukara, & Bull). Even further than this, Park, Levine, McCornack, Morrison, & Ferrara argue that people usually go beyond verbal and nonverbal communication and consider what outsiders say, physical evidence, and the relationship over a longer period of time. **Read further in this article** if you want to learn more about body language and how to detect lies.

## Case In Point

### EAT LIKE A LADY

In Japan it is considered improper for women to be shown with their mouths open in public. Not surprisingly, this makes it difficult to eat particular foods, such as hamburgers. So, in 2013, the Japanese Burger chain, Freshness Burger, developed a solution: the liberation wrapper. The wrapper, or mask, hides women's mouths as they eat thus allowing them to maintain the expected gendered nonverbal behavior for the culture.

- **We use nonverbal communication to indicate relational standing** (Mehrabian; Burgoon, Buller, Hale, & deTurck; Le Poire, Duggan, Shepard, & Burgoon; Sallinen-Kuparinen; Floyd & Erbert). Take a few moments today to observe the nonverbal communication of people you see in public areas. What can you determine about their relational standing from their nonverbal communication? For example, romantic partners tend to stand close to one another and touch one another frequently. On the other hand, acquaintances generally maintain greater distances and touch less than romantic partners. Those who hold higher social status often use more space when they interact with others. In the United States, it is generally acceptable for women in platonic relationships to embrace and be physically close while males are often discouraged from doing so. Contrast this to many other nations where it is custom for males to greet each other with a kiss or a hug and hold hands as a symbol of friendship. We make many inferences about relational standing based on the nonverbal communication of those with whom we interact and observe. Imagine seeing a couple talking to each other across a small table. They both have faces that looked upset, red eyes from crying, closed body positions, are leaning into each other, and are whispering emphatically. Upon seeing this, would you think they were having a "Breakup conversation"?
- **We use nonverbal communication to demonstrate and maintain cultural norms.** We've already shown that some nonverbal communication is universal, but the majority of nonverbal communication is culturally specific. For example, in United States culture, people typically place high value on their personal space. In the United States people maintain far greater personal space than those in many other cultures. If you go to

New York City, you might observe that any time someone accidentally touches you on the subway he/she might apologize profusely for the violation of personal space. Cultural norms of anxiety and fear surrounding issues of crime and terrorism appear to cause people to be more sensitive to others in public spaces, highlighting the importance of culture and context.

Contrast this example to norms in many Asian cultures where frequent touch in crowded public spaces goes unnoticed because space is not used in the same ways. For example, **watch this short video** of how space is used in China's subway system.

If you go grocery shopping in China as a westerner, you might be shocked that shoppers would ram their shopping carts into others' carts when they wanted to move around them in the aisle. This is not an indication of rudeness, but a cultural difference in the negotiation of space. You would need to adapt to using this new approach to personal space, even though it carries a much different meaning in the U.S. Nonverbal cues such as touch, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures are culturally specific and reflect and maintain the values and norms of the cultures in which they are used.



- **We use nonverbal communication to communicate emotions.** While we can certainly tell people how we feel, we more frequently use nonverbal communication to express our emotions. Conversely, we tend to interpret emotions by examining nonverbal communication. For example, a friend may be feeling sad one day and it is probably easy to tell this by her nonverbal communication. Not only may she be less talkative but her shoulders may be slumped and she may not smile. One study suggests that it is important to use and interpret nonverbal communication for emotional expression, and ultimately relational attachment and satisfaction (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer). Research also underscores the fact that people in close relationships have an easier time reading the nonverbal communication of emotion of their relational partners than those who aren't close. Likewise, those in close relationships can more often detect concealed emotions (Sternglanz & Depaulo).

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, you have learned that we define nonverbal communication as any meaning shared through sounds, behaviors, and artifacts other than words. Some of the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication include the fact that verbal communication uses one channel while nonverbal communication occurs through multiple channels simultaneously. As a result, verbal communication is distinct while nonverbal communication is continuous. For the most part, nonverbal communication is enacted at an unconscious level while we are almost always

conscious of our verbal communication. Finally, some nonverbal communication is considered universal and recognizable by people all over the world, while verbal communication is exclusive to particular languages. There are many types of nonverbal communication including kinesics, haptics, appearance, objects, artifacts, proxemics, our environment, chronemics, paralanguage, and silence. These types of nonverbal communication help us share meanings in our interactions. Now that you have a basic understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication as a primary focus of study in our field, let's look at how theory helps us understand our world.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever communicated with someone outside of your culture? How were their nonverbals similar to your own, or different?
2. Have you ever had your nonverbal cues misinterpreted? For example, someone thought you liked them because your proxemics suggested an intimate relationship. How did you correct the misinterpretation?
3. What kind of nonverbal communication do you use every day? What does it accomplish for you?
4. Which do you consider has greater weight when interpreting a message from someone else, verbal or nonverbal communication? Why?

## KEY TERMS

- chronemics
- conscious
- context
- continuous
- distinct
- environment
- haptics
- kinesics
- nonverbal communication
- paralanguage
- personal appearance
- proxemics
- silence
- unconscious

# Chapter 4

## Interpersonal Communication Overview

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define interpersonal communication.
- Explain self-disclosure.
- Understand the role of communication climate on interpersonal communication.
- Be aware of the role of dialectical tensions in interpersonal communication.
- Understand the unique dynamics of friendship.
- Understand the unique dynamics of romantic relationships.
- Understand the unique dynamics of family.
- Understand the various ways of interpreting and responding to conflict in interpersonal communication.

Think about your relationships in the last few years. You may have just transitioned from high school to a community college or university. Perhaps you and your friends from high school went to different colleges and are now living far apart from each other. If you have recently been separated by distance from friends or family, you have noticed that it is more difficult to stay connected and share all of the little things that go on in your day. As you continue to grow and change in college, it is likely that you will create relationships along the way. Being away from your family, you will probably notice changes to your relationships with them. All of these dynamics, and many more, fall under the scope of interpersonal communication.



Before going any further, let us define interpersonal communication. “Inter” means between, among, mutually, or together. The second part of the word, “personal” refers to a specific individual or particular role that an individual may occupy. Thus, **interpersonal communication** is *communication between individual people*. We often engage in interpersonal communication in **dyads**, which means *between two people*. It may also occur in small groups such as you and your housemates trying to figure out a system for household chores.

Important to know, is that the definition of interpersonal communication is not simply a quantitative one. What this means is that you cannot define it by merely counting the number of people involved. Instead, Communication scholars view interpersonal communication qualitatively; meaning that it occurs when people communicate with each other as unique individuals. Thus, **interpersonal communication** is *a process of exchange where there is desire and motivation on the part of those involved to get to know each other as individuals*. We will use this definition of interpersonal communication to explore the three primary types of relationships in our lives – friendships, romantic, and family. Given that conflict is a natural part of interpersonal communication, we will also discuss multiple ways of understanding and managing conflict. But before we go into detail about specific interpersonal relationships, let's examine two important aspects of interpersonal communication: self-disclosure and climate.

## Self-Disclosure

### Interpersonal Communication Now

#### MELANIE BOOTH AND SELF-DISCLOSURE IN THE CLASSROOM

One emerging area of interest in the arena of interpersonal communication is self-disclosure in a classroom setting and the challenges that teachers face dealing with personal boundaries. Melanie Booth wrote an article discussing this issue, incorporating her personal experiences. Even though self-disclosure challenges boundaries between teacher-student or student-student, she states that it can offer “transformative” learning opportunities that allow students to apply what they have learned to their life in a deeper more meaningful way. She concludes that the “potential boundary challenges associated with student self-disclosure can be proactively managed and retroactively addressed with careful thought and action and with empathy, respect, and ethical responses toward our students” (Booth).

Because interpersonal communication is the primary means by which we get to know others as unique individuals, it is important to understand the role of self-disclosure. **Self-disclosure** is the *process of revealing information about yourself to others that is not readily known by them*—you have to disclose it. In face-to-face interactions, telling someone “I am a white woman” would not be self-disclosure because that person can perceive that about you without being told. However, revealing, “I am an avid surfer” or “My favorite kind of music is “electronic trance” would be examples of self-disclosure because these are pieces of personal information others do not know unless you tell them. Given that our definition of interpersonal communication requires people to “build knowledge of one another” to get to know them as unique individuals, the necessity for self-disclosure should be obvious.

There are degrees of self-disclosure, ranging from relatively safe (revealing your hobbies or musical preferences), to more personal topics (illuminating fears, dreams for the future, or fantasies). Typically, as relationships deepen and trust is established, self-disclosure increases in both breadth and depth. We tend to disclose facts about ourselves first (I am a Biology major), then move towards opinions (I feel the war is wrong), and finally disclose feelings (I'm sad that you said that). An important aspect of self-disclosure is the rule of reciprocity. This rule states that self-disclosure between two people works best in a back and forth fashion. When you tell someone something personal, you probably expect them to do the same. When one person reveals more than another, there can be an imbalance in the relationship because the one who self discloses more may feel vulnerable as a result of sharing more personal information.

One way to visualize self-disclosure is the **Johari Window** which comes from combining the first names of the window's creators, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. The window is divided into four quadrants: the arena, the blind spot, the facade, and the unknown (Luft).

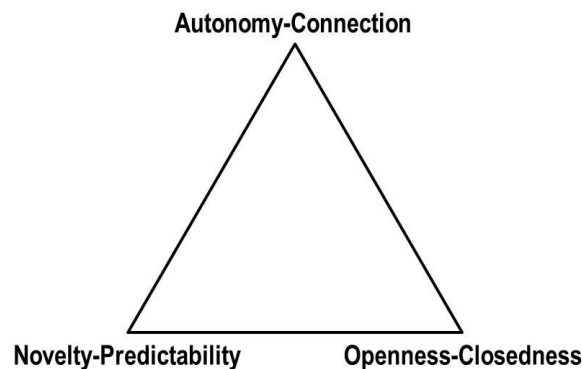
The arena area contains information that is known to us and to others, such as our height, hair color, occupation, or major. In general, we are comfortable discussing or revealing these topics with most people. Information in the blind spot includes those things that may be apparent to others, yet we are unaware of it in ourselves. The habit of playing with your hair when nervous may be a habit that others have observed but you have not. The third area, the facade,

contains information that is hidden from others but is known to you. Previous mistakes or failures, embarrassing moments, or family history are topics we typically hold close and reveal only in the context of safe, long-term relationships. Finally, the unknown area contains information that neither others, nor we, know about. We cannot know how we will react when a parent dies or just what we will do after graduation until the experience occurs. Knowing about ourselves, especially our blind and unknown areas, enables us to have a healthy, well-rounded self-concept. As we make choices to self-disclose to others, we are engaging in negotiating relational dialectics.

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	Arena "Open Self"	Blindspot "Blind Self"
Not Known to Others	Façade "Hidden Self"	Unknown Self

## Relational Dialectics

One way we can better understand our personal relationships is by understanding the notion of relational dialectics. Baxter describes three relational dialectics that are constantly at play in interpersonal relationships. Essentially, they are a continuum of needs for each participant in a relationship that must be negotiated by those involved. Let's take a closer look at the three primary relational dialectics that are at work in all interpersonal relationships.



- **Autonomy-Connection** refers to our *need to have close connection with others as well as our need to have our own space and identity*. We may miss our romantic partner when they are away but simultaneously enjoy and cherish that alone time. When you first enter a romantic relationship, you probably want to be around the other person as much as possible. As the relationship grows, you likely begin to desire fulfilling your need for autonomy, or alone time. In every relationship, each person must balance how much time to spend with the other, versus how much time to spend alone.
- **Novelty-Predictability** is the idea that *we desire predictability as well as spontaneity in our relationships*. In every relationship, we take comfort in a certain level of routine as a way of knowing what we can count on the other person in the relationship. Such predictability provides a sense of comfort and security. However, it



requires balance with novelty to avoid boredom. An example of balance might be friends who get together every Saturday for brunch, but make a commitment to always try new restaurants each week.

- **Openness-Closedness** refers to *the desire to be open and honest with others while at the same time not wanting to reveal everything about yourself to someone else*. One's desire for privacy does not mean they are shutting out others. It is a normal human need. We tend to disclose the most personal information to those with whom we have the closest relationships. However, even these people do not know everything about us. As the old saying goes, "We all have skeletons in our closet," and that's okay.

## How We Handle Relational Dialectics

Understanding that these three dialectical tensions are at play in all relationships is a first step in understanding how our relationships work. However, awareness alone is not enough. Couples, friends, or family members have strategies for managing these tensions in an attempt to meet the needs of each person. Baxter identifies four ways we can handle dialectical tensions.

<b>Neutralize</b>	<b>Separate</b>
<b>Segment</b>	<b>Reframe</b>

### 4 Ways to Handle Dialectical Tension

The first option is to **neutralize** the extremes of the dialectical tensions. Here, *individuals compromise, creating a solution where neither person's need (such as novelty or predictability) is fully satisfied*. Individual needs may be different, and never fully realized. For example, if one person seeks a great deal of autonomy, and the other person in the relationship seeks a great deal of connection, neutralization would not make it possible for either person to have their desires met. Instead, each person might feel like they are not getting quite enough of their particular need met.

The second option is **separation**. This is when someone *favors one end of the dialectical continuum and ignores the other, or alternates between the extremes*. For example, a couple in a commuter relationship in which each person works in a different city may decide to live apart during the week (autonomy) and be together on the weekends (connection). In this sense, they are alternating between the extremes by being completely alone during the week, yet completely together on the weekends.

When people decide to *divide their lives into spheres* they are practicing **segmentation**. For example, your extended family may be very close and choose to spend religious holidays together. However, members of your extended family might reserve other special days such as birthdays for celebrating with friends. This approach divides needs according to the different segments of your life.

The final option for dealing with these tensions is **reframing**. This strategy requires creativity not only in managing the tensions, but understanding how they work in the relationship. For example, *the two ends of the dialectic are not viewed as opposing or contradictory* at all. Instead, they are understood as supporting the other need, as well as the relationship itself. A couple who does not live together, for example, may agree to spend two nights of the week alone or with friends as a sign of their autonomy. The time spent alone or with others gives each person the opportunity to develop themselves and their own interests so that they are better able to share themselves with their partner and enhance their connection.

In general, there is no one right way to understand and manage dialectical tensions since every relationship is unique. However, to always satisfy one need and ignore the other may be a sign of trouble in the relationship (Baxter). It is important to remember that relational dialectics are a natural part of our relationships and that we have a lot of choice, freedom, and creativity in how we work them out with our relational partners. It is also important to remember that dialectical tensions are negotiated differently in each relationship. The ways we self-disclose and manage dialectical tensions contributes greatly to what we call the communication climate in relationships.

## Communication Climate

### Interpersonal Communication Now

#### “STICKS AND STONES CAN BEAK MY BONES BUT WORDS CAN HURT ME, TOO”

In a study published in the journal *Science*, researchers reported that the sickening feeling we get when we are socially rejected (being ignored at a party or passed over when picking teams) is real. When researchers measured brain responses to social stress they found a pattern similar to what occurs in the brain when our body experiences physical pain. Specifically, “the area affected is the anterior cingulate cortex, a part of the brain known to be involved in the emotional response to pain” (Fox). The doctor who conducted the study, Matt Lieberman, a social psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, said, “It makes sense for humans to be programmed this way . . . Social interaction is important to survival.”

Do you feel organized, or confined, in a clean workspace? Are you more productive when the sun is shining than when it's gray and cloudy outside? Just as factors like weather and physical space impact us, communication climate influences our interpersonal interactions. **Communication climate** is the “*overall feeling or emotional mood between people*” (Wood). If you dread going to visit your family during the holidays because of tension between you and your sister, or you look forward to dinner with a particular set of friends because they make you laugh, you are responding to the communication climate—the overall mood that is created because of the people involved and the type of communication they bring to the interaction. Let's look at two different types of communication climates: Confirming and Disconfirming climates.

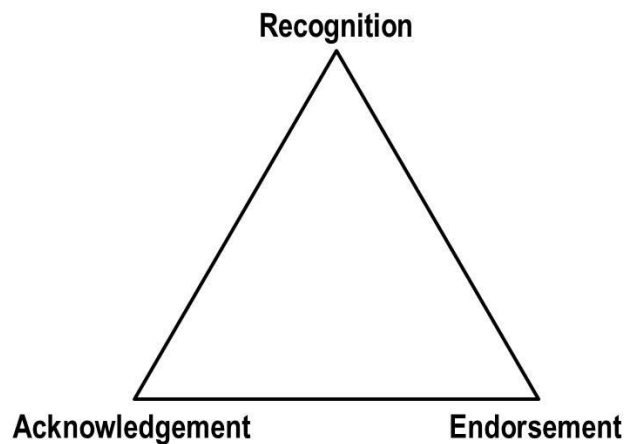
## Confirming and Disconfirming Climates

Positive and negative climates can be understood along three dimensions—recognition, acknowledgement, and endorsement. We experience **Confirming Climates** when we receive *messages that demonstrate our value and worth from those with whom we have a relationship*. Conversely, we experience **Disconfirming Climates** when we receive *messages that suggest we are devalued and unimportant*. Obviously, most of us like to be in confirming climates because they foster emotional safety as well as personal and relational growth. However, it is likely that your relationships fall somewhere between the two extremes. Let's look at three types of messages that create confirming and disconfirming climates.

- **Recognition Messages:** Recognition messages either confirm or deny another person's existence. For example, if a friend enters your home and you smile, hug him, and say, “I'm so glad to see you” you are confirming his existence. If you say “good morning” to a colleague and she ignores you by walking out of the

room without saying anything, she is creating a disconfirming climate by not recognizing you as a unique individual.

- **Acknowledgement Messages:** Acknowledgement messages go beyond recognizing another's existence by *confirming what they say or how they feel*. Nodding our head while listening, or laughing appropriately at a funny story, are nonverbal acknowledgement messages. When a friend tells you she had a really bad day at work and you respond with, "Yeah, that does sound hard, do you want to go somewhere quiet and talk?" you are acknowledging and responding to her feelings. In contrast, if you were to respond to your friend's frustrations with a comment like, "That's nothing. Listen to what happened to me today," you would be ignoring her experience and presenting yours as more important.



### 3 Types of Messages Shaping Communication Climates

- **Endorsement Messages:** Endorsement messages go one step further by *recognizing a person's feelings as valid*. Suppose a friend comes to you upset after a fight with his girlfriend. If you respond with, "Yeah, I can see why you would be upset" you are endorsing his right to feel upset. However, if you said, "Get over it. At least you have a girlfriend" you would be sending messages that deny his right to feel frustrated in that moment. While it is difficult to see people we care about in emotional pain, people are responsible for their own emotions. When we let people own their emotions and do not tell them how to feel, we are creating supportive climates that provide a safe environment for them to work through their problems.

Now that you understand that we must self-disclose to form interpersonal relationships, and that self-disclosure takes place in communication climates, we want to spend the rest of the chapter briefly highlighting some of the characteristics of the three primary interpersonal relationships in which we engage: Friendships, Romantic Relationships, and Family Relationships.

## Developing and Maintaining Friendships

A common need we have as people is the need to feel connected with others. We experience great joy, adventure, and learning through our connection and interactions with others. The feeling of wanting to be part of a group and liked by others is natural. One way we meet our need for connection is through our friendships. Friendship means different things to different people depending on age, gender, and cultural background. Common among all friendships is the fact that they are interpersonal relationships of choice. Throughout your life, you will engage in an ongoing process of developing friendships. Rawlins suggests that we develop our friendships through a series of six

steps. While we may not follow these six steps in exact order in all of our relationships, these steps help us understand how we develop friendships.



The first step in building friendships occurs through **Role-Limited Interaction**. In this step, we *interact with others based on our social roles*. For example, when you meet a new person in class, your interaction centers around your role as “student.” The communication is characterized by a focus on superficial, rather than personal topics. In this step we engage in limited self-disclosure, and rely on scripts and stereotypes. When two first-time freshmen met in an introductory course, they struck up a conversation and interacted according to the roles they played in the context of their initial communication. They began a conversation because they sit near each other in class and discussed how much they liked or disliked aspects of the course.

The second step in developing friendships is called **Friendly Relations**. This stage is characterized by *communication that moves beyond initial roles as the participants begin to interact with one another to see if there are common interests, as well as an interest to continue getting to know one another*. As the students spend more time together and have casual conversations, they may realize a wealth of shared interests. They realize that both were traveling from far distances to go to school and understood each other’s struggle with missing their families. Each of them also love athletics, especially playing basketball. The development of this friendship occurred as they identified with each other as more than classmates. They saw each other as women of the same age, with similar goals, ambitions, and interests. Moreover, as one of them studied Communication and the other Psychology, they appreciated the differences as well as similarities in their collegiate pursuits.

The third step in developing friendships is called **Moving Toward Friendship**. In this stage, participants *make moves to foster a more personalized friendship*. They may begin meeting outside of the setting in which the relationship started, and begin increasing the levels of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure enables the new friends to form bonds of trust. When the students entered this stage it was right before one joined the basketball club on their college campus. As she started practices and meetings, she realized this would be something fun for her and her classmate to do together so she invited her classmate along.

The fourth step in developing friendships is called **Nascent Friendship**. In this stage individuals *commit to spending more time together*. They also may start using the term “friend” to refer to each other as opposed to “a person in my history class” or “this guy I work with.” The interactions extend beyond the initial roles as participants work out their own private communication rules and norms. For example, they may start calling or texting on a regular basis or reserving certain times and activities for each other such as going on evening runs together. As time went on, the students started texting each other more frequently just to tell each other a funny story that happened during the day, to make plans for going out to eat, or to plan for meeting at the gym to work out.

The fifth step in developing friendships is **Stabilized Friendship**. In this stage, friends *take each other for granted as friends, but not in a negative way*. Because the friendship is solid, they assume each other will be in their lives. There is an assumption of continuity. The communication in this stage is also characterized by a sense of trust as levels of self-disclosure increase and each person feels more comfortable revealing parts of him or herself to the other. This stage can continue indefinitely throughout a lifetime. When the women became friends, they were freshmen in college. After finishing school some years later, they moved to separate regions for graduate school. While they were

sad to move away from one another, they knew the friendship would continue. To this day they continue to be best friends.

The final step in friendship development is **Waning Friendship**. As you know, friendships do not always have a happy ending. *Many friendships come to an end.* Friendships may not simply come to an abrupt end. Many times there are stages that show a decline of a friendship, but in Rawlin's model, the ending of a friendship is summed up by this step. Perhaps the relationship is too difficult to sustain over large geographic distances. Or, sometimes people change and grow in different directions and have little in common with old friends. Sometimes friendship rules are violated to a degree beyond repair. We spoke earlier of trust as a component of friendships. One common rule of trust is that if we tell friends a secret, they are expected to keep it a secret. If that rule is broken, and a friend continually breaks your trust by telling your secrets to others, you are likely to stop thinking of them as your friend.

## Challenges for Friendships

While the above steps are a general pathway toward friendship, they are not always smooth. As with any relationship, challenges exist in friendships that can strain their development. Three of the more common challenges to friendships are gender, cultural diversity, and sexual attraction. Important to remember, is that each of these constructs comes with its own conflicts of power and privilege because of the cultural norms and the values we give to certain characteristics. These are challenges to relationships since studies show that people tend to associate with others that are similar to themselves (Echols & Graham). Take a look at the pair on the side of the page, they identify as different genders, ethnicities, cultures, and are even attracted to different sexes. Their friendship not only offers an opportunity to learn about differences through each other, but also offers challenges because of these differences. As we emphasize throughout the book, factors such as our gender identities and cultural backgrounds always play a role in our interactions with others.



- **Gender:** Research suggests that both women and men value trust and intimacy in their friendships and value their time spent with friends (Mathews, Derlega & Morrow; Bell & Coleman; Monsour & Rawlins). However, there are some differences in the interactions that take place within women's and men's friendships (Burleson, Jones & Holmstrom; Coates; Harriman). Quite common among female friends, is to get together simply to talk and catch up with one another. When calling her close friend, Antoinette might say, "Why don't you come over to my place so we can talk?" The need to connect through verbal communication is explicitly stated and forms the basis for the relationship. In contrast, among male friends a more common approach to interaction is an invitation to engage in an activity as a means of facilitating conversation. For example, John might say to his friend, "Hey, Mike, let's get out surfing this weekend." The explicit request is to engage in an activity (surfing), but John and Mike understand that as they engage in the activity, they will talk, joke around, and reinforce their friendship ties.

While we have often looked at gender as male and female, culture is changing in which gender is viewed as a spectrum rather than the male/female binary. Monsour & Rawlins explain the new waves of research into different types of gender communities. More recent research is more inclusive to gender definitions that extend beyond the male/female binary. This research may be cutting edge in its field, but as society becomes more accepting of difference, new ideas of relationship rules will emerge.

- **Culture:** Cultural values shape how we understand our friendships. In most Western societies that emphasize individualism (as opposed to collectivism), friendships are seen as voluntary in that we get to choose who we want in our friendship circle. If we do not like someone we do not have to be friends with him/her. Contrast this to the workplace, or school, where we may be forced to get along with colleagues or classmates even though we may not like them. In many collectivist cultures, such as Japan and China, friendships carry certain obligations that are understood by all parties (Carrier; Kim & Markman). These may include gift giving, employment and economic opportunities, and cutting through so-called 'bureaucratic red tape.' Although these sorts of connections, particularly in business and politics, may be frowned upon in the United States because they contradict our valuing of individualism, they are a natural, normal, and logical result of friendships in collectivist cultures.
- **Sexual Attraction:** The classic film, *When Harry Met Sally*, highlights how sexual attraction can complicate friendships. In the movie, Harry quotes the line, "Men and women can't be friends because the sex always gets in the way." Levels of sexual attraction or sexual tension may challenge friendships between heterosexual men and women, gay men, and lesbian women. This may arise from an internal desire of one of the friends to explore a sexual relationship, or if someone in the relationship indicates that he/she wants to be "more than friends." These situations might place strain on the friendship and require the individuals to address the situation if they want the friendship to continue. One approach has been the recent definition of friendships called, "Friends with Benefits." This term implies an understanding that two people will identify their relationship as a friendship, but will be open to engaging in sexual activity without committing to the other characteristics common in romantic relationships.

## Friendships Now

Take a moment to reflect on how many friends you have in your everyday life. Is that number equivalent or more than the number you have on social media accounts like Facebook? Chances are, those numbers are very different. To those of us who have access to social media, it is changing the ways we develop and maintain friendships. When you make a friend in physical life, the other person has to be in close enough proximity to communicate with on a regular basis to have a face-to-face interaction. That concept is almost nonexistent in the world of social media. Rawlin's first step in developing friendships, Role-Limited Interaction, can be bypassed and moved right into Friendly Relations with the click of a button.

## Developing and Maintaining Romantic Relationships

Like other relationships in our lives, romantic relationships play an important role in fulfilling our needs for intimacy, social connection, and sexual relations. Like friendships, romantic relationships also follow general stages of creation and deterioration. Before we explore these stages, let's look at our definition of romantic relationships.

In many Western cultures, romantic relationships are voluntary. We are free to decide whom to date and form life-long romantic relationships. In some Eastern cultures these decisions may be made by parents, or elders in the community, based on what is good for the family or social group. Even in Western societies, not everyone holds the same amount of freedom and power to determine their relational partners. Parents or society may discourage interracial, interfaith, or interclass relationships. While it is now legal for same-sex couples to marry, many same-sex couples still suffer political and social restrictions when making choices about marrying and having children. Much of the research on how romantic relationships develop is based on relationships in the West. In this context, romantic

relationships can be viewed as voluntary relationships between individuals who have intentions that each person will be a significant part of their ongoing lives.

Think about your own romantic relationships for a moment. To whom are you attracted? Chances are they are people with whom you share common interests and encounter in your everyday routines such as going to school, work, or participation in hobbies or sports. In other words, **self-identity**, **similarity**, and **proximity** are three powerful influences when it comes to whom we select as romantic partners. We often select others that we deem appropriate for us as they fit our self-identity; heterosexuals pair up with other heterosexuals, lesbian women with other lesbian women, and so forth. Social class, religious preference, and ethnic or racial identity are also great influences as people are more likely to pair up with others of similar backgrounds. Logically speaking, it is difficult (although not impossible with the prevalence of social media and online dating services) to meet people outside of our immediate geographic area. In other words, if we do not have the opportunity to meet and interact with someone at least a little, how do we know if they are a person with whom we would like to explore a relationship? We cannot meet, or maintain a long-term relationship, without sharing some sense of proximity.

## Interpersonal Communication and You

### HOW DO YOU LOVE?

Love can come in many different forms. There is a love between a mother and her child. The love between two brothers. The love between a dog and its human companions. These different types of love have many similarities yet have phenomenal differences. Love can be sexual, but it is definitely contextual. The Greeks had six distinct words for love depending on the context, whereas we often use the single term “love” to describe many things. I love pizza. I love my mother. I love my dog. Look at the table below to see what Greek word for love you would use in these sentences.

Type of Love	Definition
<i>Eros</i>	Passion and Commitment
<i>Ludus</i>	Game Playing
<i>Storge</i>	Love and Friendship
<i>Pragma</i>	Pragmatic Love
<i>Mania</i>	Emotional Intensity
<i>Agape</i>	Selfless Caring

We are certainly not suggesting that we only have romantic relationships with carbon copies of ourselves. Over the last few decades, there have been some dramatic shifts when it comes to numbers and perceptions of interracial marriage. It is more and more common to see a wide variety of people that make up married couples.

Just like the steps we examined for developing friendships, there are general stages we follow in the development and maintenance of romantic relationships. Let’s look at these six stages of growth in romantic relationships. The first stage in the development of romantic relationships is **No Interaction**. As the name suggests, the initial stage of a romantic relationship *occurs when two people have not interacted*. For example, you may see someone you are attracted to on the first day of class and think to yourself, “I really want to meet her.” Our attraction for someone may



motivate us to move beyond the no interaction stage to see if there is a possibility of developing a romantic relationship.

The second stage for developing romantic relationships is **Invitational Communication**. When we are attracted to someone, we may *signal or invite them to interact with us*. For example, you can do this by asking them to dinner, to dance at a club, or even, “I really liked that movie. What did you think?” The significance here is in the relational level (how the people feel about each other) rather than the content level (the topic) of the message. As the poet, Maya Angelou, explains, “Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning.” The ‘shades of deeper meaning’ are the relational level messages that invite others to continue exploring a possible romantic relationship. Quite often, we strategize how we might go about inviting people into communication with us so we can explore potential romantic development.

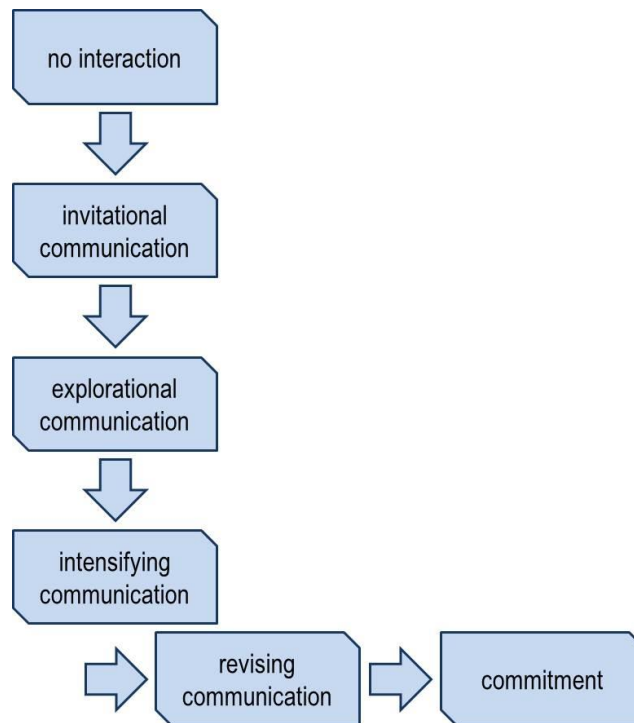
The third stage of developing romantic relationships is **Explorational Communication**. When *individuals respond favorably to our invitational communication* we then engage in explorational communication. In this stage, we share information about ourselves while looking for mutual interests, shared political or religious views, and similarities in family background. Self-disclosure increases so we can give and receive personal information in a way that fosters trust and intimacy. Common dating activities in this stage include going to parties or other publicly structured events, such as movies or a concert, that foster interaction and self-disclosure.

The fourth stage of romantic relationships is **Intensifying Communication**. If we continue to be attracted (mentally, emotionally, and physically) to one another, we begin engaging in intensifying communication. *This is the happy stage (the “relationship high”) where we cannot bear to be away from the other person*. It is here that you might plan all of your free time together, and begin to create a private relational culture. Going out to parties and socializing with friends takes a back seat to more private activities such as cooking dinner together at home or taking long walks on the beach. Self-disclosure continues to increase as each person has a strong desire to know and understand the other. In this stage, we tend to idealize one another in that we downplay faults (or don’t see them at all), seeing only the positive qualities of the other person.

## Interpersonal Communication and You

Often relationships end, and do so for a variety of reasons. People may call it quits for serious issues such as unfaithfulness or long distance struggles. While sometimes people slowly grow apart and mutually decide to move on without each other. There are a plethora of reasons why people end their relationships. Sometimes it is not a pleasant experience: the initial realization that the relationship is going to cease to exist, the process of breaking up, and then the aftermath of the situation can be difficult to navigate. In an attempt to save you some potential heartache and arm you with advice/knowledge to pass along, here are some video links that propose some insight on dealing with such issues.

The fifth stage of romantic relationship development is **Revising Communication**. When the “relational high” begins to wear off, couples begin to have *a more realistic perspective of one another, and the relationship as a whole*. Here, people may recognize the faults of the other person that they so idealized in the previous stage. Also, couples must again make decisions about where to go with the relationship—do they stay together and work toward long-term goals, or define it as a short-term relationship? A couple may be deeply in love and also make the decision to break off the relationship for a multitude of reasons. Perhaps one person wants to join the Peace Corps after graduation and plans to travel the world, while the other wants to settle down in their hometown. Their individual needs and goals may not be compatible to sustain a long-term commitment.



**Commitment** is the sixth stage in developing romantic relationships. This occurs when a couple makes the *decision to make the relationship a permanent part of their lives*. In this stage, the participants assume they will be in each other's lives forever and make joint decisions about the future. While marriage is an obvious sign of commitment it is not the only signifier of this stage. Some may mark their intention of staying together in a commitment ceremony, or by registering as domestic partners. Likewise, not all couples planning a future together legally marry. Some may lose economic benefits if they marry, such as the loss of Social Security for seniors or others may oppose the institution (and its inequality) of marriage.

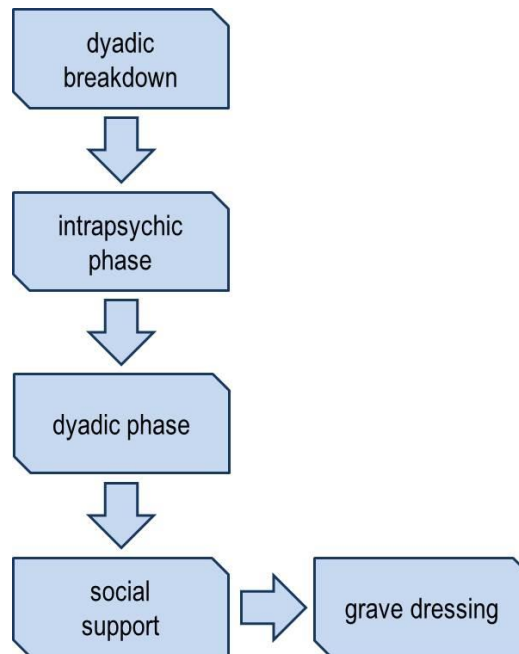
Obviously, simply committing is not enough to maintain a relationship through tough times that occur as couples grow and change. Like a ship set on a destination, a couple must learn to steer through rough waves as well as calm waters. A couple can accomplish this by learning to communicate through the good and the bad. **Navigating** is when a couple continues to *revise their communication and ways of interacting to reflect the changing needs of each person*. Done well, life's changes are more easily enjoyed when viewed as a natural part of the life cycle. The original patterns for managing dialectical tensions when a couple began dating, may not work when they are managing two careers, children, and a mortgage payment. Outside pressures such as children, professional duties, and financial responsibilities put added pressure on relationships that require attention and negotiation. If a couple neglects to practice effective communication with one another, coping with change becomes increasingly stressful and puts the relationship in jeopardy.

Not only do romantic couples progress through a series of stages of growth, they also experience stages of deterioration. Deterioration does not necessarily mean that a couple's relationship will end. Instead, couples may move back and forth from deterioration stages to growth stages throughout the course of their relationship.

The first stage of deterioration, **Dyadic Breakdown**, occurs when *romantic partners begin to neglect the small details that have always bound them together*. For example, they may stop cuddling on the couch when they rent a movie and sit in opposite chairs. Taken in isolation this example does not mean a relationship is in trouble. However, when

intimacy continues to decrease, and the partners feel dissatisfied, this dissatisfaction can lead to worrying about the relationship.

The second stage of deterioration, the **Intrapsychic Phase**, occurs when *partners worry that they do not connect with one another in ways they used to, or that they no longer do fun things together*. When this happens they may begin to imagine their life without the relationship. Rather than seeing the relationship as a given, the couple may begin to wonder what life would be like not being in the partnership.



The third stage of deterioration, the **Dyadic Phase**, occurs when **partners make the choice to talk about their problems**. In this stage, they discuss how to resolve the issues and may seek outside help such as a therapist to help them work through the reasons they are growing apart. This could also be the stage where couples begin initial discussions about how to divide up shared resources such as property, money, or children.

The fourth stage of deterioration, **Social Support**, occurs when *termination is inevitable and the partners begin to look outside the relationship for social support*. In this stage couples will make the news public by telling friends, family, or children that the relationship is ending. As family members listen to problems, or friends offer invitations to go out and keep busy, they provide social support. The couple needs social support from outside individuals in the process of letting go of the relationship and coming to terms with its termination.

The fifth stage of deterioration, **Grave Dressing**, occurs when *couples reach closure in a relationship and move on with life*. Like a literal death, a relationship that has ended should be mourned. People need time to go through this process in order to fully understand the meaning of the relationship, why it ended, and what they can learn from the experience. Going through this stage in a healthy way helps us learn to navigate future relationships more successfully.

You can probably recognize many of these stages from your own relationships or from relationships you've observed. Experience will tell you that we do not always follow these stages in a linear way. A couple, for example, may enter counseling during the dyadic phase, work out their problems, and enter a second term of intensifying communication, revising, and so forth. Other couples may skip some stages all together. Whatever the case, these models are

valuable because they provide us with a way to recognize general communicative patterns and options we have at each stage of our relationships. Knowing what our choices are, and their potential consequences, gives us greater tools to build the kind of relationships we desire in our personal lives.

## Thinking About Conflict



When you hear the word “conflict,” do you have a positive or negative reaction? Are you someone who thinks conflict should be avoided at all costs? While conflict may be uncomfortable and challenging it doesn’t have to be negative. Think about the social and political changes that came about from the conflict of the civil rights movement during the 1960’s. There is no doubt that this conflict was painful and even deadly for some civil rights activists, but the conflict resulted in the elimination of many discriminatory practices and helped create a more egalitarian social system in the United States. Let’s look at two distinct orientations to conflict, as well as options for how to respond to conflict in our interpersonal relationships.

### Conflict as Destructive

When we shy away from conflict in our interpersonal relationships we may do so because we conceptualize it as destructive to our relationships. As with many of our beliefs and attitudes, they are not always well-grounded and lead to destructive behaviors. Augsburger outlined four assumptions of viewing conflict as destructive.

1. Conflict is a destructive disturbance of the peace.
2. The social system should not be adjusted to meet the needs of members; rather, members should adapt to the established values.
3. Confrontations are destructive and ineffective.
4. Disputants should be punished.

When we view conflict this way, we believe that it is a threat to the established order of the relationship. Think about sports as an analogy of how we view conflict as destructive. In the U.S. we like sports that have winners and losers. Sports and games where a tie is an option often seem confusing to us. How can neither team win or lose? When we apply this to our relationships, it’s understandable why we would be resistant to engaging in conflict. I don’t want to lose, and I don’t want to see my relational partner lose. So, an option is to avoid conflict so that neither person has to face that result.

## Conflict as Productive

In contrast to seeing conflict as destructive, also possible, even healthy, is to view conflict as a productive natural outgrowth and component of human relationships. Augsburger described four assumptions of viewing conflict as productive.

1. Conflict is a normal, useful process.
2. All issues are subject to change through negotiation.
3. Direct confrontation and conciliation are valued.
4. Conflict is a necessary renegotiation of an implied contract—a redistribution of opportunity, release of tensions, and renewal of relationships.

From this perspective, conflict provides an opportunity for strengthening relationships, not harming them. Conflict is a chance for relational partners to find ways to meet the needs of one another, even when these needs conflict. Think back to our discussion of dialectical tensions. While you may not explicitly argue with your relational partners about these tensions, the fact that you are negotiating them points to your ability to use conflict in productive ways for the relationship as a whole, and the needs of the individuals in the relationship.

## Types of Conflict

Understanding the different ways of valuing conflict is a first step toward engaging in productive conflict interactions. Likewise, knowing the various types of conflict that occur in interpersonal relationships also helps us to identify appropriate strategies for managing certain types of conflict. Cole states that there are five types of conflict in interpersonal relationships: Affective, Conflict of Interest, Value, Cognitive, and Goal.

- **Affective conflict.** Affective conflict arises when we have *incompatible feelings with another person*. For example, if a couple has been dating for a while, one of the partners may want to marry as a sign of love while the other decides they want to see other people. What do they do? The differences in feelings for one another are the source of affective conflict.
- **Conflict of Interest.** This type of conflict arises when people *disagree about a plan of action or what to do in a given circumstance*. For example, Julie, a Christian Scientist, does not believe in seeking medical intervention, but believes that prayer can cure illness. Jeff, a Catholic, does believe in seeking conventional medical attention as treatment for illness. What happens when Julie and Jeff decide to have children? Do they honor Jeff's beliefs and take the kids to the doctor when they are ill, or respect and practice Julie's religion? This is a conflict of interest.
- **Value Conflict.** A *difference in ideologies or values between relational partners* is called value conflict. In the example of Julie and Jeff, a conflict of interest about what to do concerning their children's medical needs results from differing religious values. Many people engage in conflict about religion and politics. Remember the old saying, "Never talk about religion and politics with your family."
- **Cognitive Conflict.** Cognitive conflict is *the difference in thought process, interpretation of events, and perceptions*. Marsha and Victoria, a long-term couple, are both invited to a party. Victoria declines because she has a big presentation at work the next morning and wants to be well rested. At the party, their mutual friends Michael and Lisa notice Marsha spending the entire evening with Karen. Lisa suspects Marsha may be flirting and cheating on Victoria, but Michael disagrees and says Marsha and Karen are just close friends

catching up. Michael and Lisa are observing the same interaction but have a disagreement about what it means. This is an example of cognitive conflict.

- **Goal Conflict.** Goal conflict occurs when people *disagree about a final outcome*. Jesse and Maria are getting ready to buy their first house. Maria wants something that has long-term investment potential while Jesse wants a house to suit their needs for a few years and then plans to move into a larger house. Maria has long-term goals for the house purchase and Jesse is thinking in more immediate terms. These two have two different goals in regards to purchasing a home.

## Strategies for Managing Conflict

When we ask our students what they want to do when they experience conflict, most of the time they say “resolve it.” While this is understandable, also important to understand is that conflict is ongoing in all relationships, and our approach to conflict should be to “manage it” instead of always trying to “resolve it.”



One way to understand options for managing conflict is by knowing five major strategies for managing conflict in relationships. While most of us probably favor one strategy over another, we all have multiple options for managing conflict in our relationships. Having a variety of options available gives us flexibility in our interactions with others. Five strategies for managing interpersonal conflict include dominating, integrating, compromising, obliging, and avoiding (Rahim; Rahim & Magner; Thomas & Kilmann). One way to think about these strategies, and your decision to select one over another, is to think about whose needs will be met in the conflict situation. You can conceptualize this idea according to the degree of concern for the self and the degree of concern for others.

When people select the **dominating strategy**, or win-lose approach, they exhibit *high concern for the self and low concern for the other person*. The goal here is to win the conflict. This approach is often characterized by loud, forceful, and interrupting communication. Again, this is analogous to sports. Too often, we avoid conflict because we believe the only other alternative is to try to dominate the other person. In relationships where we care about others, it's no wonder this strategy can seem unappealing.

The **obliging style** shows a *moderate degree of concern for self and others, and a high degree of concern for the relationship itself*. In this approach, the individuals are less important than the relationship as a whole. Here, a person may minimize the differences or a specific issue in order to emphasize the commonalities. The comment, “The fact that we disagree about politics isn’t a big deal since we share the same ethical and moral beliefs,” exemplifies an obliging style.

The **compromising style** is evident when *both parties are willing to give up something in order to gain something else*. When environmental activist, Julia Butterfly Hill agreed to end her two-year long tree sit in Luna as a protest

against the logging practices of Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO), and pay them \$50,000 in exchange for their promise to protect Luna and not cut within a 20-foot buffer zone, she and PALCO reached a compromise. If one of the parties feels the compromise is unequal they may be less likely to stick to it long term. When conflict is unavoidable, many times people will opt for compromise. One of the problems with compromise is that neither party fully gets their needs met. If you want Mexican food and your friend wants pizza, you might agree to compromise and go someplace that serves Mexican pizza. While this may seem like a good idea, you may have really been craving a burrito and your friend may have really been craving a pepperoni pizza. In this case, while the compromise brought together two food genres, neither person got their desire met.

When one **avoids** a conflict they may suppress feelings of frustration or walk away from a situation. While this is often regarded as expressing a *low concern for self and others* because problems are not dealt with, the opposite may be true in some contexts. Take, for example, a heated argument between Ginny and Pat. Pat is about to make a hurtful remark out of frustration. Instead, she decides that she needs to avoid this argument right now until she and Ginny can come back and discuss things in a more calm fashion. In this case, temporarily avoiding the conflict can be beneficial. However, conflict avoidance over the long term generally has negative consequences for a relationship because neither person is willing to participate in the conflict management process.

Finally, **integrating** demonstrates a *high level of concern for both self and others*. Using this strategy, individuals agree to share information, feelings, and creativity to try to reach a mutually acceptable solution that meets both of their needs. In our food example above, one strategy would be for both people to get the food they want, then take it on a picnic in the park. This way, both people are getting their needs met fully, and in a way that extends beyond original notions of win-lose approaches for managing the conflict. The downside to this strategy is that it is very time consuming and requires high levels of trust.

## SUMMARY

Interpersonal communication is communication between individuals that view one another as unique. Quite often, interpersonal communication occurs in dyads. In order for interpersonal communication to occur, participants must engage in self-disclosure, which is the revealing of information about oneself to others that is not known by them. As we self-disclose, we manage our relationships by negotiating dialectical tensions, which are opposing needs in interpersonal relationships. We use a variety of strategies for navigating these tensions, including neutralization, separation, segmentation, and reframing.

As we navigate our interpersonal relationships, we create communication climates, which are the overall feelings and moods people have for one another and the relationship. When we engage in disconfirming messages, we produce a negative relational climate, while confirming messages can help build a positive relational climate by recognizing the uniqueness and importance of another person.

The three primary types of interpersonal relationships we engage in are friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships. Each of these relationships develop through a series of stages of growth and deterioration. Friendships and romantic relationships differ from family relationships in that they are relationships of choice. Each of these relationships requires commitment from participants to continuously navigate relational dynamics in order to maintain and grow the relationship.

Finally, all relationships experience conflict. Conflict is often perceived as an indicator that there is a problem in a relationship. However, conflict is a natural and ongoing part of all relationships. The goal for conflict is not to eliminate it, but to manage it. There are five primary approaches to managing conflict which include dominating, obliging, compromising, avoiding, and integrating.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Select an important person in your life and pay attention to your communication climate. How do you and this other person demonstrate recognition, acknowledgement, and endorsement?
2. Reflect on one of your important friendships and trace its development through Rawlins' six stages. How was it affected by important transitions in your life, sexual attraction, and diversity?
3. Reflect on a current or past romantic relationship. How did you communicate attraction, or needs for connection and separateness?
4. Does Pearson's definition of family fit your own? Why? Why not?
5. Interview one or both of your parents about how their communication has changed as they have moved along the family life cycle. How did their relational culture change? How did they manage relational dialectics?
6. How was conflict managed in your family while growing up? Was it viewed as positive or negative? How did those early messages and lessons about conflict shape your current attitudes?

## KEY TERMS

- committed romantic relationships
- conflict
- content level of message
- domestic partners
- dyad
- dyadic breakdown
- dyadic phase
- family
- family life cycle
- grave dressing
- intrapsychic phase
- interracial marriage
- proximity
- relational culture
- relational level of message
- self-disclosure
- self-identity
- similarity
- social support



# Chapter 5

## Mass Communication

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Define mass communication.
- Identify key functions of mass communication.
- Understand prominent theories of mass communication.
- Understand the role that media plays in your life.
- Describe pop culture.
- Identify several key elements of media literacy.
- Recognize your role in the global community.

You're sitting in a classroom checking twitter while listening to your favorite music when the clock hits the top of the hour. You take out your headphones and put the phone down when you hear the instructor begin talking. She is referring to a web page projected on the screen in front of class. She welcomes everyone to the start of the school year, but stops to wait for the guy next to you to put down his phone that he's reading. She explains that she will only provide an electronic version of the syllabus, pointing to the course web page. Everyone in the class is to go online and read the syllabus before the next class meeting. She explains that, besides lecture and discussion, you will need to watch CNN, read the Wall Street Journal, and watch several clips she's listed on YouTube to demonstrate and learn key concepts. Suddenly, from the back of the class a cell phone begins ringing. The instructor stops mid-sentence and explains the class policy about turning off cell phones during class. Your classmate never answers the phone but reaches into his pocket and looks at the phone screen. The instructor explains that you will need to read chapter one of the textbook by next week. Included with your textbook is a pass-code that allows you to connect to an online database so you can access articles for your semester project. After she answers student questions, class is over.

As you head out the door you hear music coming from large video monitors playing music and promotions for the university. You walk to the student union to grab lunch and watch whatever they're playing on the large screen television. On your drive home, you turn on the radio to listen to the broadcast of your favorite baseball team. While driving, you notice the new billboard advertising Ford trucks. When you get home, you sit down in front of your computer. You check a class web page to see if you have homework, check the day's current events and sporting scores, then check your email. You read several messages, delete the spam, and get irritated at the pop-up advertisements that keep jumping on your screen. After shutting down your computer you sit on the couch to watch a movie streaming through Netflix. As you lean back on the couch, you clear away a stack of magazines to set down your drink.

The above example is representative of the amount of mass communication we are exposed to daily. In the U.S. we witness and understand a great deal of our world through mass communication. Remember from Chapter 2 that in the early part of the 20th century, communication scholars began to ask questions about the impact of media as more and more mass communication outlets were developed. Questions then and now include: To what degree does mass communication affect us? How do we use or access mass communication? How does each medium influence

how we interpret messages? Do we play an active or passive role when we interact with media? This chapter explores these questions by examining the concept of mass communication, its evolution, its functions, its theories, and its place in society.

## Defining Mass Communication

Littlejohn and Foss define **mass communication** as “the process whereby media organizations produce and transmit messages to large publics and the process by which those messages are sought, used, understood, and influenced by audience.” McQuail states that mass communication is, “only one of the processes of communication operating at the society-wide level, readily identified by its institutional characteristics.” Simply put, mass communication is the public transfer of messages through media or technology-driven channels to a large number of recipients from an entity, usually involving some type of cost or fee (advertising) for the user. “The sender often is a person in some large media organization, the messages are public, and the audience tends to be large and varied” (Berger 121). However, with the advent of outlets like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and text messaging, these definitions do not account for the increased opportunities individuals now have to send messages to large audiences through mediated channels.

### Mass Communication

The process whereby media organizations produce and transmit messages to large publics and the process by which those messages are sought, used, understood, and influenced by audience.

Nevertheless, most mass communication comes from large organizations that influence culture on a large scale. Schramm refers to this as a “working group organizer.” Today the working groups that control most mass communication are large conglomerates such as Viacom, NewsCorp, Disney, ComCast, Time Warner, and CBS. In 2012, these conglomerates controlled 90% of American Media and mergers continue to consolidate ownership even more.

Remember our definition of communication study: “who says what, through what channels (media) of communication, to whom, [and] what will be the results?” (Smith, Lasswell & Casey) When examining mass communication, we are interested in who has control over what content, for what audience, using what medium, and what are the results? Media critic Robert McChesney said we should be worried about the increasingly concentrated control of mass communication that results when just a handful of large organizations control most mass communication, “The implications for political democracy, by any standard, are troubling.” When interviewed, Ben Bagdikian, media critic and former Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley, cautiously pointed out that over the past two decades, major media outlets went from being owned by 50 corporations to just five (WGBH/Frontline). Both McChesney and Bagdikian warn about the implications of having so few organizations controlling the majority of our information and communication. Perhaps this is the reason new media outlets like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have consistently grown in popularity as they offer alternative voices to the large corporations that control most mass communication.

**Mass Communication Now**

This table shows the six most prosperous media conglomerates of 2014. Included is a list of just SOME of the networks they own.

COMCAST	News Corporation	Disney	VIACOM	TIMEWARNER	CBS
-NBC -MSNBC -AT&T	-FOX -Wall Street Journal -New York Post	-ABC -ESPN -Pixar -Miramax -Marvel Studios	-MTV -Nick JR. -CMT -Paramount pictures	-CNN -HBO -Time -Warner Bros.	-Showtime -Smithsonian Channel -NFL.com -Jeopardy -60 Minutes

Image produced with information from businessinsider.com

The information above is from a few years ago – mergers and buyouts are resulting in fewer companies owning more media and are constantly changing.

To understand mass communication one must first be aware of some of the key factors that distinguish it from other forms of communication. First, is the dependence on a media channel to convey a message to a large audience. Second, the audience tends to be distant, diverse, and varies in size depending on the medium and message. Third, mass communication is most often profit driven, and feedback is limited. Fourth, because of the impersonal nature of mass communication, participants are not equally present during the process.

Mass communication continues to become more integrated into our lives at an increasingly rapid pace. This “metamorphosis” is representative by the convergence occurring (Fidler) between ourselves and technology, where we are not as distanced from mass communication as in the past. Increasingly, we have more opportunities to use mediated communication to fulfill interpersonal and social needs. O’Sullivan refers to this new use of mass communication to foster our personal lives as “**masspersonal communication**” where (a) *traditional mass communication channels are used for interpersonal communication*, (b) *traditionally interpersonal communication channels are used for mass communication*, and (c) *traditional mass communication and traditional interpersonal communication occur simultaneously*.” Over time, more and more overlap occurs. “Innovations in communication technologies have begun to make the barriers between mass and interpersonal communication theory more permeable than ever” (O’Sullivan). Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Vine, Snapchat, and Instagram are great examples of new mass communication platforms we use to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

Perhaps we are turning into a “global village” through our interdependence with mass communication. Suddenly, “across the ocean” has become “around the corner.” McLuhan predicted this would happen because of mass communication’s ability to unify people around the globe. Are you a player in what Hagermas calls the “public sphere” that mass communication creates by posting information about yourself on public sites? If so, be careful about what you post about yourself, or allow others to “tag” you in, as many employers are searching for your online presence, both past and present, to look into their personal lives before making decisions about hiring. As we continue our discussion of mass communication we want to note that mass communication does not include every communication technology. As our definition states, mass communication is communication that potentially reaches large audiences. We will deal with other communication technologies in another chapter.

## Evolution of Mass Communication

Societies have long had a desire to find effective ways to report environmental dangers and opportunities; circulate opinions, facts, and ideas; pass along knowledge, heritage, and lore; communicate expectations to new members; entertain in an expansive manner; and broaden commerce and trade (Schramm). The primary challenge has been to find ways to communicate messages to as many people as possible. Our need-to-know prompted innovative ways to get messages to the masses.

### **Mass Communication Study Then**

*In 1949, Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, and Fred D. Sheffield wrote the book *Experiments on Mass Communication*. They looked at two kinds of films the Army used to train soldiers. First, they examined orientation and training films such as the "Why We Fight" that were intended to teach facts to the soldiers, as well as generate a positive response from them for going to war. The studies determined that significant learning did take place by the soldiers from the films, but primarily with factual items. The Army was disappointed with the results that showed that the orientation films did not do an effective job in generating the kind of positive responses they desired from the soldiers. Imagine, people were not excited about going to war.*

Before writing, humans relied on oral traditions to pass on information. "It was only in the 1920s-according to the Oxford English Dictionary-that people began to speak of 'the media' and a generation later, in the 1950s, of a 'communication revolution', but a concern with the means of communication is very much older than that" (Briggs & Burke 1). Oral and written communication played a major role in ancient cultures. These oral cultures used stories to document the past and impart cultural standards, traditions, and knowledge. With the development of alphabets around the world over 5000 years ago, written language with ideogrammatic (picture-based) alphabets like hieroglyphics started to change how cultures communicated.

Still, written communication remained ambiguous and did not reach the masses until the Greeks and Romans resolved this by establishing a syllable alphabet

representing sounds. But, without something to write on, written language was inefficient. Eventually, paper making processes were perfected in China, which spread throughout Europe via trade routes (Baran). Mass communication was not quick, but it was far-reaching (Briggs & Burke). This forever altered how cultures saved and transmitted cultural knowledge and values. Any political or social movement throughout the ages can be traced to the development and impact of the printing press and movable metal type (Steinberg). With his technique, Guttenberg could print more than a single page of specific text. By making written communication more available to larger numbers of people, mass printing became responsible for giving voice to the masses and making information available to common folks (McLuhan & Fiore). McLuhan argued that Gutenberg's evolution of the printing press as a form of mass communication had profound and lasting effects on culture, perhaps the most significant invention in human history.

With the transition to the industrial age in the 18th century, large populations headed to urban areas, creating mass audiences of all economic classes seeking information and entertainment. Printing technology was at the heart of modernization which led to magazines, newspapers, the telegraph, and the telephone. At the turn of the century (1900), pioneers like Thomas Edison, Theodore Puskas, and Nikola Tesla literally electrified the world and mass communication. With the addition of motion pictures and radio in the early 1900s, and television in the 40s and 50s, the world increasingly embraced the foundations of today's mass communication. In the 1970s cable started challenging over-the-air broadcasting and traditional program distribution making the United States a wired nation. In 2014, there was an estimated 116.3 million homes in America that own a TV (Nielsen, 2014 Advance National TV Household Universe Estimate). While traditionally these televisions would display only the programs that are chosen to be broadcast by cable providers, more and more households have chosen to become more conscious media consumers and actively choose what they watch through alternative viewing options like streaming video. Today, smart T.V.'s and streaming devices have taken over the market and they are expected to be in 43% of households by 2016. These new forms of broadcasting have created a digital revolution. Thanks to Netflix and other

streaming services we are no longer subjected to advertisements during our shows. Similarly, streaming services like Hulu provide the most recent episodes as they appear on cable that viewers can watch any time. These services provide instant access to entire seasons of shows (which can result in binge watching).

The Information Age eventually began to replace the ideals of the industrial age. In 1983 Time Magazine named the PC the first "Machine of the Year." Just over a decade later, PCs outsold televisions. Then, in 2006, Time Magazine named "you" as the person of the year for your use of technology to broaden communication. "You" took advantage of changes in global media. Chances are that you, your friends, and family spend hours engaged in data-mediated communication such as emailing, texting, or participating in various form of social media. Romero points out that, "The Net has transformed the way we work, the way we get in contact with others, our access to information, our levels of privacy and indeed notions as basic and deeply rooted in our culture as those of time and space" (88). Social media has also had a large impact in social movements across the globe in recent years by providing the average person with the tools to reach wide audiences around the world for the first time history.

If you're reading this for a college class, you may have grown up in a time when free wifi, apps, alternative news sources, Facebook, Twitter and other social media have become a way of life for many. Can you imagine a world without communication technology? How would you find out the name of that song stuck in your head? If you wanted to spontaneously meet up with a friend for lunch, how would you let them know? Mass communication has become such an integral part of our daily lives, most people probably could not function through the day without it. What started as email quickly progressed to chat rooms, wikis and other interactive information sharing. From there, we saw the rise and fall of the social media, and legal investigations into how social media owners and advertisers use data and influence opinions. Though now just a shadow of the social media powerhouse it once was, Myspace paved the way for social media to enter the mainstream in forms of websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Snapchat, and Instagram. Facebook has evolved into a global social media site. It's available in 37 languages and has over 500 million users.

In this age of information overload, multiple news sources, high-speed connections, and social networking, life seems unimaginable without mass communication. Can you relate to your parents' or grandparents' stories about writing letters to friends, family, or their significant others? Today, when trying to connect with someone we have a variety of ways to contact them. We can call, text, email, Facebook message, tweet, and/or Snapchat, etc.; the options seem endless and ever-changing. Only a few years ago families were arguing over landline internet cable use and the constant disruptions from incoming phone calls. Now, we have the ability to browse the web anytime on smart phones. Since the printing press, mass communication has literally changed the ways we think and interact as humans. We take so much for granted as "new technologies are assimilated so rapidly in U.S. culture that historic perspectives are often lost in the process" (Fidler 1). With all of this talk and research about mass communication, what functions does it serve for us?

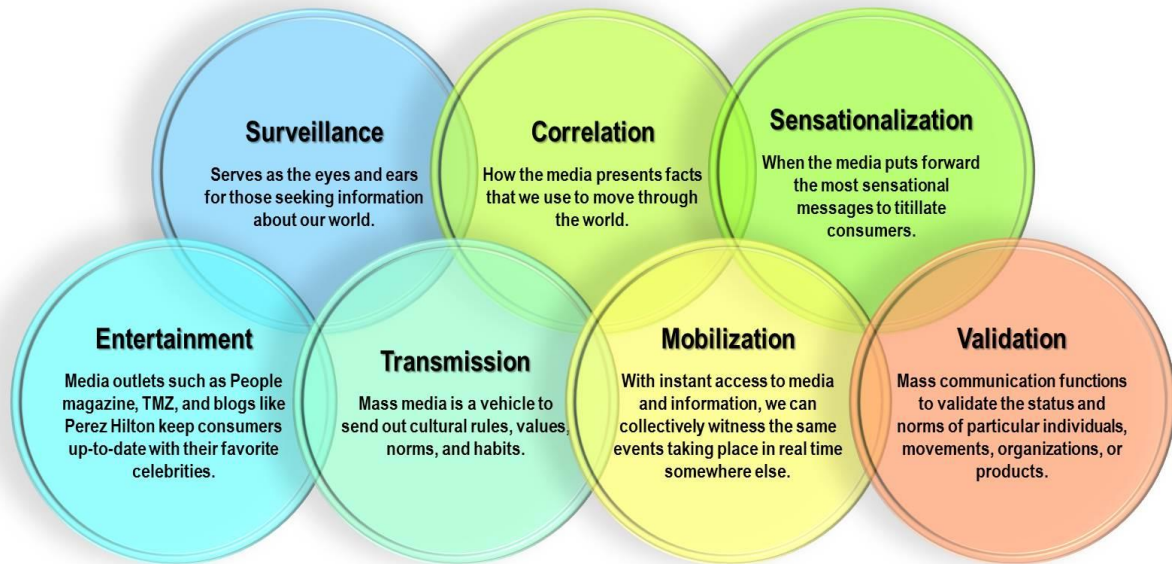
## Functions of Mass Communication

Mass communication doesn't exist for a single purpose. With its evolution, more and more uses have developed and the role it plays in our lives has increased greatly. Wright characterizes seven functions of mass communication that offer insight into its role in our lives.

- **Surveillance.** The first function of mass communication is to serve as the eyes and ears for those seeking information about the world. The internet, televisions, and newspapers are the main sources for finding out what's going around you. Society relies on mass communication for news and information about our daily lives, it reports the weather, current issues, the latest celebrity gossip and even start times for games. Do you remember the Boston Marathon Bombing that happened in 2013? How did you hear about it? Thanks to the internet and smart phones instant access to information is at the users fingertips. News apps have made mass communication surveillance instantly accessible by sending notifications to smartphones with the latest news.

- **Correlation.** Correlation addresses how the media presents facts that we use to move through the world. The information received through mass communication is not objective and without bias. People ironically state “it must be true if it’s on the internet.” However, we don’t think that in generations past people must have without a doubt stated it “has to be true” because it was on the radio. This statement begs the question, how credible are the media? Can we consume media without questioning motive and agenda? Someone selects, arranges, interprets, edits, and critiques the information used in the media. If you ask anyone who works for a major reality TV show if what we see is a fair representation of what really happens, the person would probably tell you “no.”
- **Sensationalization.** There is an old saying in the news industry “if it bleeds, it leads,” which highlights the idea of sensationalization. Sensationalization is when the media puts forward the most sensational messages to titillate consumers. Elliot observes, “Media managers think in terms of consumers rather than citizens. Good journalism sells, but unfortunately, bad journalism sells as well. And, bad journalism-stories that simply repeat government claims or that reinforce what the public wants to hear instead of offering independent reporting -is cheaper and easier to produce” (35).
- **Entertainment.** Media outlets such as People Magazine, TMZ, and entertainment blogs such as Perez Hilton keep us up to date on the daily comings and goings of our favorite celebrities. We use technology to watch sports, go to the movies, play video games, watch YouTube videos, and listen to iPods on a daily basis. Most mass communication simultaneously entertains and informs. People often turn to media during our leisure time to provide an escape from boredom and relief from the predictability of our everyday lives. We rely on media to take us places we could not afford to go or imagine, acquaints us with bits of culture, and make us laugh, think or cry. Entertainment can have the secondary effect of providing companionship and/or catharsis through the media we consume.
- **Transmission.** Mass media is a vehicle to transmit cultural norms, values, rules, and habits. Consider how you learned about what’s fashionable in clothes or music. Mass media plays a significant role in the socialization process. We look for role models to display appropriate cultural norms, but all too often, not recognizing their inappropriate or stereotypical behavior. Mainstream society starts shopping, dressing, smelling, walking, and talking like the person in the music video, commercial, or movies. Why would soft drink companies pay Kim Kardashian or Taylor Swift millions of dollars to sell their products? Have you ever bought a pair of shoes or changed your hairstyle because of something you encountered in the media? Obviously, culture, age, type of media, and other cultural variables factor into how mass communication influences how we learn and perceive our culture.
- **Mobilization.** Mass communication functions to mobilize people during times of crisis (McQuail, 1994). Think back to the Boston Marathon Bombing. Regardless of your association to the incident, Americans felt the attack as a nation and people followed the news until they found the perpetrators. With instant access to media and information, we can collectively witness the same events taking place in real time somewhere else, thus mobilizing a large population of people around a particular event. The online community Reddit.com is a key example of the internet’s proactivity. While the FBI was investigating the bombing, the Reddit community was posting witness’s photos and trying to help identify the culprits. People felt they were making a difference.
- **Validation.** Mass communication functions to validate the status and norms of particular individuals, movements, organizations, or products. The validation of particular people or groups serves to enforce social norms (Lazarsfeld & Merton). If you think about most television dramas and sitcoms, who are the primary characters? What gender and ethnicity are the majority of the stars? What gender and ethnicity are those that play criminals or those considered abnormal? The media validates particular cultural norms while diminishing differences and variations from those norms. A great deal of criticism focuses on how certain groups are promoted, and others marginalized by how they are portrayed in mass media.





Given the power of the various functions of mass communication, we need to be reflective about its presence in our lives (McLuhan & Fiore). We will now turn our attention to the study of mass communication by looking at what mass communication scholars study, and how they study it.

## The Study of Mass Communication

Continuing with the theme of this book, studying the role of mass communication heightens our awareness, helping us become media literate and strengthen our “ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages” (Baran 374). Look around you. Mass communication’s influence in contemporary society is pervasive, as we are all interlaced with it in our daily lives.



## Mass Communication and Popular Culture

**Culture** is comprised of *shared behaviors, values, beliefs, and attitudes that are learned through socialization*. As Brummett explains, “**popular culture** are those *systems or artifacts that most people share or know about*”(27). Using Brummett’s ideas, in order for mass communication to be popular all forms do not have to be consumed or

used by everyone. Instead, its place in culture is so pervasive that we at least have some familiarity with it. You may not watch the shows like *The Walking Dead*, *Big Bang Theory*, or *Modern Family*, but chances are you know something about them.

In contrast to popular culture, **high culture** consists of those *media that are generally not produced for the masses, require a certain knowledge base, and typically require an investment of time and money to experience them*. Examples of high culture include opera, poetry, theater, classical music, and the arts. While we generally do not use the term low culture, “Pop culture refers to mass-mediated kinds of ‘low’ art such as television commercials, television programs, most films, genre works of literature, and popular music” (Berger 118).

### Case In Point

*In 2002, a general manager at CNN Headline News instructed writers to insert slang words like “fly” (a sexually attractive person) into their televised graphics to resonate with younger viewers (Gordon; Sanders). Irvine points out that advertisers have been doing this for years. Abbreviations to speed up writing such as “lol” (laugh out loud) from chat rooms and e-mail are now becoming popular in daily conversation, and are even included in cell phone commercials advertising text messaging plans. Also, as new television genres replaced older ones, shows like “Survivor,” “Dancing with the Stars” and “American Idol” demonstrated that viewers like watching people in “real” situations. Does media shape our culture or does our culture shape media? Which one reflects the other, or is it possible to tell which one came first? These questions point to the importance of, and need for, media theories to provide the answers.*

Keep in mind that popular culture **does not necessarily mean poor quality**. Popular is not always bad and is often relative to the times. For example, think about baby boomers. Their parents said rock-n-roll music was going to ruin their generation. However, today that very same music is considered classic. In the 1950’s it was said that comic books would corrupt children, and jazz was sinful. It seems like every generation has the opinion that the current pop culture of the time will destroy the moral fiber of young people. But it’s often the case that those cultural references become our most revered and loved cultural icons of the time period. Regardless of how mass communication is perceived, it implants words, behaviors, trends, icons, and patterns of behaviors that show up in our culture. Or, as some ask, is it the other way around?

Mass communication influences all aspects of society, including the language we use (Spitulnik). For example, in the 1980’s, Wendy’s aired the popular television commercial “where’s the beef?” In the 1990s, Jerry

Seinfeld’s television show got us saying, “yada, yada, yada.” Saturday Night Live popularized the phrase, “I need more cow bell.” And *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* coined the term “phone a friend.” It is common for us to personalize words or phrases, especially if they’re funny, and integrate them into our lives relative to our social contexts. The Seattle Times News Service reported that the 2003 version of the Oxford Dictionary of English now contains the catch phrase made famous by the HBO show *The Sopranos* – “bada bing” meaning an exclamation to emphasize that something will effortlessly and predictably happen. This dictionary now contains words implanted by popular culture such as “counterterrorism” and “bootylicious.” Certain words become a part of our shared understanding through media exposure. Think about other acronyms and language that are now commonplace that were not just a few years ago: iPhone, Instagram, selfie, hashtag, Google and Skype (as verbs), sexting, etc.

## Grounding Theories of Mass Communication

Almost forty years ago Osmo Wiio argued that mass communication does not accurately portray reality. Interesting that all this time later we now have a large number of “reality tv” shows that continue to blur the lines of reality and fiction. Are you always able to tell the difference between fiction and reality in mass communication? Most people tend to rationalize that others are more affected by mass communication than they are (Paul, Salwen, & Dupagne). However, we are all susceptible to the influence of mass communication.

As we discussed in Chapter 5, theories are our best representations of the world around us. “Mass communication theories are explanations and predictions of social phenomena that attempt to relate mass communication to various



aspects of our personal and cultural lives or social systems” (Baran 374). We need to be discerning as we examine mass communication (Baran). “The beginning of the television age in the 1950s brought in visual communication as well as stimulated the rise of an interdisciplinary theory of the media. Contributions were made from economics, history, literature, art, political science, psychology, sociology and anthropology, and led to the emergence of academic departments of communication and cultural studies” (Briggs & Burke 2). Mass communication theories explore explanations for how we interact with mass communication, its role in our lives, and the effects it has on us. Let’s look at five fundamental theories of mass communication: 1) *the magic bullet theory*, 2) *two-step flow theory*, 3) *multi-step flow theory*, 4) *uses and gratification theory*, and 5) *cultivation theory*.

- Magic Bullet Theory.** The magic bullet theory (also called the hypodermic needle theory) suggests that *mass communication is like a gun firing bullets of information at a passive audience*. “Communication was seen as a magic bullet that transferred ideas or feelings or knowledge or motivations almost automatically from one mind to another” (Schramm 8). This theory has been largely discredited by academics because of its suggestion that all members of an audience interpret messages in the same way, and are largely passive receptors of messages. This theory does not take into account intervening cultural and demographic variables such as age, ethnicity, gender, personality, or education that cause us to react differently to the media messages we encounter. However, many people hold the assumption that media, like television news outlets, simply release information that doesn’t encourage audience engagement and critical thinking. Rather than give a story with an unbiased message that would allow a consumer create an opinion for themselves, media news outlets present stories to audiences that are attractive to them. Those who believe reality television shows actually portray reality hold some assumptions of the magic bullet theory.
- Two-Step Flow Theory.** After World War II, researchers began noticing that not all audiences react in the same ways to mass communication. Media had less power and relatively less affect than previously assumed (Klapper). The **two-step flow theory** suggests that mass communication messages do not move directly from a sender to the receiver (Katz & Lazarsfeld). Instead, *a small group of people, gatekeepers, screen media messages, reshape these messages, and control their transmission to the masses*. Opinion leaders initially consume “media content on topics of particular interest to them” and make sense of it based upon their own values and beliefs (Baran). In the second step, the opinion leaders filter and interpret the messages before they pass them along to individuals with shared ideologies who have less contact with the media, opinion followers. An example of this theory occurs during political campaigns. Research has shown that during an election, media influence your voting preferences (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet) through the information they choose to show about a candidate. More recent research shows social media “shares” may do the same thing. This research can still be applied to current political campaigns. Pope Francis has over 4 million followers on twitter and is one of the most re-tweeted social leaders. He uses social media to engage and influence his followers about what’s going on in the world. Also, President Obama’s use of social media is highly credited as a key factor in the 2008 election. Conservatives often argue that they are marginalized by the “liberal media,” while liberals argue that they are marginalized because wealthy conservatives own and control the media. Either way, research reveals that media dependency becomes increasingly important for the public especially during political campaigns (Jeffries).

**Mass Communication Study Now**

*One of the things that has occurred in mass communication during the Iraq war is the absence of images and coverage of American soldiers killed in action. The American government has asked that the media refrain from using these images in their publications. As we have talked about how individuals now have the ability to engage in mass communication, Paul Mcleary (2008) wrote an article for the Columbia Journalism Review entitled “Blogging the Long War.” In it, he examines the rise of independent reporters using blogs to report events occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan that people may not be able to see in mainstream media. As a result of access to outlets like blogs, individuals, such as soldiers can do their own reporting, and others are able to access alternative sources of information. How do you think these new outlets impact our world view?*

- **Multi-step Flow Theory.** This theory suggests that *there is a reciprocal nature of sharing information and influencing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors* (Troidahl; Troidahl & Van Dam). The idea is that opinion leaders might create media messages, but opinion followers might be able to sway opinion leaders. Thus, the relationship to media becomes much more complex. Some believe that the role of the opinion leader in our changing culture is diminishing (Baran; Kang) particularly with the ability for average people to reach potentially millions of people through social media. You've likely heard the term "going viral" which is something that could not have happened even ten-fifteen years ago. This mediated diffusion debunks the notion of an all-powerful media but still recognizes that media have some effect on the audience.

- **Uses and Gratification Theory.** The uses and gratification theory suggests that *audience members actively pursue particular media to satisfy their own needs.* "Researchers focus their attention, then, on how audiences use the media rather than how the media affect audiences" (Berger 127). The reciprocal nature of the mass communication process no longer sees the media user as an inactive, unknowing participant but as an active, sense-making participant that chooses content and makes informed media choices. We tend to avoid media that do not agree with our values, attitudes, beliefs, or pocketbooks. Schramm argued that we make media choices by determining how gratified we will be from consuming a particular media. Is it easier for you to read a newspaper or would you rather watch television or listen to the radio? Even with all the information on the internet, there are still some people who consider it too time consuming and complex. Yet, many of our students do not have television sets, but instead watch all television, movies, and videos online. Streaming shows online helps us avoid commercials and media content in which we choose not to participate. Netflix, for example, requires a monthly fee in order for you to be commercial free during your shows, but usually you have to wait a season to watch shows. Whereas, Hulu charges under \$5 for their services and share 2-5 commercials per episode, but you can watch the shows during the original season they are aired. These new ways of watching television have allowed the consumer to make active choices about what media the use and consume.

**Mass Communication Study and You**

*Do you do most of your research using search engines like google or yahoo? There had been an assumption that today's younger generation is the most web-literate. However, a study carried out by the CIBER research team at the University College London states today's youth "rely heavily on search engines, view rather than read and do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the web." The same study showed that people of all ages who use the internet have a low tolerance for any delay in obtaining information. These researchers called on libraries and educational institutions to keep up with the digital age in order to provide people with quick access to information. They also stress the importance of having good research skills, rather than doing quick and simple google searches, without thinking critically about the information and its sources. Does your campus require any sort of "information literacy" training for you to graduate?*

~ The British Library

- **Cultivation Theory.** Cultivation theory *questions how active we actually are when we consume mass communication.* For example, the average American views between three and five hours of television a day for an average of 21 hours per week (Hinckly). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, by age 18, the average American child will have watched 200,000 acts of violence on television. This statistic does not even take into account the violence a child has access through YouTube videos, Instagram, Facebook, music videos or any other media distribution. When violence is shown on television, rarely are the negative consequences of it acknowledged — 47% of victims show no evidence of harm and 73% of perpetrators were not held accountable for their violent actions (Huston et al.). Also, how many advertisements do you see? Are bottles, and products placed on a set or worn by a character considered advertising?

What kind of impact does all of this have? Is it possible to tell when the average viewer becomes desensitized to violent content, or does it serve as an outlet for normal aggression? Why doesn't all violent content affect every

viewer in the same manner? Does too much consumption of violent media cause violent behavior from viewers? People who consume a lot of media see the world as a more violent and scary place because of the high levels of violence they see (Gerbner)

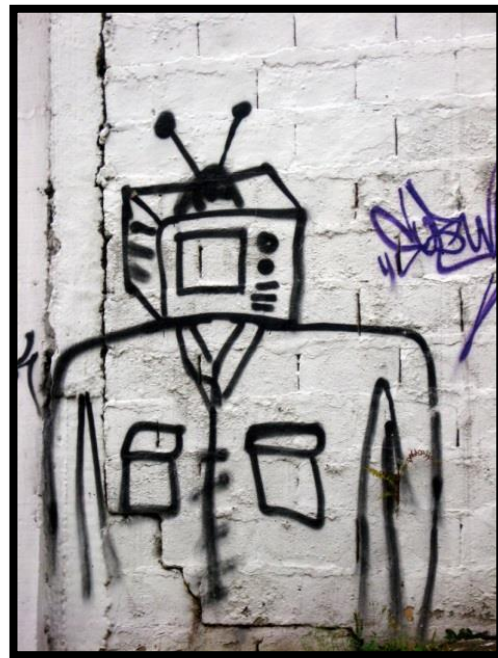
The theory has been extended to address the more general influences of media on human social life and personal beliefs (Lowery; DeFleur). Media present cultural realities such as fear of victimization (Sparks & Ogles), body image, promiscuity, religion, families, attitudes toward racism (Allen & Hatchett), sex roles, and drug use. Kilbourne states, "Advertising doesn't cause eating problems, of course, any more than it causes alcoholism. [However,] Advertising does promote abusive and abnormal attitudes about eating, drinking, and thinness" (261). Gerbner developed the three B's which state that media **blurs** people's traditional distinctions of reality, **blends** people's realities into one common cultural mainstream, and **bends** the mainstream to fit its institutional interests and the interests of its sponsors.

Mass communication theories are outlined into three categories: (1) theories about culture and society, (2) theories of influence and persuasion and (3) media use theories (Littlejohn and Foss). Understanding a few of the theories on mass communication, let's look at some skills that will help you become a better and more critical consumer of mass communication.

## Media Literacy

Studying how we use and consume mass communication allows us to scrutinize the conflicts, contradictions, problems, or even positive outcomes in our use of mass communication. With so much to learn about mass communication, how informed are you? Our consciousness of our media consumption is vital to understanding its effects on us as members of society. **Media literacy** is *our awareness regarding our mediated environment or consumption of mass communication. It is our ability to responsibly comprehend, access, and use mass communication in our personal and professional lives.* Potter states that we should maintain cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and moral awareness as we interact with media. Baran suggests a number of skills we can develop in order to be media literate.

- **Understand and respect the power of mass communication messages.** An important skill for media literacy is to acknowledge just how dominant mass communication is in our lives and around the globe. Through mass communication, media shape, entertain, inform, represent, reflect, create, move, educate, and affect our behaviors, attitudes, values, and habits in direct and indirect ways. Virtually everyone in the world has been touched in some way by mass communication, and has made personal and professional decisions largely based on representations of reality portrayed through mass communication. We must understand and respect the power media have in our lives and understand how we make sense of certain meanings.



- **Understand content by paying attention and filtering out noise.** As we learned in Chapter 1, anything that hinders communication is noise. Much of the noise in mass communication originates with our consumption behaviors. How often do you do something other than pay complete attention to the media that you're accessing? Do you listen to the radio while you drive, watch television while you eat, or text message a friend while you're in class? When it comes to mass communication we tend to multitask, an act that acts as noise and impacts the quality of the messages and our understanding of their meanings. We often turn ourselves into passive consumers, not really paying attention to the messages we receive as we perform other tasks while consuming media.
- **Understand emotional versus reasoned reactions to mass communication content in order to act accordingly.** A great deal of mass communication content is intended to touch us on an emotional level. Therefore, it's important to understand our emotional reactions to mass communication. Advertising often appeals to our emotions in order to sell products (Jhally). "Sex sells" is an old advertising adage, but one that highlights how often we make decisions based on emotional reactions, versus reasoned actions. Glance through magazines like Maxim or Glamour and you'll quickly realize how the emotions associated with sex are used to sell products of all kinds. Reasoned actions require us to think critically about the mass communication we consume before we come to conclusions simply based on our emotional responses.
- **Develop heightened expectations of mass communication content.** Would you consider yourself an informed consumer of mass communication? Do you expect a lot from mass communication? You may like a mystery novel because it's "fun," or a movie might take your mind off of reality for a few hours. However, Baran challenges us to require more from the media we consume. "When we expect little from the content before us, we tend to give meaning making little effort and attention" (57). It depends upon you what you're willing to accept as quality. Some people may watch fewer and fewer mainstream movies because they think the current movies in theaters are low culture or are aimed at less educated audiences. They may begin to look for more foreign films, independent films, and documentaries rather than go to see the popular movies released by Hollywood. We've even seen a backlash against television programming in general. With the rise of services like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon

### Case In Point

#### *The Tao of Media Literacy*

*How do media affect us? Are we media literate? Werner Heisenberg in *The Physicist's Conception of Nature* relates a timeless, allegorical story about the role of technology in our lives and questions if our interactions are mindful or thoughtless in regards to change. In Heisenberg's analogy, the wise old, Chinese sage warns us about the delicate balance between humans, nature, and technology.*

*In this connection it has often been said that the far-reaching changes in our environment and in our way of life wrought by this technical age have also changed dangerously our ways of thinking, and that here lie the roots of the crises, which have shaken our times and which, for instance, are also expressed in modern art. True, this objection's much older than modern technology and science, the use of implements going back to our earliest beginnings. Thus, two and a half thousand years ago, the Chinese sage Chuang-Tzu spoke of the danger of the machine when he said: As Tzu-Gung was [traveling] through the regions north of the river Han, he saw an old man working in his vegetable garden. He had dug an irrigation ditch. The man would descend into the well, fetch up a vessel of water in his arms and pour it out into the ditch. While his efforts were tremendous the results appeared to be very [meager]. Tzu-Gung said, "There is a way whereby you can irrigate a hundred ditches in one day, and whereby you can do much with little effort. Would you not like to hear of it?" Then the gardener stood up, looked at him and said, "And what would that be?" Tzu-Gung replied, "You take a wooden lever, weighted at the back and light in front. In this way you can bring up water so quickly that it just gushes out. This is called a draw-well." Then anger rose up on the old man's face, and he said, "I have heard my teacher say that whoever uses machines does all his work like a machine. He who does his work like a machine grows a heart like a machine, and he who carries the heart of a machine in his breast loses his simplicity. He who has lost his simplicity becomes unsure in the strivings of his soul. Uncertainty in the strivings of the soul is something which does not agree with honest sense. It is not that I do not know of such things: I am ashamed to use them."*



On-Demand, many media consumers have chosen to become what's known as "cord cutters" and cancel their cable subscriptions. These new services often offer popular TV shows and sometimes even the most current episodes available to watch at your own leisure. Some people have decided to not trust any media. How does that work in modern society where we need information?

- **Understand genre conventions and recognize when they are being mixed.** All media have their own unique characteristics or "certain distinctive, standardized style elements" that mark them as a category or genre (Baran 57). We expect certain things from different forms of mass communication. Most of us believe, for example, that we are able to tell the difference between news and entertainment. But, are we? Television news shows often recreate parts of a story to fill in missing video of an event. Do you always catch the "re-enactment" disclaimer? Shows such as *The Daily Show* or *Last Week Tonight* effectively blur the lines between comedy and news, and both became recognized as credible sources for news information. Even eighty years ago, Walter Lippmann recognized that media are so invasive in our lives that we might have difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is manipulated by the media. The "reality TV" genre is now blurring these lines even more.
- **Think critically about mass communication messages, no matter how credible their source.** It is essential that we critically consider the source of all mass communication messages. No matter how credible a media source, we can't always believe everything we see or hear because all mass communication is motivated by political, profit, or personal factors. Publicists, editors, and publishers present the information from their perspective – informed by their experiences and agendas. Even if the motive is pure or the spin is minimal, we tend to selectively interpret meanings based on our own lived experiences. Audiences do not always hold similar perceptions regarding mediated messages.
- **Understand the internal language of mass communication to understand its effects, no matter how complex.** This skill requires us to develop sensitivity to what is going on in the media. This doesn't just refer to whether you can program a DVR or surf the internet. This means being familiar with the intent or motivation behind the action or message. "Each medium has its own specific internal language. This language is expressed in production values – the choice of lighting, editing, special effects, music, camera angle, location on the page, and size and placement of headline. To be able to read a media text, you must understand its language" (Baran 58). What effect do these have on your interpretive or sense making abilities? Most news coverage of the Iraq war included background symbols of American flags, eagles, as well as words like "Freedom," and "Liberation." What is the impact of using these symbols in "objective" coverage of something like war? Shows like *Scandal* makes editorial choices to glamorize and demoralize politics while making it appear provocatively thrilling. On the surface, we might not realize the amount of effort that goes into dealing with political scandals, but such shows shed a light on these unspoken issues.

## SUMMARY

Societies have always needed effective and efficient means to transmit information. Mass communication is the outgrowth of this need. If you remember our definition of mass communication as the public transfer of messages through media or technology driven channels to a large number of recipients, you can easily identify the multiple forms of mass communication you rely on in your personal, academic, and professional lives. These encompass print, auditory, visual, interactive media, and social media forms. A relatively recent mass communication phenomenon known as mass-personal communication combines mass communication channels with interpersonal communication and relationships, where individuals are now gaining access to technology that allows them to reach large audiences.

While mass communication is vital to the success of social movements and political participation it has seven basic functions. The first of which is surveillance, or the "watch dog" role. Correlation occurs when an audience receives

facts and usable information from mass media sources. When the most outrageous or fantastic stories are presented, we are witnessing the sensationalization function of media. Needing an escape from routines or stress we turn to media for its entertainment value. As a cultural institution, mass communication transmits cultural values, norms and behaviors, mobilizes audiences, and validates dominant cultural values.

As media technology has evolved, so have the scholarly theories for understanding them. The five theories we discussed are different primarily in the degree of passivity versus activity they grant the audience. The magic-bullet theory assumes a passive audience while the two-step-flow and multi-step-flow theories suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between the audience and the message. The theory of uses and gratification suggests that audiences pick and choose media to satisfy their individual needs. Gerbner's cultivation theory takes a long-term perspective by suggesting that media is one of many cultural institutions responsible for shaping or cultivating attitudes.

Because of mass communication's role in our lives, **media literacy skills are vital** for any responsible consumer and citizen. Specifically, we can become media literate by understanding and respecting the power of mass communication messages, understanding media content by paying attention, understanding emotional versus reasoned responses to mass communication, developing heightened expectations of mass communication content, understanding genre conventions and recognizing when they're mixed, understanding the internal language of mass communication, and above all—thinking critically!

## KEY TERMS

- cold media
- correlation
- cultivation theory
- entertainment
- gatekeepers
- global village
- hot media
- magic bullet theory
- mass communication
- masspersonal communication
- media literacy
- mobilization
- multi-step flow theory
- opinion followers
- opinion leaders
- popular culture
- sensationalization
- surveillance
- youth
- transmission
- two-step flow theory
- uses and gratification theory
- validations

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# Chapter 6

## The Basics of Public Speaking

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Define public speaking, channel, feedback, noise, encode, decode, symbol, denotative, and connotative;
- Explain what distinguishes public speaking from other modes of communication;
- List the elements of the communication process;
- Explain the origins of anxiety in public speaking;
- Apply some strategies for dealing with personal anxiety about public speaking;
- Understand why public speaking is part of the curriculum at this college and important in personal and profession life.

### What is Public Speaking?

What is your mental picture when you think about “public speaking?” The President of the United States delivering an inaugural address? A sales representative seeking to persuade clients in a board room? Your minister, priest, or rabbi presenting a sermon at a worship service? Your professor lecturing? A dramatic courtroom scene, probably from *Law & Order*? Politicians debating before an election?

All of these and more are instances of public speaking. Be assured that public speaking takes many forms every day in our country and across the world. Now let’s get personal: Do you see yourself as a public speaker? And when you do, do you see yourself as confident, prepared, and effective, or nervous, unsure of what to say, and feeling as if you are failing to get your message across?

As you have probably heard or read, polls indicate public speaking is one of the things Americans fear the most. As Jerry Seinfeld has said in his stand-up comedy routine,

*According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.*

While it is a stretch to think that most people fear death less than giving a short speech, aversion toward public speaking situations and tasks is common

Before we go any further, though, what do we mean by “public speaking?” The most obvious answer is “talking in front of a group of people.” For the purposes of this class and this book, public speaking is more formal than that. **Public speaking** is an organized, face-to-face, prepared, intentional (purposeful) attempt to inform, entertain, or persuade a group of people (usually five or more) through words, physical delivery, and (at times) visual or audio aids. In almost all cases, the speaker is the focus of attention for a specific amount of time. There still may be some back-and-forth interaction, such as questions and answers with the audience, but the speaker usually holds the responsibility to direct that interaction either during or after the prepared speech has concluded.

As Stephen A. Lucas (2015) has written, public speaking is an “enlarged conversation,” and as such it has some similarities to conversations but some major differences, too. As a conversation, it has elements of:

- awareness of and sensitivity toward your audience (in this case, more than one person);
- an exchange of explicit messages about content (facts, ideas, information) and less explicit ones about relationship (how you relate to one another, such as trust, liking, respect);
- a dependence on feedback to know if you are successful in being understood (usually nonverbal in public speaking, but still present);
- the fact that the communication is face-to-face rather than mediated (through a computer, telephone, mass media, or writing).

As an “enlarged conversation” public speaking needs to be more purposeful (to entertain, inform, or persuade); highly organized with certain formal elements (introduction and clear main points, for example); and usually dependent on resources outside of your personal experience (research to support your ideas).

Of course, the delivery would have to be “enlarged” or “projected” as well—louder, more fluid, and more energetic, depending on the size and type of room in which you are speaking—and you will be more conscious of the correctness and formality of your language. You might say, “That sucks” in a conversation but less likely to do in front of a large audience in certain situations. If you can keep in mind the basic principle that public speaking is formalized communication with an audience designed to achieve mutual understanding for mutual benefit (like a conversation), rather than a “performance,” you will be able to relate to your audience on the human and personal level.

## **Anxiety and Public Speaking**

Why are so many people afraid of public speaking? This is a complex question, and the answer is tied to many personal and psychological factors such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, past experience, training, culture, and context. The term “glossophobia,” combining the two Greek words for “tongue” and “fear or dread,” has been coined to refer to

. . . a severe fear of public speaking. People who suffer from glossophobia tend to freeze in front of any audience, even a couple of people. They find their mouth dries up, their voice is weak and their body starts shaking. They may even sweat, go red and feel their heart thumping rapidly. (“Do You Suffer from Glossophobia?” 2015)

This fear may be in situations such as responding to a professor in class or having to interact with a stranger, not just giving formal speeches as this book is addressing.

For many people, fear of public speaking or being interviewed for a job does not rise to the level of a true “phobia” in psychological terms, which is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV as experiencing “significant and persistent fear when in the presence of, or anticipating the presence of, the object of fear, which may be an object, place or situation” (Grohol, 2013). They are just uncomfortable in public speaking situations and need strategies for addressing the task.

Scholars at the University of Wisconsin-Stout (“Public Speaking Anxiety,” 2015) explain that anxiety in public speaking can result from one of several misperceptions:

- All or nothing” thinking—a mindset that if your speech falls short of “perfection” (an unrealistic standard), then you are a failure as a public speaker;

- Overgeneralization—believing that a single event (such as failing at a task) is a universal or “always” event;

AND

- Fortune telling—the tendency to anticipate that things will turn out badly, no matter how much practice or rehearsal is done.

Likewise, many new college students operate under the false belief that intelligence and skill are “fixed.” In their minds, you are either smart or skilled in something, or you’re not. Some students apply this false belief to math and science subjects, saying things like “I’m just no good at math and I never will be,” or even worse, “I guess I am just not smart enough to be in college.” Unfortunately, as you can tell, these beliefs can sabotage someone’s college career. Also unfortunately, the same kind of false beliefs are applied to public speaking, and people conclude that because public speaking is hard, they are just not “natural” at it and have no inborn skill, and they give up.

Modern research by Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck (2007) and others shows that intelligence and related skills are “malleable,” meaning that they are open to change and growth. Understanding and accepting that your intelligence and skill in different areas is not fixed or “stuck,” but open to growth, will have a significant influence on your success in life. It will also help you see that just because learning a subject or task is hard does not mean you are not good at it. Obstacles and barriers that make learning hard are opportunities for growth, not “getting off places.”

So, we can see that anxiety in public speaking is related to more than just one situation. There are fears and false assumptions involved, and we’ll now spend time discussing two specific fears you may have: fear of failure and fear of rejection.

## **Fear of Failure**

This fear can result from several sources: real or perceived bad experiences involving public speaking in the past, lack of preparation, lack of knowledge about public speaking, not knowing the context, and uncertainty about one’s task as a public speaker (such as being thrown into a situation at the last minute).

It is not the goal of this book to belittle that fear. It is real and justified to some extent, because you might lack understanding of the public speaking task or lack good speaking experiences upon which to build. One of the goals and fringe benefits of this course is that you are not just going to learn about public speaking, but you are going to do it—at least four or five times—with a real audience. You will overcome some of your fears and feel that you have accomplished something of personal benefit.

## **Fear of Rejection of Self or Ideas**

This one is more serious in some respects. You may feel rejection because of fear of failure, or you may feel that the audience will reject your ideas, or worse, you as a person. Knowing how to approach the public speaking task and explain your ideas can help. However, you will also have to ask yourself deep and probing questions as to why you believe that your audience will reject you *because this fear is rooted in a belief*.

One of the core attitudes an effective and ethical public speaker must have is respect for and empathy with the audience. Your audience in this class is your peers who want to learn and want to get through the class successfully (just like you do). Your audience also includes your instructor who wants to see you succeed in the course as well. They want you to succeed if for no other reason than a good speech is much easier and pleasant to listen to than a poor one! Again, gaining practice in this class with a real, live audience can help you work through the roots of your fear of rejection.

Beyond dealing with the root fears that may cause you to have a “fright or flight” response when it comes to public speaking, there are some practical answers to dealing with fears about public speaking. Of course, fear responses can be reduced if you know how public speaking works, as you will see throughout this textbook. But there are some other strategies, and all of them have to do with preparation.

## **Mental Preparation**

If your neighbor’s house were on fire, getting to the phone to call the fire department would be your main concern. You would want to get the address right and express the urgency. That is admittedly an extreme example, but the point is about focus. To mentally prepare, you want to put your focus where it belongs, on the audience and the message. Mindfulness and full attention to the task are vital to successful public speaking. If you are concerned about a big exam or something personal going on in your life, your mind will be divided and add to your stress.

The main questions to ask yourself are “Why am I so anxiety-ridden about giving a presentation?” and “What is the worst that can happen?” For example, you probably won’t know most of your classmates at the beginning of the course, adding to your anxiety. However, very often we make situations far worse in our minds than they actually are, and we can lose perspective. One of the authors tells her student, “Some of you have been through childbirth and even through military service. That is much worse than public speaking!” Your instructor will probably try to help you get to know your classmates and minimize the “unknowns” that can cause you worry.

## **Physical Preparation**

The first step in physical preparation is adequate sleep and rest. You might be thinking such a thing is impossible in college, where sleep deprivation and late nights come with the territory. However, research shows the extreme effects a lifestyle of limited sleep can have, far beyond yawning or dozing off in class (Mitru, Millrood, & Mateika, 2002). As far as public speaking is concerned, your energy level and ability to be mindful will be affected by lack of sleep.

Secondly, you would be better off to eat something that is protein-based rather than processed sugar-based before speaking. In other words, cheese or peanut butter on whole grain toast, Greek yogurt, or eggs for breakfast rather than a donut and soft drink. Some traditionalists also discourage the drinking of milk because it is believed to stimulate mucus production, but this has not been scientifically proven (Lai & Kardos, 2013).

A third suggestion is to wear clothes that you know you look good in and are comfortable but also meet the context’s requirements (that is, your instructor may have a dress code for speech days). Especially, wear comfortable shoes that give you a firm base for your posture. Flip-flops and really high heels may not fit these categories.

A final suggestion for physical preparation is to utilize some stretching or relaxation techniques that will loosen your limbs or throat. Essentially, your emotions want you to run away but the social system says you must stay, so all that energy for running must go somewhere. The energy might go to your legs, hands, stomach, sweat glands, or skin, with undesirable physical consequences. Tightening and stretching your hands, arms, legs, and throat for a few seconds before speaking can help release some of the tension. Your instructor may be able to help you with these exercises, or you can find some on the Internet.

## **Contextual Preparation**

The more you can know about the venue where you will be speaking, the better. For this class, of course, it will be your classroom, but for other situations where you might experience “communication apprehension,” you should check out the space beforehand or get as much information as possible. For example, if you were required to give a

short talk for a job interview, you would want to know what the room will be like, if there is equipment for projection, how large the audience will be, and the seating arrangements. If possible, you will want to practice your presentation in a room that is similar to the actual space where you will deliver the talk.

The best advice for contextual preparation is to be on time, even early. If you have to rush in at the last minute, as so many students do, you will not be mindful, focused, or calm for the speech. Even more, if you are early, you can make sure equipment is working, and can converse with the audience as they enter. Professional speakers often do this to relax themselves, build credibility, and gain knowledge to adapt their presentations to the audience. Even if you don't want to "schmooze," you will be able to create a good first impression and thus enhance your credibility before the actual speech.

## Speech Preparation

Procrastination, like lack of sleep, seems to just be part of the college life. Sometimes we feel that we just don't get the best ideas until the last minute. Writing that essay for literature class at 3:00 a.m. just may work for you. However, when it comes to public speaking, there are some definite reasons you would not want to do that. First, of course, if you are finishing up your outline at 3:00 a.m. and have a 9:00 speech, you are going to be tired and unable to focus. Second, your instructor may require you to turn in your outline several days ahead of the speech date. However, the main reason is that public speaking requires active, oral, repeated practice before the actual delivery.

You do not want the first time that you say the words to be when you are in front of your audience. Practicing is the only way that you will feel confident, fluent, and in control of the words you speak. Practicing (and timing yourself) repeatedly is the only way that you will be assured that your speech meets the context's time limits, and speaking within the expected time limits is a cardinal rule of public speaking. You may think your speech is five minutes long but it may end up being ten minutes the first time you practice it—or two minutes!

Your practicing should be out loud, standing up, with shoes on, with someone to listen (other than your dog or cat), and with your visual aids. If you can record yourself and watch it, that is even better. The need for oral practice will be emphasized over and over in this book and probably by your instructor. As you progress as a speaker, you will always need to practice but perhaps not to the extent you do as a novice speaker.

Some concluding thoughts on good old "stage fright" (a term we prefer not to use in preference to "communication anxiety" or "apprehension"). As hard as it is to believe,

*YOU NEVER LOOK AS NERVOUS AS YOU FEEL*

You may feel that your anxiety is at level seventeen on a scale of one to ten, but the audience does not perceive it the same way. They may perceive it at a three or four or even less. That's not to say they won't see any signs of your anxiety and that you don't want to learn to control it, only that what you are feeling inside is not as visible as you might think. This principle relates back to focus. If you know you don't look as nervous as you feel, you can focus and be mindful of the message and audience rather than your own emotions.

Also, your anxiety will decrease throughout the class (Finn, Sawyer, & Schrodt, 2009). In her TED Talk, "Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are," Harvard Business School social psychologist Amy Cuddy discusses nonverbal communication and suggests that instead of "faking it until you make it," that you can, and should, "fake it until you become it," because research shows that our behavior affects our mindsets, not just the other way around. Therefore, the act of giving the speech and "getting through it" will help you gain confidence.

Final Note: If you are an audience member, you can help the speaker with his/her anxiety, at least a little bit. Mainly, be an engaged listener from beginning to end. You can imagine that a speaker is going to be more nervous if the

audience looks bored from the beginning. A speaker with less anxiety is going to do a better job and be more interesting. Of course, do not walk into class during your classmates' speeches, or get up and leave. In addition to being rude, it pulls their minds away from their message and distracts the audience. Your instructor will probably have a policy on this behavior, too, as well as a dress code and other expectations on speech days.

## **Getting Started in Public Speaking**

To finish this first chapter, let's close with some foundational principles about public speaking, which apply no matter the context, audience, topic, or purpose.

### **Timing is Everything**

We often hear this about acting or humor. In this case, it has to do with keeping within the time limit. As mentioned before, you can only know that you are within time limits by practicing and timing yourself; it shows preparation and forethought. More importantly, being on time (or early) for the presentation and within time limits shows respect for your audience.

### **Public Speaking Requires Muscle Memory**

If you have ever learned a new sport, especially in your teen or adult years, you know that you must consciously put your body through some training to get it used to the physical activity of the sport. An example is golf. A golf swing, unlike swinging a baseball bat, is not a natural movement and requires a great deal of practice, over and over, to get right. Pick up any golf magazine and there will be at least one article on "perfecting the swing." In fact, when done incorrectly, the swing can cause severe back and knee problems over time.

Public speaking is a physical activity as well. You are standing and sometimes moving around; your voice, eye contact, face, and hands are involved. You will expend physical energy, and after the speech you may be tired. Even more, your audience's understanding and acceptance of your message may depend somewhat on how energetic, controlled, and fluid your physical delivery. Your credibility as a speaker hinges to some extent on these matters.

### **Public Speaking Involves a Content and Relationship Dimension**

You may have heard the old saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." According to Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967), all human communication has two elements going at the same time: content and relationship. There are statements about ideas, facts, and information, and there are messages communicated about the relationship between the communication partners, past and present. Public speaking is not a good way to provide a lot of facts and data to your audience. In fact, there are limits to how much information you can pile on your audience before listening is too difficult for them. However, public speaking is a good way to make the information meaningful for your audience.

### **Emulation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery**

Learn from those who do public speaking well, but find what works best for you. Emulation is not imitation or copying someone; it is following a general model. Notice what other speakers do well in a speech and try to incorporate those strategies. An example is humor. Some of us excel at using humor, or some types of it. Some of us do not, or do not believe we do, no matter how hard we try. In that case, you may have to find other strengths to becoming an effective speaker. However, use of storytelling, such as through illustrations or narrative examples, should be part of your speaking. Stories are one of your most powerful tools as a speaker, and audiences are likely to remember anecdotes and narratives long after a speech's statistics are forgotten.



## Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Reliable personality inventories, such as the Myers Briggs or the Gallup StrengthsQuest tests, can be helpful in knowing your strengths and weaknesses. One such area is whether you are an extravert or introvert. Introverts (about 40% of the population) get their psychological energy from being alone while extraverts tend to get it from being around others. This is a very basic distinction and there is more to the two categories, but you can see how an extravert may have an advantage with public speaking. However, the extravert may be tempted not to prepare and practice as much because he or she has so much fun in front of an audience, while the introvert may overprepare but still feel uncomfortable. Your public speaking abilities will benefit from increased self-awareness about such characteristics (For an online self-inventory about introversion and extraversion, visit <http://www.quietrev.com/the-introvert-test/>).

## Remember the Power of Story

Stories and storytelling, in the form of anecdotes and narrative illustrations, are your most powerful tool as a public speaker. Your instructor may assign you to do a personal narrative speech, or require you to write an introduction or conclusion for one of your speeches that includes a story. This does not mean that other types of proof are unimportant and that you just want to tell stories in your speech, but human beings love stories and often will walk away from a speech moved by or remembering a powerful story or example more than anything.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has been designed to be informative but also serve as a bit of a pep talk. Many students face this course with trepidation, for various reasons. However, as studies have shown over the years, a certain amount of tension when preparing to speak in public can be good for motivation. A strong course in public speaking should be grounded in the communication research, the wisdom of those who have taught it over the last 2,000 years, and reflecting on your own experience.

John Dewey (1916), the twentieth century education scholar, is noted for saying, "Education does not come just from experience, but from reflecting on the experience." As you finish this chapter and look toward your first presentation in class, be sure to give yourself time after the experience to reflect, whether by talking to another person, journaling, or sitting quietly and thinking, about how the experience can benefit the next speech encounter. Doing so will get you on the road to becoming more confident in this endeavor of public speaking.

# Chapter 7

## Audience Analysis and Listening

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Define audience-centered, audience analysis, and demographic characteristics;
- List and explain the various demographic characteristics used to analyze an audience;
- Define the meanings of attitudes, beliefs, values, and needs;
- Diagram Maslow's hierarchy of needs and explain its usefulness to public speaking;
- Describe contextual factors that should be considered when preparing a speech;
- Describe typical barriers to listening in public speaking situations;
- Explain ways an individual can improve his/her listening when in an audience; and
- Apply what he/she knows about listening to improve personal preparation of a speech.

### The Importance of Audience Analysis

One of the advantages of studying public speaking and improving your own skills is that you become much more aware of what other speakers do. In one respect, we are able to look for ways to emulate what they do—for example, how they might seamlessly incorporate stories or examples into their speaking, or how they might use transitions to help audiences follow the speech's logic. In another respect, we become aware of how a speaker might use dramatic delivery or emotional appeals to hide a lack of facts or logic. A course in public speaking should include ways to improve one's listening to public speaking.

This chapter will look at the audience from both sides of the lectern, so to speak. First it will examine how a presenter can fully understand the audience, which will aid the speaker in constructing the approach and content of the speech. Secondly, this chapter will examine the public speaker as audience member and how to get the most out of a speech, even if the topic does not seem immediately interesting.

As previously discussed, we have Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson (1967) to thank for pointing out to us that communication always involves a content dimension and a relationship dimension. Nowhere does that become more important than when we look into what is commonly known as audience analysis. Their concept about content and relationship dimension will guide this chapter. You are not using the speech to dump a large amount of content on the audience; you are making that content important, meaningful, and applicable to them. Additionally, the way the audience perceives you and your connection to them—such as whether there is mutual trust and respect—will largely determine your success with the audience. The speaker must respect the audience as well as the audience trusting the speaker.

When we use the term **audience analysis**, we mean looking at the audience first by its demographic characteristics and then by their internal psychological traits. “Demo-” comes the Greek root word demos meaning “people,” and “-graphic” means description or drawing. **Demographic characteristics** describe the outward characteristics of the audience. This textbook will discuss ten of them below, although you might see longer or shorter lists in other

sources. Some of them are obvious and some not as much. But before we get into the specific demographic characteristics, let's look at three principles.

First, be careful not to stereotype on the basis of a demographic characteristics. **Stereotyping** is generalizing about a group of people and assuming that because a few persons in that group have a characteristic, all of them do. If someone were sitting near campus and saw two students drive by in pickup trucks and said, "All students at that college drive pickup trucks," that would be both stereotyping and the logical fallacy of hasty generalization (see Chapter 14). At the same time, one should not totalize about a person or group of persons. **Totalizing** is taking one characteristic of a group or person and making that the "totality" or sum total of what that person or group is. Totalizing often happens to persons with disabilities, for example; the disability is seen as the totality of that person, or all that person is about. This can be both harmful to the relationship and ineffective as a means of communicating. If a speaker before a group of professional women totalizes and concludes that "women's issues" are all they care about, or the speaker stereotypes and thinks that women in business are all like the ones he or she has known, the speaker will be less effective and possibly unethical.

Avoiding stereotyping and totalizing are important because you cannot assume everything about an audience based on just one demographic characteristic. Two or three might be important. The age of a group will be important in how they think about investing their money, but so will the socio-economic level, career or profession, and even where they live. Even their religious beliefs may come into it. A good speaker will be aware of more than one or two characteristics of the audience.

Second, in terms of thinking about demographic characteristics, not all of them are created equal, and not all of them are important in every situation. When parents come to a PTA meeting, they are concerned about their children and playing the important role of "parent," rather than being concerned about their profession. When senior citizens are thinking about how they will pay for their homes in retirement years, their ethnicity probably has less to do with it as much as their age and socioeconomic level.

Third, there are two ways to think about demographic characteristics: positively and negatively. In a positive sense, the demographic characteristics tell you what might motivate or interest the audience or even bind it together. In a negative sense, the demographic characteristic might tell you what subjects or approaches to avoid. Understanding your audience is not a game of defensive tic-tac-toe, but a mean of relating to them.

For example, a common example is given about audiences of the Roman Catholic faith. Speakers are warned not to "offend" them by talking about abortion, since official Roman Catholic teaching is against abortion. However, this analysis misses three points. First, even if most Roman Catholics take a pro-life position, they are aware of the issues and are adults who can listen and think about topics. Additionally, not all Roman Catholics agree with the official church stance, and it is a complex issue. Second, Roman Catholics are not the only people who hold views against abortion. Third, and most important, if all the speaker thinks about Roman Catholics is that they are *against* something, he or she might miss all the things the audience is *for* and what motivates them. In short, think about how the demographic characteristics inform what to talk about and how, not just what to avoid talking about.

There is one more point to be made about demographic characteristics before they are listed and explained. In a country of increasing diversity, demographic characteristics are dynamic. People change as the country changes. What was true about demographic characteristics—and even what was considered a demographic characteristic—has changed in the last fifty years. For example, the number of Internet users in 1980 was miniscule (mostly military personnel). Another change is that the percentage of the population living in the Great Lakes areas has dropped as the population has either aged or moved southward.

What follows is a listing of ten of the more common demographic characteristics that you might use in understanding your audience and shaping your speech to adapt to your audience.

## Age

The first demographic characteristic is age. In American culture, we have traditionally ascribed certain roles, behaviors, motivations, interests, and concerns to people of certain ages. Young people are concerned about career choices; people over 60 are concerned about retirement. People go to college from the age of 18 to about 24. Persons of 50 years old have raised their children and are “empty nesters. These neat categories still exist for many, but in some respects they seem outdated. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), 38% of college students are over 25 years old. Some women and men wait until their late thirties to have children, and thus at 50 have preteens in the house. More and more grandparents—middle and lower incomes—are raising grandchildren. Combining the longer lives Americans are living with the economic recession of 2008 and following, 62 is not a reasonable age for retirement for many.

Therefore, knowing that your audience is 18, 30, 55, or 70 is important, but it is just one of many factors. In your classroom audience, for example, you may find 30-year-old returning, nontraditional college students, young entrepreneurs, 17-year-old dual enrollment students, and veterans who have done three or four tours in the Middle East as well as 18-year-old traditional college students.

## Gender

The second demographic characteristic commonly listed is gender. This area is open to misunderstanding as much as any other. Despite stereotypes, not all women have fifty pairs of shoes with stiletto heels in their closets, and not all men love football. In almost all cases you will be speaking to a “mixed” audience of men and women, so you will have to keep both groups in mind. If you are speaking to a group of all men or all women and you are of the same gender as the audience, you might be able to use some appropriate common experiences to connect with the audience. However, if you are a woman speaking to an all-male audience or a man speaking to an all-female audience, those are situations in which to be aware of overall gender differences in communication.

According to Deborah Tannen (2007), a scholar of linguistics and a well-known author, men and women in the United States have divergent communication styles. She is quick to point out neither is all good or all bad, nor do they apply to every single person. The two communication styles are just different, and not recognizing the differences can cause problems, or “noise,” in communication. Although she normally applies these principles to family, marital, and work relationships, they can be applied to public speaking.

According to Tannen, women tend to communicate more inductively; they prefer to give lots of details and then move toward a conclusion. Women tend to be less direct, to ask more questions, to use “hedgies” and qualifiers (“it seems to me,” “I may be wrong, but . . .”) and to apologize more, often unnecessarily. This lack of direct communication does not sound the same to men as it does to women. To men it may seem that a female speaker is unsure or lacks confidence, whereas the female speaker is either doing it out of habit or because she thinks she sounds open-minded and diplomatic. Tannen calls women’s style of communication “rapport” style.

Male speakers, on the other hand, are more deductive and direct; they state their point, give limited details to back it up, and then move on. Men may be less inclined to ask questions and qualify what they say; they might not see any reason to add unnecessary fillers. Men also may tend toward basic facts, giving some the impression they are less emotional in their communication, which is a stereotype. Finally, men are socialized to “fix” things and may give advice to women when it is not really needed or wanted.

In some ways, these differences are traditional and some writers, especially women, are trying to help others avoid these patterns without losing the positive side of female or male communication differences. For example, books such as *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013) are meant to teach women to negotiate for better salaries and conditions and

avoid common communication behaviors that hurt their ability to negotiate. However, it is unlikely these general tendencies are going to disappear any time soon.

Therefore, if you are a woman speaking to an all-male audience, be direct without mimicking “male talk.” Avoid excessive detail and description; it will be seen as getting off topic. Do not follow the habit of starting sentences with “I don’t know if this is 100% correct, but...” or even worse, the habitual “I’m sorry, but . . .” If on the other hand you are a male speaking to a primarily female audience, realize that women want knowledge but not to have their problems fixed. Men also seem abrupt when talking to women, and much research supports the conclusion that men talk more than women in groups and interrupt more. So, male speakers should allow time for questions and work hard at listening.

Age and gender are the two main ways we categorize people: a teenaged boy, an elderly lady, a middle-aged man; a young mother. There are several other demographic characteristics, however.

## Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Race, ethnicity, and culture are often lumped together, but how these categories are talked about is controversial. We will consider them as one category here because of their interrelationship.

We might think in terms of a few racial groups in the world: Caucasian, African, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American. Each one of these has many ethnicities. Caucasian has ethnicities of Northern European, Arab, Indian (from India), Mediterranean, etc. Then each ethnicity has cultures. Mediterranean ethnicities include Greek, Italian, Spanish, etc., and then each of these has subcultures, and so on. It should be noted that many social scientists today reject the idea of race as a biological reality altogether and see it as a social construct. This means it is a view of humanity that has arisen over time and affects our thinking about others.

Unfortunately, dividing these categories and groups is not that easy, and these categories are almost always clouded by complicated political and personal concerns, which we do not have time or space to address here. Most audience will be **heterogeneous**, or a mixture of different types of people and demographic characteristics, as opposed to **homogeneous**, very similar in many characteristics (a group of single, 20-year-old female nursing students at your college). Therefore, be sensitive to your audience members’ identification with a culture. Anglos are often guilty of confusing Hispanic (a language category) with cultures (a more regional or historical category), and overlooking that Mexican is not Puerto Rican is not Cuban is not Colombian. In the same way for Caucasians, a Canadian is not an Australian is not an American is not a Scot, just because their last names, basic looks, and language seem almost the same (well, sort of!). “American” itself is a problematic term since “American” can refer to every country in the Western Hemisphere.

## Religion

Next is religion, an even more complicated demographic characteristic. Religion can be thought of as an affiliation and a commitment. According to polls, due to either family or choice, a majority of Americans (although the percentage is shrinking) have some kind of religious affiliation, identity, or connection. It may simply be where they were christened as an infant, but it is a connection – “I’m in that group.” About 23% of Americans are being called “nones” because they do not claim a formal religious affiliation (Pew Research, 2015).

On the other hand, commitment to a faith may exist outside of an affiliation to an established group, and someone who has an affiliation may develop his or her own variations of beliefs that do not match the established organization’s doctrines. Unless the audience is brought together because of common faith concerns or the group shares the same affiliation or commitment, religious faith may not be relevant to your topic and not a central factor in the audience analysis.

Religion, like ethnicity and culture, is an area where you should be conscious of the diversity of your audience. Not everyone worships in a “church,” and not everyone attends a house of worship on Sunday. Not everyone celebrates Christmas the way your family does, and some do not celebrate it at all. Inclusive language, which will be discussed in Chapter 10, will be helpful in these situations.

## **Region**

Region, another demographic characteristic, relates to where the audience members live. We can think of this in two ways. We live in regions of the country: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Rocky Mountain region, and West Coast. These regions can be broken down even more, such as coastal Southeastern states. Americans, especially in the East, are very conscious of their state or region and identify with it a great deal.

The second way to think about region is as “residence” or whether the audience lives in an urban area, the suburbs, or a rural area. If you live in the city, you probably do not think about being without cell phone or Internet service, but many people in rural areas do not take those for granted. The clubs that students in rural high schools belong to might be very different from what a student in a city would join.

## **Occupation**

Occupation may be a demographic characteristic that is central to your presentation. For the most part in the U.S., we choose our occupations because they reflect our values, interests, and abilities, and as we associate with colleagues in that occupation, those values, interests, and abilities are strengthened. You are probably in college to enter a specific career that you believe will be economically beneficial and personally fulfilling. We sometimes spend more time at work than any other activity, except sleeping. Messages that acknowledge the importance, diversity, and reasons for occupations will be more effective. At the same time, if you are speaking to an audience with different occupations, do not use jargon from one specific occupation.

## **Education**

The next demographic characteristic is education, which is closely tied to occupation. In the United States, education usually reflects what kind of information and training a person has been exposed to, but it does not necessarily reflect intelligence. An individual with a bachelor’s degree in physics or computer science may know a great deal more about that field than someone with a Ph.D. in English. Having a certain credential is supposed to be a guarantee of having learned a set of knowledge or attained certain skills. Some persons, especially employers, tend to see achieving a credential such as a college degree as the person’s having the “grit” to finish an academic program. We are also generally proud of our educational achievements, so they should not be disregarded.

## **Socio-Economic Level**

Socio-economic level, another demographic characteristic, is also tied to occupation and education in many cases. We expect certain levels of education or certain occupations to make more money. While you cannot know the exact pay of your audience members, you should be careful about references that would portray your own socio-economic level as superior to their own. Saying, “When I bought my BMW 7 Series” (a car that retails at over \$80,000) would not make a good impression on someone in the audience who is struggling to make a car payment on her used KIA. One time a lawyer for a state agency was talking to a group of college professors about how she negotiated her salary. She mentioned that she was able to get her salary raised by an amount that was more than the annual salary of the audience members. Her message, which was a good one, was lost in this case because of insensitivity to the audience.

## Sexual Orientation

The next few demographic characteristics are more personal and may not seem important to your speech topic, but then again, they may be the most important for your audience. Sexual orientation, usually referred to by the letters LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-gendered), is a characteristic not listed in speech textbooks forty years ago. As acceptance of people of various sexual orientations and lifestyles becomes more common, we can expect that these differences will lead to people feeling free to express who they are and not be confined to traditional gender roles or stereotypes. For this reason, it is valuable to use inclusive language, such as “partner” or “spouse.”

## Family Status

Family status, such as whether the audience members are married, single, divorced, or have children or grandchildren may be very important to the concerns and values of your audience and even the reason the audience is brought together. For example, young parents could be gathered to listen to a speaker because they are concerned about health and safety of children in the community. Getting married and/or having a child often creates a seismic shift in how a person views the world, his responsibilities, and his priorities. A speaker should be aware if she is talking to single, married, divorced, or widowed persons and if the audience members are parents, especially with children at home.

Does this section on demographic characteristics leave you wondering, “with all this diversity, how can we even think about an audience?” If so, do not feel alone in that thought. As diversity increases, audience understanding and adaptation becomes more difficult. To address this concern, you should keep in mind the primary reason the audience is together and the demographic characteristics they have in common—*their common bonds*. Your classmates may be diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, or religion, but they have in common profession (all students) and region (living near or on the campus), as well as, possibly, other characteristics.

## Psychographic Characteristics

Whereas demographic characteristics describe the “facts” about the people in your audience and are focused on the external, **psychographic characteristics** explain the inner qualities. Although there are many ways to think about this topic, here the ones relevant to a speech will be explored: beliefs, attitudes, needs, and values.

### Beliefs

Daryl Bem (1970) defined **beliefs** as “statements we hold to be true.” Notice this definition does not say the beliefs are true, only that we hold them to be true and as such they determine how we respond to the world around us. Stereotypes are a kind of belief: we believe all the people in a certain group are “like that” or share a trait. Beliefs are not confined to the religious realm, either. We have beliefs about many aspects of the world.

Beliefs, according to Bem, come essentially from our experience and from sources we trust. Therefore, beliefs are hard to change – not impossible, just difficult. Beliefs are hard to change because of:

- Stability – the longer we hold them, the more stable or entrenched they are;
- Centrality – they are in the middle of our identity, self-concept, or “who we are”;
- Saliency – we think about them a great deal; and
- Strength – we have a great deal of intellectual or experiential support for the belief or we engage in activities that strengthen the beliefs.

Beliefs can have varying levels of stability, centrality, salience, and strength. An educator's beliefs about the educational process and importance of education would be strong (support from everyday experience and reading sources of information), central (how he makes his living and defines his work), salient (he spends every day thinking about it), and stable (especially if he has been an educator a long time). Beliefs can be changed, and we will examine how in Chapter 13 under persuasion, but it is not a quick process.

## Attitudes

The next psychographic characteristic, attitude, is sometimes a direct effect of belief. **Attitude** is defined as a stable positive or negative response to a person, idea, object, or policy. How do you respond when you hear the name of a certain singer, movie star, political leader, sports team, or law in your state? Your response will be either positive or negative, or maybe neutral if you are not familiar with the object of the attitude. Where did that attitude come from? Psychologists and communication scholars study attitude formation and change probably as much as any other subject, and have found that attitude comes from experiences, peer groups, beliefs, rewards, and punishments.

Do not confuse attitude with "mood." Attitudes are stable; if you respond negatively to Brussels sprouts today, you probably will a week from now. That does not mean they are unchangeable, only that, like beliefs, they change slowly and in response to certain experiences, information, or strategies. As with beliefs, we will examine how to change attitudes in the chapter on persuasion. Changing attitudes is a primary task of public speakers because attitudes are the most determining factor in what people actually do. In other words, attitudes lead to actions, and interestingly, actions leads to and strengthen attitudes.

We may hold a belief that regular daily exercise is a healthy activity, but that does not mean we will have a positive attitude toward it. There may be other attitudes that compete with the belief, such as "I do not like to sweat," or "I don't like exercising alone." Also, we may not act upon a belief because we do not feel there is a direct, immediate benefit from it or we may not believe we have time right now in college. If we have a positive attitude toward exercise, we will more likely engage in it than if we only believe it is generally healthy.

## Values

As you can see, attitude and belief are somewhat complex "constructs," but fortunately the next two are more straightforward. **Values** are goals we strive for and what we consider important and desirable. However, values are not just basic wants. A person may want a vintage sports car from the 1960s, and may value it because of the amount of money it costs, but the vintage sports car is not a value; it represents a value of either

- Nostalgia (the person's parents owned one in the 1960s and it reminds him of good times),
- Display (the person wants to show it off and get "oohs" and "ahs"),
- Materialism (the person believes the adage that the one who dies with the most toys wins),
- Aesthetics and beauty (the person admires the look of the car and enjoys maintaining the sleek appearance),
- Prestige (the person has earned enough money to enjoy and show off this kind of vehicle), or
- Physical pleasure (the driver likes the feel of a convertible on the open road).

Therefore we can engage in the same behavior but for different values; one person may participate in a river cleanup because she values the future of the planet; another may value the appearance of the community in which she lives; another just because friends are involved and she values relationships. A few years ago political pundits coined the

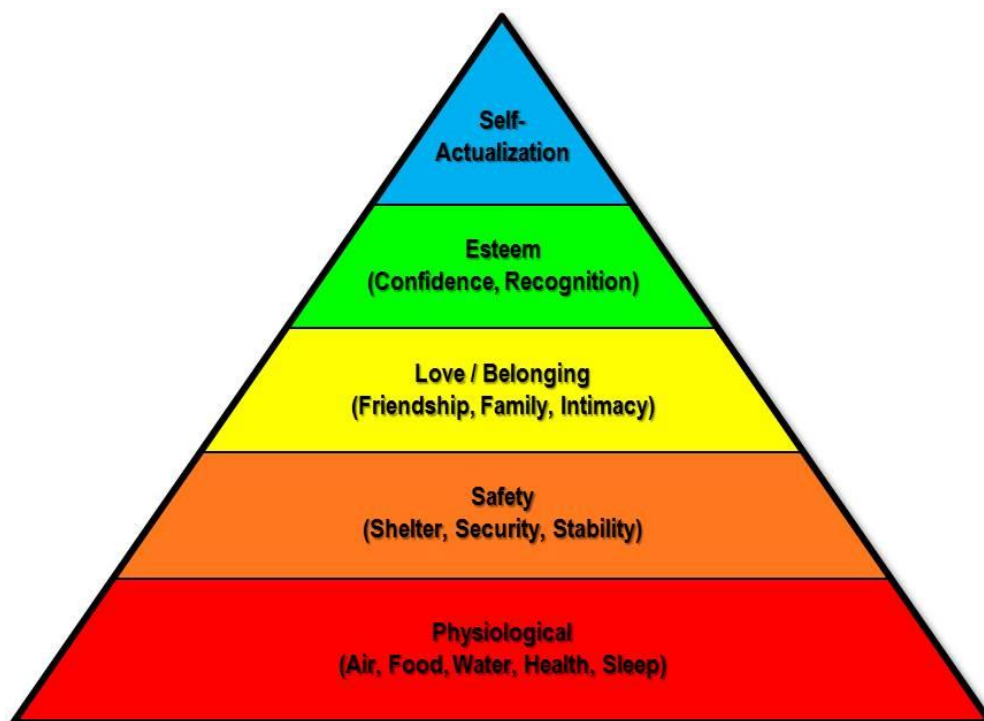


term “values voters,” usually referring to social conservatives, but this is a misnomer because almost everyone votes and otherwise acts upon his or her values—what is important to the individual.

## Needs

The fourth psychographic characteristic is **needs**, which are important deficiencies that we are motivated to fulfill. You may already be familiar with the well-known diagram known as Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs. It is commonly discussed in the fields of management, psychology, and health professions. A version of it is shown in Figure 2.1. (Some versions include 8 levels, adding Cognitive Needs, Aesthetic Needs, and Transcendence.) It is one way to think about needs. In trying to understand human motivation, Maslow theorized that as our needs represented at the base of the pyramid are fulfilled, we move up the hierarchy to fulfill other types of need (McLeod, 2014).

Our most basic physiological or survival needs must be met before we move to the second level, which is safety and security. When our needs for safety and security are met, we move up to relationship or connection needs, often called “love and belongingness.” The fourth level up is esteem needs, which could be thought of as achievement, accomplishment, or self-confidence. The highest level, self-actualization, is achieved by those who are satisfied and secure enough in the lower four that they can make sacrifices for others. Self-actualized persons are usually thought of as altruistic or charitable. Maslow also believed that studying motivation was best done by understanding psychologically healthy individuals.



In another course you might go into more depth about Maslow’s philosophy and theory, but the key point to remember here is that your audience members are experiencing both “felt” and “real” needs. They may not even be aware of their needs; in a persuasive speech one of your tasks is to show the audience that needs exist that they might not know about. For example, gasoline sold in most of the U.S. has ethanol, a plant-based product, added to it, usually about 10%. Is this beneficial or detrimental for the planet, the engine of the car, or consumers’ wallets? Your audience may not even be aware of the ethanol, its benefits, and the problems it can cause.

A “felt” need is another way to think about strong “wants” that the person believes will fulfill or satisfy them even if the item is not necessary for survival. For example, one humorous depiction of the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs features the word “WiFi” scribbled at the bottom of the pyramid. (Someone else might add the word “coffee!”) However, as great as WiFi and coffee are, they are not crucial to human survival, either individually or collectively, but we do want them so strongly that they operate like needs.

So, how do these psychographic characteristics operate in preparing a speech? They are most applicable to a persuasive speech, but they do apply to other types of speeches as well. What are your audience’s informational needs? What beliefs or attitudes do they have that could influence your choice of topic, sources, or examples? How can you make them interested in the speech by appealing to their values? The classroom speeches you give will allow you a place to practice audience analysis based on demographic and psychographic characteristics, and that practice will aid you in future presentations in the work place and community.

## Contextual Factors of Audience Analysis

The “facts about” and “inner qualities” (demographic and psychographic characteristics) of the audience influence your approach to any presentation. The context (place and time) of the speech does also. What follows are some questions to consider when planning your presentation

1. How much time do I have for the presentation? As mentioned in Chapter 1, we must respect the time limits of a speech. In most cases you will have little control over the time limits. In class the instructor assigns a five- to six-minute speech; at work, there may be an understood twenty-minute presentation rule in the organization, since attention can diminish after a certain length. You might be asked to speak to a community group for your company and be told that you have thirty minutes—that seems like a long time, but if you are really passionate about the subject, it can go quickly.

Knowing the time limit for a speech does three things for the speaker. First, it lets her know how much of a given topic can realistically be covered. Secondly, the speaker must practice to be sure that his/her content actually fits in the time given, so the practice leads to a better speech. Third, time limits impose a discipline and focus on the speaker.

In reference to practice, this might be a good place to dispel the “practice makes perfect” myth. It is possible to practice incorrectly, so in that case, *practice will make permanent, not perfect*. There is a right way and a wrong way to practice a speech, musical instrument, or sport.

2. What time of the day is the presentation? An audience at 8:00 in the morning is not the same as at 2:00 p.m. An audience at Monday at 10:00 a.m. is not the same as at 3:00 Friday afternoon. The time of your presentation may tell you a great deal about how to prepare. For example, if the audience is likely to be tired, you might want to get them physically active or talking to each other in a part of the speech, especially if it is a long presentation.
3. Why is the audience gathered? In the case of your speech class, everyone is there, of course, because they want a grade and because they are students at the college. However, they also have career and educational goals and probably are at a certain stage in their education. (Some people wait until the last semester of senior year to take this course, but most are going to be first-year students.) In other contexts, the audience is there because of a common interest, commitment, or responsibility. What is it? Everything you do in the speech should be relevant to that reason for their being there.
4. What is the physical space like? Straightforward, with the audience in rows and hard seats, as in a classroom? A typical boardroom with a long table and a dozen or more chairs around it? Big sofas and armchairs, where the audience might get too comfortable? Can the speaker walk around and get closer to the audience? Does the speaker have to stay behind a lectern or on a platform? Is there audiovisual equipment? Is the room well-lit?

Sometimes you will have no control over the physical space, especially in the speech classroom, but you should try to exert all the control you possibly can in other situations. Even the temperature of the room or outside noise can affect your speech's effectiveness. Just closing the door can make a world of difference in the physical space and its effect on the audience.

5. Related to number 4 is "How large will the audience be?" Ten people or one hundred? This factor will probably affect your delivery the most, specifically how you deliver the speech. You may need to increase your volume in a venue with a large audience, or you might have to use a microphone, which could limit your walking around and getting close to the group. On the other hand, you might want to directly interact with the audience if it is a small, intimate number of people. The size of the audience will also affect your choice of visual aids.
6. What does the audience expect? Why were you asked to speak to them? Again, in the class you will have certain specifications for the presentations, such as type of speech, length, kinds of sources used, visual aids or lack of them. In other contexts, you will need to ask many questions to know the context fully.

Knowing these details about the audience can greatly impact how successful you are as a speaker, and not knowing them can potentially have adverse effects. One of the textbook authors was asked to speak to the faculty of another college about 120 miles away on the subject of research about teaching college students. Because the campus she was visiting was a branch campus, she assumed (always dangerous) that only the faculty on that small branch campus would be present. Actually, the faculty of the whole college—over 400 instructors in a school of over 21,000 students—showed up. Although the speaker was very conscious of time limits (30 minutes), subject matter, needs of the audience, and expectations, the change in the size of the expected audience was a shock.

It all went well because she was an experienced speaker, but she was a little embarrassed to realize she had not asked the actual size of the audience. Of course, the auditorium was much larger than she expected, the slides she planned to use were inappropriate, and she could not walk around. Instead, she was "stuck" behind a lectern. This is all to say that the importance of knowing your audience and taking the time to prepare based on that knowledge can make your speech go much more smoothly, and not doing so can lead to unexpected complications.

## Listening

To this point in the text, and for most of the rest of it, we focus on the "sending" part of the communication process. However, public speaking only works if there are listeners. Studying public speaking should make you a better listener because you see the value of the listener to the communication process and because you are more aware of what you do in a speech.

Listening is not the same thing as hearing. **Hearing** is a physical process in which sound waves hit your ear drums and send a message to your brain. You may hear cars honking or dogs barking when you are walking down the street because your brain is process the sounds, but that doesn't mean that you are listening to them. **Listening** implies an active process where you are specifically making an effort to understand, process, and retain information.

Also, although both reading and listening are methods of taking in information, they are very different processes. You may have taken a learning styles inventory at some point and learned that you were either a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learner, or maybe a combination. Many of us have a strength in one of these areas, or at least a preference. Having a particular learning preference should never be used as an excuse; we learn in all three modes, depending on the context and subject matter, even if one is stronger. As one of the appendices will note, real research of these three learning styles is actually limited.

Also, when you read, you can go back and read a passage over and over until you understand it. This is more difficult in listening. If the message is recorded, you can play it over, but if the situation is a speech, once may be all you get.

Many studies have been conducted to find out how long we remember oral messages, and often the level of memory from oral communication is not very high (Bostrom & Bryant, 1980).

In this section, we will focus on comprehensive listening, which is listening focused on understanding and remembering important information from a public speaking message. There are other “types” of listening, based on the context and purpose. The first is empathetic listening, for understanding the feelings and motivations of another person, usually with a goal to helping the person deal with a personal problem. For example, if a friend says she is thinking about dropping out of college at the end of the semester, you would want to listen for the reasons and feelings behind her choice, recognizing that you might need to ask sensitive questions and not just start telling her what to do or talk about your own feelings.

The second type of listening is appreciative, which takes place while listening to music, poetry, or literature or watching a play or movie. For example, knowing that the melodies of classical music have a certain A-B pattern informs us how to listen to Mozart. To be good at this kind of listening, it helps to study the art form to learn the patterns and devices.

The third type is critical listening, which we will address in Chapter 14 in discussing critical thinking and logic. In critical listening the audience member is evaluating the validity of the arguments and information and deciding whether the speaker is persuasive and whether the message should be accepted.

## Your Audience and Listening

With this understanding of how listening differs from other forms of message reception, we can think of public speaking as “linear in time.” It does not allow you to loop back, as in reading. For that reason, a speaker must make listening easier for the audience. The main way speakers achieve this is through planned redundancy. **Planned redundancy** refers to purposeful ways of repeating and restating parts of the speech to help the audience listen and retain.

The speaker uses a relevant introduction to emphasize the interest and importance of the subject, uses a preview of the main points to forecast the plan of the speech, uses connective statements between points to remind the audience of the plan and re-emphasize the content, and then uses an overall summary in the conclusion and some other method to cause the audience to want to remember or do something with the information. As mentioned before, you might not be able to “cover” or dump a great deal of information in a speech, but you can make the information meaningful through the planned redundancy as well as through examples, stories, support, and appeals.

A speaker can also help the audience’s listening abilities by using visual aids, stories and examples, audience interaction or movement at key points in the speech (if appropriate and if your instructor approves it), and specific attention-getting techniques.

In short, listening is hard work, but you can meet your audience half way by using certain strategies and material to make listening easier for them. At the same time, an audience member has a responsibility to pay attention and listen well. In the next section, we will look at how you can improve your listening ability in public speaking situations. We will not look at listening in private, group, or interpersonal communication settings. Those often require skills such as empathy and paraphrasing in order to understand your communication partner fully and to meet his or her emotional needs. If a friend comes to you with a problem, he or she may be more interested in your concern than that you can recall back the content of what was shared or that you can give him or her advice.

## Barriers to Listening

Since hearing is a physiological response to auditory stimuli, you hear things whether you want to or not. Just ask anyone who has tried to go to sleep with the neighbor's dog barking all night. However, listening, really listening, is intentional and hard work. Several hundred years ago we lived in an aural world—by that is meant most people took in information through hearing. That is why you will often hear stories of great speakers who orated for two or three hours, and that was considered acceptable. It does not mean everyone stayed awake all the time, but it does mean that the majority did not find it unusual or impossible to listen for that long.

A famous historical example is that of the Gettysburg Address, that wonderful, concise speech by Abraham Lincoln given in November of 1863 to commemorate the battlefield of Gettysburg. It is a speech we still read and sometimes memorize as an example of powerful rhetoric. The speaker before Lincoln was Edward Everett, a renowned statesman of the time from Massachusetts, who spoke for over two hours. Today we prefer the Lincoln's example of conciseness to Everett's version. In other words, we just do not have the listening power we used to. Perhaps we do not need it, or due to neuroplasticity ("Definition of neuroplasticity," 2015) our brains have adapted to other means of efficiently taking in information.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, some people are not strong aural learners. In that case, listening may not be a personal strength in addition to being a skill that has deteriorated in society over time. But that does not make it unimportant or something we should not try to improve upon. Therefore, the first barrier to listening is our lack of capacity for it, whether from societal expectation or personal psycho-logical preferences.

Another barrier to listening is the noisiness and constant distractions of our lives, something that you might not even be aware of if you have always lived in the world of Internet, cell phones, iPods, tablets, and 24/7 news channels. We are dependent on and constantly wired to the Internet. Focus is difficult. Not only do electronic distractions hurt our listening, but life concerns can distract us as well. An ill family member, a huge exam next period, your car in the shop, deciding on next semester's classes—the list is endless. Hunger and fatigue hurt listening ability as well.

A third barrier to listening not often considered is that our minds can usually process much faster than a speaker can speak clearly. We may be able to listen, when really trying, at 200 words per minute, but few speakers can articulate that many words clearly; an average rate for normal speech is around 100-120 (Foulke, 1968). That leaves a great deal of time when the mind needs to pull itself back into focus. During those gaps, we might find it more enjoyable to think of lunch, the new person we are dating, or our vacation at the beach.

Another barrier is distraction from the people around you. Perhaps the scent of their soap or shampoo is unpleasant to you. Perhaps they cannot put their cell phones down or perhaps they are whispering to each other and impeding your ability to hear the speaker clearly. Finally, the physical environment may make listening to a public speaker difficult. This is not to even mention that the skill of the speaker influences your listening ability.

These are all the possible obstacles to listening, but there might also be reasons that are particular to you, the listener. Often we go into listening situations with no purpose; we are just there physically but have no plans for listening. We go in unprepared. We are tired and mentally and physically unready to listen well. We do not sit in a comfortable position to listen. We do not bring proper tools to listen, specifically to take notes. There is actually research to indicate that we listen better and learn/retain more when we take notes with a pen and paper than when we type them on a computer or tablet (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014). Add to this the research that shows how distracting open laptops are to other students. This research has led some professors to bar laptops from their classrooms.

Another important barrier to listening is one not so easily dealt with as bringing paper and pen. We can listen poorly or not at all when we hold prejudices against a speaker or a topic. When it comes to media, we can just click away or change the channel, but in face-to-face public speaking situations we do not have that option. We may hear the

speaker's topic or thesis ("I support . . .") and click an "off" button in our brains, impeding our listening and missing something from which we can benefit. This is not always reasonable, but it is human and fairly common.

## What Can Be Done to Improve Listening?

The previous section explains barriers to good listening behavior and in a sense gives us the solution. The key is to personalize this information and decide which of it relates to you. Your own barrier might be not coming prepared, being quick to prejudge, or allowing gadgets to distract you. Obviously, recognizing the cause of your poor listening is the first step to becoming a better listener. Here are some steps, in summary:

- Believe that good listening in specific situations and improving your own listening behavior are important. You would not want to be called upon in a meeting at work when you were daydreaming or being distracted by a cell phone. Consider listening in class and to your classmates' speeches in the same way.
- Be prepared to listen. This means putting away mobile devices, having a pen and paper, and situating yourself physically to listen (not slouching or slumping). Have a purpose in listening. In your speech class, one of your purposes should be mutual support of your classmates; you are all in this together. Your instructor might also require you to write responses to your classmates' speeches.
- When taking notes, keep yourself mentally engaged by writing questions that arise, especially if your instructor does not take questions until a break, and you might forget. This behavior will fill in the gaps when your mind could wander and create more of an interaction with the speaker.
- For your own sake and that of your co-listeners, avoid temptations to talk to those sitting next to you. It is far more distracting to both the speaker and your co-listeners than you might think. Write down the questions for asking later. Our use of cellular devices in an audience can also be more of a distraction to others than we realize. There is a good reason the movie theatres play those announcements about turning your phone off before the feature!

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the psychological and physical processes going on inside the audience during a speech. Being audience-centered and adapting to your audience involves knowing as much as is reasonably possible about them. Addressing a diverse audience is a challenge, and audiences are, in general, becoming more diverse and more aware of their diversity.

### Something to Think About

Can you think of some ways that knowing the psychographic characteristics of your audience can influence your speech preparation? What values, needs, beliefs, and attitudes? Example topics:

- You want to give a persuasive speech to your classroom audience to encourage them to take a study abroad trip.
- You want your audience to consider buying a Mac Book Pro rather than a PC as their next laptop.
- You want to persuade them that sponsoring a child in a poor country is a way to bring the child out of poverty.
- You want them to volunteer in the next Special Olympics in your community.

# Chapter 8

## Developing Topics for Your Speech

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Distinguish between the specific purpose, central idea, and main points of a speech;
- Differentiate between a speech to inform, persuade, and inspire or entertain;
- Write a specific purpose statement;
- Write a thesis or central idea statement;
- Distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable specific purpose and central idea statements;
- Compose appropriate specific purpose and central idea statements for informative, persuasive, and inspirational/ entertaining speeches.

### Getting Started with Your Topic and Purpose

So far in this book we have examined many practical and theoretical aspects of public speaking as a method of communicating and as an art form, but in this chapter we are going to get into the real meat of putting your speech together.

Often when we get to the point of sitting down to prepare a speech, we think about topics. That is understandable, but before we go any further, let's recalibrate our minds to think also, or even more, about "purpose." There are some benefits to considering purpose and topic simultaneously. Doing so will help you focus your speech to a manageable amount of content, become more audience-centered, and make strategic decisions about other aspects of the speech, such as organization, supporting evidence, and visual aids.

Speeches have traditionally been seen to have one of three broad purposes: to inform, to persuade, and— Well, to be honest, different words are used for the third kind of speech purpose: to inspire, to amuse, to please, or to entertain. These broad goals are commonly known as a speech's **general purpose**, since, in general, you are trying to inform, persuade, or entertain your audience without regard to specifically what the topic will be. Perhaps you could think of them as appealing to the understanding of the audience (informative), the will or action (persuasive), and the emotion or pleasure. Your instructor will most likely assign you an informative and persuasive speech, and then perhaps one more, such as a tribute (commemorative), after-dinner, or special occasion speech. These last three types of speeches fit into the category of "to entertain."

These three purposes are not necessarily exclusive of the others. A speech designed to be persuasive can also be informative and entertaining, even if either of those are not the main purpose.

### Formulating a Specific Purpose Statement

Now that you know your general purpose (to inform, to persuade, or to entertain), you can start to move in the direction of the specific purpose. A **specific purpose statement** builds on your general purpose (to inform) and makes it more specific (as the name suggests). So if your first speech is an informative speech, your general purpose

will be to inform your audience about a very specific realm of knowledge, for example, the history of NASA's Shuttle program.

In writing your specific purpose statement, you will take three contributing elements that will come together to help you determine your specific purpose. The diagram in Figure 4.1 shows those three elements. These three elements are **you** (your interests, your background, past jobs, experience, education, major), **your audience** (with which you learned to analyze in Chapter 2), and **the context** or setting.

## You

An old adage states, "Write about what you know." In many ways, that is a great place to start with creating a speech, although you will need to consult other sources as well. If you start with ideas that reflect your interests and passions, your interest and passion will come across in your speech and give you more credibility in the eyes of your audience and make your speech more interesting.

## The Audience

After you examine what you know and are passionate about, you have to determine if and how the topic has practical value or interest for others. It may be that it is a topic the audience is not immediately interested in but needs to know about for their own benefit. Then it becomes necessary for you to find that angle and approach that will help them see the benefit of it and listen to you. The more you know about your audience, the better you can achieve this goal. Good speakers are very knowledgeable about their audiences.

## The Context

Many aspects come into the context of a speech, but as mentioned in Chapter 2, the main ones are the time, place, and reason for the event and the audience being there. Your classroom speeches have a fairly set context: time limits, the classroom, assignment specifications. Other speeches you will give in college (or in your career and personal life) will require you to think more deeply about the context just as you would the audience.

## Putting It Together

Keeping these three inputs in mind, you can begin to write a specific purpose statement, which will be the foundation for everything you say in the speech and a guide for what you do not say. This formula will help you in putting together your specific purpose statement:

To \_\_\_\_\_ Specific Communication Word (inform, explain, demonstrate, describe, define, persuade, convince, prove, argue) \_\_\_\_\_.

Target Audience (my classmates, the members of the Social Work Club, my coworkers)  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The Content (how to bake brownies, that Macs are better than PCs)

Each of these parts of the specific purpose is important. The first two parts make sure you are clear on your purpose and know specifically who will be hearing your message. However, we will focus on the last part here.

The content part of the specific purposes statement must first be singular and focused, and the content must match the purpose. The word "and" really should not appear in the specific purpose statement since that would make it



seem that you have two topics. Obviously, the specific purpose statement's content must be very narrowly defined and, well, specific. One mistake beginning speakers often make is to try to "cover" too much material. They tend to speak about the whole alphabet, A-Z, instead of just "T" or "L." This comes from an emphasis on the topic more than the purpose, and from not keeping audience and context in mind.

Second, the content must match the focus of the purpose word. A common error is to match an informative purpose with a persuasive content clause or phrase. For example,

To explain to my classmates why term life insurance is a better option than whole life insurance policies.

OR

To demonstrate to my classmates how the recent Supreme Court decision on police procedures during arrests is unconstitutional.

Sometimes it takes an unbiased second party to see where your content and purpose may not match.

Third, the specific purpose statement should be relevant to the audience. How does the purpose and its topic touch upon their lives, wallets, relationships, careers, etc.? It is also a good idea to keep in mind what you want the audience to walk away with or what you want them to know, to be able to do, to think, to act upon, or to respond to your topic—your ultimate outcome or result.

In an example listed above, the history of NASA would be much too large a topic for speech. To revisit the earlier example, the history of NASA would not only be too much material (leading to a very general speech rather than anything of real substance and learning) and a more specific one such as the Shuttle program would be closer to their experience. Here are several examples of specific purposes statements. Notice how they meet the standards of being singular, focused, relevant, and consistent.

- To inform my classmates of the origin of the hospice movement.
- To describe to my coworkers the steps to apply for retirement.
- To define for a group of new graduate students the term "academic freedom."
- To explain to the Lions Club members the problems faced by veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- To persuade the members of the Greek society to take the spring break trip to Daytona Beach.
- To motivate my classmates to engage in the College's study abroad program.

Despite all the information given about specific purpose statements so far, the next thing you read will seem strange: Never say your specific purpose to the audience. In a sense, it is just for you and the instructor. For you, it's like a note you might tack on the mirror or refrigerator to keep you on track. For the instructor, it's a way for him or her to know you are accomplishing both the assignment and what you set out to do. Avoid the temptation to default to saying it at the beginning of your speech. It will seem awkward and repetitive.

## Formulating a Central Idea Statement

While you will not actually say your specific purpose statement during your speech, you will need to clearly state what your focus and main points are going to be the statement that reveals your main points is commonly known as the **central idea statement** (or just the central idea).

Now, at this point we need to make a point about terminology. Your instructor may call the central idea statement “the thesis” or “the thesis statement.” Your English composition instructor probably uses that term in your essay writing. Another instructor may call it the “main idea statement.” All of these are basically synonymous and you should not let the terms confuse you, but you should use the term your instructor uses.

That said, is the central idea statement the very same thing as the thesis sentence in an essay? Yes, in that both are letting the audience know without a doubt your topic, purpose, direction, angle and/or point of view. No, in that the rules for writing a “thesis” or central idea statement in a speech are not as strict as in an essay. For example, it is acceptable in a speech to announce the topic and purpose, although it is usually not the most artful or effective way to do it. You may say,

*In this speech I will try to motivate you to join me next month as a volunteer at the regional Special Olympics.*

That would be followed by a preview statement of what the speech’s arguments or reasons for participating will be, such as,

*You will see that it will benefit the community, the participants, and you individually.*

However, another approach is to “capsulize” the purpose, topic, approach, and preview in one succinct statement.

*Your involvement as a volunteer in next month’s regional Special Olympics will be a rewarding experience that will benefit the community, the participants, and you personally.*

This last version is really the better approach and most likely the one your instructor will prefer.

So, you don’t want to just repeat your specific purpose in the central idea statement, but you do want to provide complete information. Also, unlike the formal thesis of your English essays, the central idea statement in a speech can and should use personal language (I, me, we, us, you, your, etc.) and should attempt to be attention-getting and audience-focused. And importantly, just like a formal thesis sentence, it must be a complete, grammatical sentence.

The point of your central idea statement is ultimately to reveal and clarify the ideas or assertions you will be addressing in your speech, more commonly known as your main points. However, as you are processing your ideas and approach, you may still be working on them. Sometimes those main points will not be clear to you immediately. As much as we would like these writing processes to be straightforward, sometimes we find that we have to revise our original approach. This is why preparing a speech the night before you are giving it is a *really, really* bad idea. You need lots of time for the preparation and then the practice.

Here are some examples of pairs of specific purpose statements and central idea statements:

**Specific Purpose:** To explain to my classmates the effects of losing a pet on the elderly.  
**Central Idea:** When elderly persons lose their animal companions, they can experience serious psychological, emotional, and physical effects.

**Specific Purpose:** To demonstrate to my audience the correct method for cleaning a computer keyboard.  
**Central Idea:** Your computer keyboard needs regular cleaning to function well, and you can achieve that in four easy steps.

**Specific Purpose:** To persuade my political science class that labor unions are no longer a vital political force in the United States.  
**Central Idea:** Although for decades in the twentieth century labor unions influenced local and national elections, in this speech I will point to how their influence has declined in the last thirty years.

**Specific Purpose:** To motivate my audience to oppose the policy of drug testing welfare recipients.  
**Central Idea:** Many voices are calling for welfare recipients to have to go through mandatory, regular drug testing, but this policy is unjust, impractical, and costly, and fairminded Americans should actively oppose it.

**Specific Purpose:** To explain to my fellow civic club members why I admire Representative John Lewis.  
**Central Idea:** John Lewis has my admiration for his sacrifices during the Civil Rights movement and his service to Georgia.

**Specific Purpose:** To describe how makeup is done for the TV show The Walking Dead.  
**Central Idea:** The wildly popular zombie show The Walking Dead achieves incredibly scary and believable makeup effects, and in the next few minutes I will tell you who does it, what they use, and how they do it.

Notice that in all of the above examples that neither the specific purpose nor the central idea ever exceeds one sentence. If your specific purpose or central idea consists of two or more sentences, then you probably are including too much information and taking up time that is needed for the body of the speech.

## Problems to Avoid with Specific Purpose and Central Idea Statements

The first problem many students have in writing their specific purpose statement has already been mentioned: specific purpose statements sometimes try to cover far too much and are too broad. For example:

*To explain to my classmates the history of ballet.*

Aside from the fact that this subject may be difficult for everyone in your audience to, it is enough for a three-hour lecture, maybe even a whole course. You will probably find that your first attempt at a specific purpose statement will need refining. These examples are much more specific and much more manageable given the limited amount of time you will have.

*To explain to my classmates how ballet came to be performed and studied in the U.S.*

*To explain to my classmates the difference between Russian and French ballet.*

*To explain to my classmates how ballet originated as an art form in the Renaissance.*

*To explain to my classmates the origin of the ballet dancers' clothing.*

The second problem with specific purpose statements is the opposite of being too broad, in that some specific purposes statements are so focused that they might only be appropriate for people who are already extremely interested in the topic or experts in a field:

*To inform my classmates of the life cycle of the lima bean. (Botanists, Agriculturalists)*

*To inform my classmates about the Yellow 5 ingredient in Mountain Dew. (Chemists, Nutritionists).*

*To persuade my classmates that JIF Peanut Butter is better than Peter Pan. (Organizational Chefs in Large Institutions).*

The third problem happens when the “communication verb” in the specific purpose does not match the content; for example, persuasive content is paired with “to inform” or “to explain.” If you resort to the word “why” in the thesis, it is probably persuasive.

*To persuade my audience about the three types of individual retirement accounts. (This is not persuading the audience of anything, just informing)*

*To inform my classmates that Universal Studios is a better theme park than Six Flags over Georgia. (This is clearly an opinion, hence persuasive)*

The fourth problem exists when the content part of the specific purpose statement has two parts and thus uses “and.” A good speech follows the KISS rule—Keep It Simple, Speaker. One specific purpose is enough. These examples cover two different topics.

*To explain to my audience how to swing a golf club and choose the best golf shoes.*

*To persuade my classmates to be involved in the Special Olympics and vote to fund better classes for the intellectually disabled.*

To fix this problem, you will need to select one of the topics in these examples and speak on just that:

*To explain to my audience how to swing a golf club.*

OR

*To explain to my audience how to choose the best golf shoes.*

The fifth problem with both specific purpose and central idea statements is related to formatting. There are some general guidelines that need to be followed in terms of how you write out these elements of your speech:

- Do not write either statement as a question.
- Always use complete sentences for central idea statements and infinitive phrases (that is, “to...”) for the specific purpose statement.
- Only use concrete language (“I admire Beyoncé for being a talented performer and businesswoman”), and avoid subjective terms (“My speech is about why I think Beyoncé is the bomb”) or jargon and acronyms (“PLA is better than CBE for adult learners.”)

Finally, the sixth problem occurs when the speech just gets off track of the specific purpose statement, in that it starts well but veers in another direction. This problem relates to the challenge of developing coherent main points, what might be called “the Roman numeral points” of the speech. The specific purpose usually determines the main points and the relevant structure. For example, if the specific purpose is:

*To inform my classmates of the five stages of grief as described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.*

There is no place in this speech for a biography of Dr. Kubler-Ross, arguments against this model of grief, therapies for those undergoing grief, or steps for the audience to take to get counseling. All of those are different specific purposes. The main points would have to be the five stages, in order, as Dr. Kubler-Ross defined them.

There are also problems to avoid in writing the central idea statement. As mentioned above, remember that:

- The specific purpose and central idea statements are not the same thing, although they are related.
- The central idea statement should be clear and not complicated or wordy; it should “stand out” to the audience. As you practice delivery, you should emphasize it with your voice.
- The central idea statement should not be the first thing you say, but should follow the steps of a good introduction.

## CONCLUSION

You should be aware that all aspects of your speech are constantly going to change as you move toward actually giving your speech. The exact wording of your central idea may change and you can experiment with different versions for effectiveness. However, your specific purpose statement should not change unless there is a really good reason, and in some cases, your instructor will either discourage that, forbid it, or expect to be notified. There are many aspects to consider in the seemingly simple task of writing a specific purpose statement and its companion the central idea statement. Writing good ones at the beginning will save you some trouble later in the speech preparation process.

### **Something to Think About**

What if your informative speech has the specific purpose statement: To explain the biological and lifestyle cause of Type II diabetes. The assignment is a seven-minute speech, and when you practice it the first time, it is thirteen minutes long. Should you adjust the specific purpose statement? How?

# Chapter 9

## Organizing and Outlining Your Speech

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Explain why organization is necessary and valuable to public speaking;
- Differentiate the different types of organizational patterns;
- Choose an organizational pattern that is most logical to the speech's specific purpose;
- Construct an outline for an extemporaneous speech;
- Create connective statements that will help the audience understand the logic and structure of a speech.

### Why We Need Organization in Speeches

Have you had this experience? You may have an instructor who is easy to take notes from because he or she helps you know the main ideas and gives you cues as to what is most important to write down and study for the test. And then you might have an instructor who tells interesting stories, says provocative things, and leads engaging discussions, but you have a really hard time following where the instruction is going. If so, you already know that structure makes a difference for your own listening. In this chapter we will examine why that is true and how you can translate that type of structure to your own speeches.

Significant psychological and communication research has been done about how an audience needs and desires clear organization in a speech as they listen. Those sources are listed in the references at the end of the chapter, but they are summarized here.

First, as we listen, we have limits as to how many categories of information we can keep in mind. You have probably heard that that number of items or categories is seven, or as one source says, "seven, plus or minus two" (Miller, 1956; Gabriel and Mayzner, 1963; Cowan, Chen, & Rouder, 2004). In public speaking, to be on the safe side, the "minus two" is advised: in other words, you should avoid having more than five main points in a speech, and that would only be for a speech of some length where you could actually support, explain, or provide sufficient evidence for five points.

For most speeches that you would give in class, where you have about 5-7 minutes, three points is probably safe territory, although there could be exceptions, of course. It is also acceptable for short speeches to just have two main points, **if doing so supports your specific purpose**. That last phrase is bolded for emphasis because ultimately, your organization is going to depend on your specific purpose. For the purposes of your speeches in this class, each "category" could be thought of as one of your main points.

Secondly, the categories of information should be distinct, different, and clear. You might think about organization in public speaking as having three steps, which we will cover in more detail later in the chapter. These steps are grouping, labeling, and ordering (putting in order). Before you can label your main points clearly or put them in the right order, you have to group your information.

Here we might use the analogy of having a yard sale at your home, something you might have done or helped a family member to do. The first step, before putting up signs or pricing items, is to go through your closets and garage and creating “piles” of items: what you want to sell, what should probably just be discarded, what you want to keep but store elsewhere, what you might want to give away. Then you take the “sell” pile and separate it into categories such as children’s items, tools, kitchen items, furniture, etc. This second phase of sorting items is so you can put them outside on your lawn or driveway in a way people expect to see items and would be more likely to buy. You would probably not sort items by color or size, although you could. It’s just that your customers are not looking for “blue” items or “big” items as much as they are looking for kitchen items, baby clothes, or furniture.

Researchers have found that “chunking” information, that is, the way it is grouped, is vital to audience understanding, learning, and retention of information (Beighly, 1954; Bodeia, Powers, & Fitch-Hauser, 2006; Whitman & Timmis, 1975; Daniels & Whitman, 1981). How does this work in practice? When you are doing your research, you look at the articles and websites you read and say, “That information relates to what I read over here” and “That statistic fits under the idea of . . .” You are looking for similarities and patterns. That is exactly what you do when you group anything, such as the items at a yard sale, where you group according to customer interest and purpose of the items. Finally, if a piece of information you found doesn’t fit into a group as you do your research, it may just not belong in the speech. It’s what we would call “extraneous.”

A good example of this principle is if you are doing a demonstration speech. It may or may not be required in your class but is the kind of speech you may be called upon to do in your future work. For example, a nurse may be teaching patients how to do self-care for diabetes, or a computer trainer may be showing how to use software. The temptation is to treat the procedure as a list of steps, which may number as many as twenty or thirty steps.

There are very few times we can remember a list of twenty or thirty items. Yes, you learned the alphabet of 26 letters when you were a child, or all the state capitals, but you have probably forgotten how long it took. Plus, you probably learned a song to help with the alphabet, and you also did not understand the point of the alphabet; it was just something you did with other children or to please your parents. In the case of the state capitals, you probably used flashcards or memory aids.

Adult learning and listening is different. We need information “chunked” or grouped into manageable categories. So, instead of listing twenty or thirty discrete steps in the process you are demonstrating or explaining, you would want to group the steps into three to five logical categories to help the audience’s reception and retention of the message, using the separate steps as “subpoints.”

Finally, because your audience will understand you better and perceive you as organized, you will gain more credibility as a speaker if you are organized, assuming you also have credible information and acceptable delivery (Slagell, 2013; Sharp & McClung, 1966). Yun, Costantini, and Billingsley (2012) also found a side benefit to learning to be an organized public speaker: your writing skills will improve, specifically your organization and sentence structure. This was no surprise to one of the authors, whose students often comment that they were able to organize their essays and papers for other classes much better after learning good organization principles for speaking.

## **Patterns of Organization**

At this point, then, you should see how much your audience needs organization. You also know that as you do research, you will group together similar pieces of information from different sources in your research. As you group your research information, you will want to make sure that your content is adhering to your specific purpose statement and will look for ways that your information can be grouped together into categories.

Interestingly, there are some standard ways of organizing these categories, which are called “patterns of organization.” In each of the examples below, you will see how the specific purpose gives shape to the organization of the speech and how each one exemplifies one of the six main organizational patterns. In each example, only the three to five main sections or “points” (Roman numerals) are given, without the other essential parts of the outline.

Please note that these are simple, basic outlines for example purposes, and your instructor will of course expect much more content from the outline you submit for class.

## Chronological

Specific Purpose: To describe to my classmates the four stages of rehabilitation in addiction recovery.

- I. The first stage is acknowledging the problem and entering treatment.
- II. The second stage is early abstinence, a difficult period in the rehabilitation facility.
- III. The third stage is maintaining abstinence after release from the rehab facility.
- IV. The fourth stage is advanced recovery after a period of several years.

The example above uses what is termed the **chronological pattern** of organization. Chronological always refers to time order. Since the specific purpose is about stages, it is necessary to put the four stages in the right order. It would make no sense to put the fourth stage second and the third stage first. However, chronological time can be long or short. If you were giving a speech about the history of the Civil Rights Movement, that period would cover several decades; if you were giving a speech about the process to change the oil in your car, that process takes less than an hour. The process described in the speech example above would also be long-term, that is, one taking several years. The commonality is the order of the information.

In addition, chronological speeches that refer to processes can be given for two reasons. First, they can be for understanding. A speech about recovery is to explain what happens in the addiction recovery process, but the actual process may never really happen to the audience members. That understanding may also lead them to more empathy for someone in recovery. Second, chronological or process speeches can be for action and instruction. For a speech about changing the oil in a car, your purpose is that the audience could actually change the oil in their cars after listening to the speech.

## Spatial

You can see that chronological is a highly-used organizational structure, since one of the ways our minds work is through time-orientation—past, present, future. Another common thought process is movement in space or direction, which is called the **spatial pattern**. For example:

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the three regional cooking styles of Italy.

- I. In the mountainous region of the North, the food emphasizes cheese and meat.
- II. In the middle region of Tuscany, the cuisine emphasizes grains and olives.
- III. In the southern region and Sicily, the diet is based on fish and seafood.

In this example, the content is moving from northern to southern Italy, as the word “regional” would indicate. Here is a good place to note that grouping or “chunking” in a speech helps simplicity, and to meet the principle of KISS (Keep It Simple, Speaker). If you were to actually study Italian cooking in depth, sources will say there are twenty regions. But “covering” twenty regions in a speech is not practical, and while the regions would be distinct for a “foodie” or connoisseur of Italian cooking, for a beginner or general audience, three is a good place to start. You could at the end of the speech note that more in-depth study would show the twenty regions, but that in your speech you have used three regions to show the similarities of the twenty regions rather than the small differences.



## Topical/Parts of the Whole

The **topical organizational** pattern is probably the most all-purpose in that many speech topics could use it. Many subjects will have main points that naturally divide into “types of,” “kinds of,” “sorts of,” or “categories of.” Other subjects naturally divide into “parts of the whole.” However, as mentioned previously, you want to keep your categories simple, clear, distinct, and at five or fewer.

Specific Purpose: To explain to my freshmen students the concept of SMART goals.

- I. SMART goals are specific and clear.
- II. SMART goals are measurable.
- III. SMART goals are attainable or achievable.
- IV. SMART goals are relevant and worth doing.
- V. SMART goals are time-bound and doable within a time period.

Specific Purpose: To explain the four characteristics of quality diamonds.

- I. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of cut.
- II. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of carat.
- III. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of color.
- IV. Valuable diamonds have the characteristic of clarity.

Specific Purpose: To describe to my audience the four main chambers of a human heart.

- I. The first chamber in the blood flow is the right atrium.
- II. The second chamber in the blood flow is the right ventricle.
- III. The third chamber in the blood flow is the left atrium.
- IV. The fourth chamber in the blood flow and then out to the body is the left ventricle.

At this point in discussing organizational patterns and looking at these examples, two points should be made about them and about speech organization in general.

First, you might look at the example about the chambers of the heart and say, “But couldn’t that be chronological, too, since that’s the order of the blood flow procedure?” Yes, it could. There will be times when a specific purpose could work with two different organizational patterns. In this case, it’s just a matter of emphasis. This speech is emphasizing the anatomy of the heart; if the speech’s specific purpose were “To explain to my classmates the flow of blood through the chambers of the heart,” the organizational pattern would be chronological but very similar (However, since the blood goes to the lungs to be oxygenated before coming back to the left atrium, that might alter the pattern some).

## Cause/Effect Pattern

If the specific purpose mentions words such as “causes,” “origins,” “roots of,” “foundations,” “basis,” “grounds,” or “source,” it is a causal order; if it mentions words such as “effects,” “results,” “outcomes,” “consequences,” or

“products,” it is effect order. If it mentions both, it would of course be cause/ effect order. This example shows a cause/effect pattern:

Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the causes and effects of schizophrenia.

- I. Schizophrenia has genetic, social, and environmental causes.
- II. Schizophrenia has educational, relational, and medical effects.

It should be noted, however, that a specific purpose like the last one is very broad and probably not practical for your class speeches; it would be better to focus on just causes or effects, or even just one type of cause (such as genetic causes of schizophrenia) or one type of effect (relational or social). These two examples show a speech that deals with causes only and effects only, respectively.

Specific Purpose: To explain to my fellow Biology 1107 students the origin of the West Nile Virus epidemic in the U.S.

- I. The West Nile Virus came from a strain in a certain part of Africa.
- II. The West Nile Virus resulted from mosquitoes being imported through fruits.
- III. The West Nile Virus became more prominent due to floods in the Southeast.

## Problem-Solution Pattern

The problem-solution pattern will be explored in more depth in the chapter on Persuasive Speaking because that is where it is used the most. Then, we will see that there are variations on it. The principle behind problem-solution pattern is that if you explain to an audience a problem, you should not leave them hanging without solutions. Problems are discussed for understanding and to do something about them.

Additionally, when you want to persuade someone to act, the first reason is usually that something is wrong! Even if you wanted your friends to go out to get some dinner, and they have recently eaten, you will probably be less successful because there is no problem for them—they are not hungry. Then you would have to come up with a new problem, such as you will miss their presence, which they may or may not see as a problem for them.

Additionally, when you want to persuade someone to act, the first reason is usually that something is wrong! Even if you wanted your friends to go out to get some dinner, and they have recently eaten, you will probably be less successful because there is no problem for them—they are not hungry. Then you would have to come up with a new problem, such as you will miss their presence, which they may or may not see as a problem for them because music or arts are not funded? What is the *problem*?

Specific Purpose: To persuade the members of the school board to take action to support the music program at the school.

- I. There is a problem with eliminating extracurricular music programs in high schools.
  - A. Students who do not have extracurricular music in their lives have lower SAT scores.
  - B. Schools that do not have extracurricular music programs have more gang violence and juvenile delinquency.
- II. The solution is to provide \$200,000 in the budget to sustain extracurricular music in our high schools.
  - A. \$120,000 would go to bands.
  - B. \$80,000 would go to choral programs.

Of course, this is a simple outline and you would need to provide evidence to support the arguments, but it shows how problem-solution works. Psychologically, it makes more sense to use problem-solution rather than solution-problem. The audience will be more motivated to listen if you address needs, deficiencies, or problems in their lives rather than giving them solutions first.

## Problem-Cause-Solution Pattern

A variation of the problem-solution pattern, and one that sometimes requires more in-depth exploration of an issue, is the “problem-cause-solution” pattern. If you were giving a speech on future extinction of certain animal species, it would be insufficient to just explain that numbers of species are about to become extinct. Your second point would logically have to explain the cause behind this happening. Is it due to climate change, some type of pollution, encroachment on habitats, disease, or some other reason? In many cases, you can’t really *solve* a problem without first identifying what *caused* the problem. This is similar to the organizational pattern called Monroe’s Motivated Sequence (German, Gronbeck, Ehninger & Monroe, 2012), which also requires a discussion of cause to create a logical speech.

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that age to obtain a driver’s license in the state of Georgia should be raised to 18.

- I. There is a problem in this country with young drivers getting into serious automobile accidents leading to many preventable deaths.
- II. One of the primary causes of this is younger drivers’ inability to remain focused and make good decisions due to incomplete brain development.
- III. One solution that will help reduce the number of young drivers involved in accidents would be to raise the age for obtaining a driver’s license to 18.

In most of the examples so far, the main points are phrased using a similar sentence structure. For example, “The first chamber in the blood flow is. . .” “The second chamber in the blood flow is. . .” This simple repetition of sentence structure is called **parallelism**, a technique useful for speakers and helpful for the audience in remembering information. It is not absolutely necessary to use it and will not always be relevant, but parallelism should be used when appropriate and effective.

In relation to the way each main point is written, notice that they are full grammatical sentences, although sometimes short and simple. For purposes of preparation, this is a good habit, and your instructor will probably require you to write your main points in full sentences. Your instructor may also expect you to write your subpoints in complete sentences as well, but he or she will discuss that with you. There are examples of the different versions of full sentence outlines provided at the ends of some chapters.

Make sure you have adequately labeled and clearly explained your content. Students are often tempted to write main points as directions to themselves, “Talking about the health department” or “Mention the solution.” This is not helpful for you, nor will your instructor be able to tell what you mean by those phrases. “The health department provides many services for low-income residents” says something we can all understand.

## Connective Statements

At this point, you may be thinking that preparing for public speaking does not always follow a completely linear process. In writing the specific purpose statement, you might already have a predetermined structure, and if so, the central idea or thesis sentence flows simply from the specific purpose statement and structure. In other instances, the process may not be as direct and you will need to think more deeply about the best way to organize your speech and

write your central idea. Some of the examples shown above, such as the one about the chambers of the heart, fall into the “easy-to-follow” category, but others, such as the development of the Civil Rights movement, would be less easy to follow.

Also at this point, we have worked on the core of the speech: the purpose, the main idea or thesis, and the key main points, also referred to as “Roman numerals” because traditional outline format uses I. through V. for them. You will notice that we have not addressed the introduction or the conclusion. You will find that information in Chapter 8. That information is in a separate chapter and placed later because it is important and needs special emphasis, not because it is unimportant. Basically, you cannot write an introduction if you do not know what you are introducing. For that reason, even if you are tempted to write your introduction first, you should probably wait until the “core” or “body” of your speech is fairly solid in your mind.

However, there is one aspect beyond the introduction and conclusion that you should prepare and not leave to chance or “ad lib” during the speech. (In fact, you really should not leave anything to chance or “ad lib” in this stage of your development as a public speaker.) That aspect is the connective statements, the subject of the next section.

**Connectives** or connective statements are broad terms that encompass several types of statements or phrases, but are generally designed to help “connect” parts of your speech to make it easier for audience members to follow. Connectives are tools that add to the planned redundancy and are methods for helping the audience listen, retain information, and follow your structure. In fact, it is one thing to have a well-organized speech. It is another for the audience to be able to “consume” or understand that organization.

Connectives in general perform a number of functions:

- Remind the audience of what has come before
- Remind the audience of the central focus or purpose of the speech
- Forecast what is coming next
- Help the audience have a sense of context in the speech—where are we? (this is especially useful in a longer speech of twenty minutes or so)
- Explain the logical connection between the previous main idea(s) and next one
- Explain your own mental processes in arranging the material as you have
- Keeps the audience’s attention through repetition and a sense of movement

Connectives can include “internal summaries,” “signposting,” “internal previews” or “bridging statements.” Each of these terms all help connect the main ideas of your speech for the audience, but they have different emphases and are useful for different types of speeches.

## Types of Connectives and Examples

**Internal summaries** emphasize what has come before and remind the audience of what has been covered.

*“So far I have shown how the designers of King Tut’s burial tomb used the antechamber to scare away intruders and the second chamber to prepare royal visitors for the experience of seeing the sarcophagus.”*

**Internal previews** let your audience know what is coming up next in the speech and what to expect with regard to the content of your speech.

*“In this next part of the presentation I will share with you what the truly secret and valuable part of the King Tut’s pyramid: his burial chamber and the treasury.”*

**Transitions** serve as bridges between seemingly disconnected (but related) material, most commonly between your main points.

*“After looking at how the Cherokee Indians of the North Georgia mountain region were politically important until the 1840s and the Trail of Tears, we can compare their experience with that of the Indians of Central Georgia who did not assimilate in the same way as the Cherokee.”*

At a bare minimum your transition is saying, “Now that we have looked at (talked about, etc.) X, let’s look at Y.”

**Signposts** emphasize the physical movement through the speech content and let the audience know exactly where they are. Signposting can be as simple as “First,” “Next,” “Lastly” or using numbers such as “First,” “Second,” “Third,” and “Fourth.” Signposts can also be lengthier, but in general signposting is meant to be a brief way to let your audience know where they are in the speech. It may help to think of these akin to the mile markers you see along interstates that tell you where you are or signs letting you know how many more miles until you reach your destination.

*“The second aspect of baking chocolate chip cookies is to combine your ingredients in the recommended way.”*

**Bridging statements** emphasize moving the audience psychologically to the next step.

*“I have mentioned two huge disadvantages to students who don’t have extracurricular music programs. Let me ask: Is that what we want for your students? If not, what can we do about it?”*

In any speech there would be multiple ways to help the audience move with you, understand your logic, keep their attention, and remind them of where they have been and where they are going. However, there are a few pieces of advice to keep in mind about connectives.

First, connectives are for connecting. They are not for providing evidence. Save statistics, stories, examples, or new factual information for the supporting points of the main ideas of the speech. Use the connectives for the purposes listed above (review, psychological emphasis, etc.) not to provide new examples, facts, or support.

Second, remember that connectives in writing can be relatively short—a word or phrase. In public speaking, connectives need to be a sentence or two. When you first start preparing and practicing connectives, you may feel that you are being too obvious with them and they are “clunky.” Some connectives may seem to be hitting the audience over the head with them like a hammer. While it is possible to overdo connectives, and we have heard speakers do so, it is less likely than you would think. The audience will appreciate them, and as you listen to your classmates’ speeches, you will become aware of them and when they are absent. Lack of connectives results in hard-to-follow speeches where the information seems to come up unexpectedly or the speaker seems to jump to something new without warning or clarification.

The third piece of advice is that your instructor may want you to include connectives on your outlines in some way to help you start thinking about them. More experienced public speakers have developed the ability to think of transitions, internal previews and summaries, and signposts on the spot, but that talent takes many years to develop.

Fourth, you will also want to vary your connectives and not use the same one all the time. A popular transitional method is the question, such as:

*“Now that you know what was in the first chamber of the King Tut’s tomb, you are probably asking what is in the second tomb? I am glad you asked.”*

While this method can occasionally be clever, usually it is not; it is just annoying. The audience didn’t ask, so you don’t want to put words in their mouths. Or this:

*“The first, outer layer of the skin is the epidermis, the protection for what lies beneath. But what does lie beneath the epidermis?”*

Finally, up to this point we have only discussed connectives between the main points. In reality, you will want to think in terms of connectives between any list of subpoints. For example, going back to the example Problem-Solution speech about music in the high schools, you would want a shorter connecting phrase between Subpoint A and B under Main Point I.

*“Not only do students without band or choir have lower standardized college test scores, they get involved in more illicit activities.”*

Admittedly, preparing connectives between subpoints is more difficult, but you also want to avoid jumping to the next idea without warning.

## **Outlining**

For the purposes of this class, there are two primary types of outlines that we will discuss: preparation outlines and speaking outlines.

### **Preparation Outlines**

Preparation outlines are comprehensive outlines that include all of the information in your speech. This is also most likely the outline that you will be required to turn in to your instructor on the days you give your speeches or in some cases, several days before you give the speech in class. Each instructor of public speaking has a slightly different method for approaching outlining. The examples given here are variations, so please attend to the exact specifications that your instructor may require.

Some instructors require students to label parts of the introduction, for example with “Attention getter” and “Credibility,” and some like the introduction to have Roman numeral points. Some may want the central idea statement underlined. Some versions of outlines consider the introduction Main Point I, and the conclusion the last main point. Some will expect all units to be full sentences, and some will require full sentences in the main points only. However, there are some parts of an extemporaneous speech outline that are always present: the specific purpose, the introduction, the central idea statement and preview, the speech body with clearly labeled units, the connectives, and the conclusion.

In Appendix B are some examples of outlines for informative, persuasive, and commemorative speeches.

### **Speaking Outlines**

It should be clear by now that the preparation outline is something you are moving away from as you practice your speech and get ready for the delivery. As mentioned before and will be mentioned later, you must give yourself adequate time to practice the delivery of your speech—which is why procrastination is one of a public speaker’s biggest enemies. As you practice, you will be able to summarize the full preparation outline down to more usable notes. You should create a set of abbreviated notes for the actual delivery. The more materials you take up with you

to the lectern, the more you will be tempted to look at them rather than have eye contact with the audience, and that will affect your grade as well as your connection with the audience.

Your speaking notes should be in far fewer words than the preparation, in key phrases, and in larger letters than the preparation outline. Your speaking outline should provide cues to yourself to “slow down,” “pause,” or “change slide.” You may want to use 4X6 or 5X7 cards (3X5 might be too small) but again, keep them to a minimum. Your authors have seen many students get their multiple cards out of order and confuse themselves and the audience. Except for any quotations that you want to say exactly as the original, you will avoid long chunks of text.

## **CONCLUSION**

The organization of your speech may not be the most interesting part to think about, but without it, great ideas will seem jumbled and confusing to your audience. Even more, good connectives will ensure your audience can follow you and understand the logical connections you are making with your main ideas.

# Chapter 10

## Supporting Your Speech Ideas

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Explain why supporting materials are necessary;
- List the various types of verbal supporting materials;
- Discuss supporting material strengths in explaining and proving ideas and arguments;
- Incorporate supporting materials seamlessly into the speech;
- Use supporting materials ethically through correct citation.

### Why Supporting Materials are Needed

As mentioned in previous chapters, preparing to give a presentation is not a totally linear process. It would be nice if the process was like following a recipe, but it loops back and forth as you move toward crafting something that will effectively present your ideas and research. Even as you practice, you will make small changes to your basic outline, since the way something looks on paper and the way it sounds are sometimes different. For example, long sentences may look intelligent on paper, but they are hard to say in one breath and hard for the audience to understand. You will also find it necessary to use more repetition or restatement in oral delivery.

Specifically, this chapter is about supporting materials: what they are, what they do, and how to use them effectively. But you have already been thinking about how to support your ideas when you were researching and crafting a central idea and main points. Supporting material also relates directly to presentation aids. Whereas presentation aids are visual or auditory supporting materials, this chapter will deal with verbal supporting materials.

Using your supporting materials effectively is essential because we crave detail and specifics. Let's say you are discussing going out to eat with a friend. You suggest a certain restaurant, and your friend makes a comment about the restaurant you have not heard before or don't accept at face value, so you ask in some way for explanation, clarification, or proof. If she says, "Their servers are really rude," you might ask, "What did they do?" If she says, "Their food is delicious," you might ask what dish is good. Likewise, if she says, "The place is nasty," you will want to know what their health rating is or why she makes this statement. We want to know specifics and are not satisfied with vagueness.

Supporting material can be thought of as the specifics that make your ideas, arguments, assertions, points, or concepts real and concrete. Sometimes supporting materials are referred to as the "meat" on the bones of the outline, but we also like to think of them as pegs you create in the audience's mind to hang the ideas on. Another even more useful idea is to think of them as pillars or supports for a bridge. Without these supports, the bridge would just be a piece of concrete that would not hold up once cars start to cross it. Similarly, the points and arguments you are making in your speech may not hold up without the material to "support" what you are saying.

Of course, as we will see in this chapter, all supporting materials are not considered equal. Some are better at some functions or for some speeches than others. In general, there are two basic ways to think about the role of supporting materials:



They either:

- 1) Clarify, explain, or provide specifics (and therefore understanding) for the audience  
*OR THEY*
- 2) Prove and back up arguments and therefore persuade the audience. Of course, some can do both.

You might ask, how much supporting material is enough? The time you are allowed or required to speak will largely determine that. Since the supporting materials are found in the subpoints of your outline (A, B) and sub-subpoints (1, 2, etc.), you can see clearly on the outline how much you have and can omit one if time constraints demand that. However, in our experience as public speaking instructors, we find that students often struggle with having enough supporting materials. We often comment on a student's speech that we wanted the student to answer more of the "what, where, who, how, why, when," questions and add more description, proof, or evident because their ideas were vague.

Students often struggle with the difference between "main idea" and "supporting idea." For example, in this list, you will quickly recognize a commonality.

Chocolate  
Vanilla  
Strawberry  
Butter  
Pecan

Of course, they are popular flavors of ice cream. The main idea is "Popular Flavors of Ice Cream" and the individual flavors are supporting materials to clarify the main idea; they "hold" it up for understanding and clarification. If the list were:

Rocky Road  
Honey Jalapeno Pickle  
Banana Split Chocolate  
Wildberry Lavender

you would recognize two or three as ice cream flavors (not as popular) but #2 and #5 do not fit the list (Covington, 2013). But you still recognize them as types of something and infer from the list that they have to do with ice cream flavors. "Ice cream flavors" is the general subject and the flavors are the particulars.

Those examples were easy. Let's look at this one. One of the words in this list is the general, and the rest are the particulars.

Love  
Emotion  
Sadness

Disgust

Tolerance

Emotion is general category, and the others are specific emotions. Here is another:

- Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast cancer.
- Pets who live in states with high rates of spaying/neutering live longer.
- Your pet's health is positively affected by being spayed or neutered.
- Spaying lessens the increased urge to roam.
- Male pets who are neutered eliminate their chances of getting testicular and prostate cancer.

Which one is the main point (the general idea), and which are the supporting points that include evidence to prove the main point? You should see that the third bullet point (“Your pet’s health is positively affected . . .”) would be a main point or argument in a speech on spaying or neutering your pet. The basic outline for the speech might look something like this:

- I. Spaying or neutering your pet is good for public health.
- II. Spaying or neutering your pet is good for your pet’s health.
- III. Spaying or neutering your pet is good for your family’s life and budget.

Of course, each of the four supporting points in this example (“helps uterine cancer in female pets, “etc.”) cannot just be made up. The speaker would need to refer to or cite reliable statistics or testimony from veterinarians, researchers, public health organizations, and humane societies. For that reason, here is the more specific support, which you would use in a speech to be ethical and credible. Notice that the italicized sections in this example Main Point use statistics and specific details to support the claims being made.

- III. Spaying or neutering your pet is good for your pet’s health.
  - A. Spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast cancer, which is fatal in about 50 percent of dogs and 90 percent of cats, as found in the online article “Top Ten Reasons to Spay or Neuter Your Pet,” written in 2015 and posted on the website for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
  - B. The article also states that pets who live in the states with the highest rates of spaying/neutering also live the longest.
    1. According to Natalie DiBlasio, writing for USA Today on May 7 of 2013, in Mississippi, the lowest-ranking state for pet longevity, 44% of the dogs are not neutered or spayed.
    2. She goes on to say that other issues affecting pet longevity have to do with climate, heartworm, and income of owners.
  - C. The Human Society of America’s website features the August 2014 article, “Why You Should Spay/Neuter Your Pet,” which states that spaying lessens their urge to roam, exposure to fights with other animals, getting struck by cars, and other mishaps.

- D. Also according to the same article, male pets who are neutered eliminate their chances of getting testicular and prostate cancer.

With all the sources available to you through reliable Internet and published sources, finding information is not difficult. Recognizing supporting information from the general idea you are trying to support or prove is more difficult, as is providing adequate citation.

Along with clarifying and proving, supporting materials, especially narrative ones, also make your speech much more interesting and attention-getting. Later in the chapter we will look at the various “factors of attention” that are related to supporting material. Ultimately, you will be perceived as a more credible speaker if you provide clarifying, **probative** (proof-giving and logical), and interesting supporting material.

## Types of Supporting Materials

Essentially, there are seven types of supporting materials: examples, narratives, definitions, descriptions, historical and scientific fact, statistics, and testimony. Each provides a different type of support, and you will want to choose the supporting materials that best help you make the point you want to get across to your audience.

### Examples

This type of supporting material is the first and easiest to use but also easy to forget. Examples are almost always short but concrete specific instances to illuminate a concept. They are designed to give audiences a reference point. If you were describing a type of architecture, you would obviously show visual aids of it and give verbal descriptions of it, but if you could say, “You pass an example of this type of architecture every time you go downtown—City Hall.” An example must be quickly understandable, something the audience can pull out of their memory or experience quickly.

The key to effectively using examples in your speeches is this: what is an example to you may not be an example to your audience, if they have a different experience. One of the authors has been teaching for almost four decades and cannot use the same pop culture examples she used to use in class. Television shows from twenty years ago are pretty meaningless to audiences today. Time and age is not the only reason an example may not work with the audience. If you are a huge soccer fan speaking to a group who barely knows soccer, using a well-known soccer player as an example of perseverance or overcoming discrimination in the sports world may not communicate. It may only leave the audience members scratching their heads.

Additionally, one good, appropriate example is worth several less apt ones. Keep in mind that in the distinction between supporting materials that prove, those that clarify, and those that do both, examples are used to clarify.

#### *Narratives (Extended Examples)*

Narratives, stories, and anecdotes are useful in speeches to interest the audience and clarify, dramatize, and emphasize ideas. They have, if done well, strong emotional power. They can be used in the introduction, the body, and the conclusion of the speech. They can be short (as anecdotes usually are. Think of the stories you often see in Readers’ Digest, human interest stories on the local news, or what you might post on Facebook about a bad experience you had at the DMV). They could be longer, although they should not comprise large portions of the speech.

Narratives can be personal, literary, historical, or hypothetical. Personal narratives can be helpful in situations where you desire to:

- Relate to the audience on a human level, especially if they may see you as competent but not really similar or connected to them.
- Build your credibility by mentioning your experience with a topic.

Of course, personal narratives must be true. They must also not portray you as more competent, experienced, brave, intelligent, etc., than you are; in other words, along with being truthful in using personal narratives, you should be reasonably humble.

An example of a literary narrative might be one of Aesop's fables, a short story by O. Henry, or an appropriate tale from another culture. Keep in mind that because of their power, stories tend to be remembered more than other parts of the speech. Do you want the story to overshadow your content? Scenes from films would be another example of a literary narrative, but as with examples, you must consider the audience's frame of reference and if they will have seen the film.

Historical narratives (sometimes called documented narratives) have power because they can also prove an idea as well as clarify one. In using these, you should treat them as fact and therefore give a citation as to where you found the historical narrative. By "historical" we do not mean the story refers to something that happened many years ago, only that it has happened in the past and there were witnesses to validate the happening.

If you were trying to argue for the end to the death penalty because it leads to unjust executions, one good example of a person who was executed and then found innocent afterward would be both emotional and probative. Here, be careful of using theatrical movies as your source of historical narrative. Hollywood likes to change history to make the story they want. For example, many people think *Braveheart* is historically accurate, but is off on my key points—even the kilts, which were not worn by the Scots until the 1600s.

**Hypothetical narratives** are ones that could happen but have not yet. To be effective, they should be based on reality. Here are two examples:

Picture this incident: You are standing in line at the grocery checkout, reading the headlines on the *Star* and *National Enquirer* for a laugh, checking your phone. Then, the middle-aged man in front of you grabs his shoulder and falls to the ground, unconscious. What would you do in a situation like this? While it has probably never happened to you, people have medical emergencies in public many times a day. Would you know how to respond?

Imagine yourself in this situation. It is 3:00 in the morning. You are awakened from a pretty good sleep by a dog barking loudly in the neighborhood. You get up and see green lights coming into your house from the back yard. You go in the direction of the lights and unlock your back door and there, right beside your deck, is an alien spaceship. The door opens and visitors from another planet come out and invite you in, and for the next hour you tour their ship. You could somehow understand them because their communication abilities are far advanced from ours. Now, back to reality. If you were in a foreign country, you would not be able to understand a foreign language unless you had studied it. That is why you should learn a foreign language in college.

Obviously, the second is so "off-the-wall" that the audience would be wondering about the connection, although it definitely does attract attention. If using a hypothetical narrative, be sure that it is clear that the narrative is hypothetical, not factual. Because of their attention-getting nature, hypothetical narratives are often used in introductions.

## Definitions

When we use the term “definition” here as a supporting material, we are not talking about something you can easily find from the dictionary.

**re·cy·cle** (rē'sīk(ə)) *verb*

Gerund or present participle: **recycling**

1. Convert (waste) into reusable material. "Car hulks were recycled into new steel." *Synonyms: reuse, reprocess, reclaim, recover*
2. Return (material) to a previous stage in a cyclic process.
3. Use again. "He reserves the right to recycle his own text."

Only use definitions if the audience isn't familiar with the definition. If you use a definition as “filler”, your audience will notice.

## Statistics

Statistics are misunderstood. First, the meaning of the term is misunderstood. Statistics are numerical facts and comparative analysis of those numbers. For example, it is a numerical fact that the population of the U.S., according to the 2010 census, was 308,700,000. This is a 9.7% increase from the 2000 census, which is a statistic. However, for the purpose of simplicity, we will deal with both numerical facts and real statistics in this section.

In using statistics, you are probably going to use them as proof more than as explanation. Statistics are considered a strong form of proof. Here are some guidelines for using them effectively in a presentation.

1. Use statistics as support, not as a main point. The audience may cringe or tune you out for saying, “Now I'd like to give you some statistics about the problem of gangs in our part of the state.” That sounds as exciting as reading the telephone book! Use the statistics to support an argument. “Gang activity is increasing in our region. For example, it is increasing in the three major cities. Mainsville had 450 arrests for gang activity this year alone, up 20% from all of last year.” This example ties the numerical fact (450 arrests) and the statistical comparison (up 20%) to an argument. The goal is to weave or blend the statistics seamlessly into the speech, not have them stand alone as a section of the speech.
2. Always provide the source of the statistic. In the previous example, it should read, “According to a report published on the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's website, Mainsville had 450 arrests . . .” There are a number of “urban myth” statistics floating around that probably have a basis in some research done at some point in time, but that research was outlived by the statistic. An audience would have reason to be skeptical if Chapter 7: Supporting Your Speech Ideas 98 96 96 94 92 90 90 - the mode (90) appears in the list 4 times, more than any other grade in the class 90 90 86 82 - the median, in the middle of the list 80 78 78 72 70 68 68 66 60 56 Figure 7.3—Mean, Mode, Median the mean is 76.57, much lower than either the mode or median Exploring Public Speaking 146 you cannot provide the name of the researcher or organization that backs up the statistics and numerical data.
3. In regard to sources, depend on the reliable ones. Table 7.1, originally published in Wrench, Goding, Johnson, and Attias (2011), lists valid websites providing statistical information.
4. Do not overuse statistics. While there is no hard and fast rule on how many to use, there are other good supporting materials and you would not want to depend on statistics alone. You want to choose the statistics and numerical data that will strengthen your argument the most and drive your point home. Statistics can have emotional power as well as probative value if used sparingly.

5. Use graphs to display the most important statistics. If you are using presentation software such as PowerPoint, you can create your own basic pie, line, or bar graphs, or you can borrow one and put a correct citation on the slide. However, you do not need to make a graph for every single statistic.
6. Explain your statistics as needed, but do not make your speech a statistics lesson. Explain the context of the statistics. If you say, “My blog has 500 subscribers” to a group of people who know little about blogs, that might sound impressive, but is it? You can also provide a story of an individual, and then tie the individual into the statistic. After telling a story of the daily struggles of a young mother with multiple sclerosis, you could follow up with “This is just one story in the 400,000 people who suffer from MS in the United States today, according to National MS Society.”
7. If you do your own survey or research and use numerical data from it, explain your methodology. “In order to understand the attitudes of freshmen at our college about the subject of open source textbooks, I polled 150 first-year students, only three of whom were close friends, asking them this question: ‘Do you agree that our college should encourage the faculty to use open source textbooks?’ Seventy-five percent of them indicated that they agreed with the statement.”
8. It goes without saying that you will use the statistic ethically, that there will be no distortion of what the statistic means. However, it is acceptable and a good idea to round up numerical data to avoid overwhelming the audience. In the citation above of the U.S. population from the 2010 census was a rounded figure. The actual number was 308,745,538, but saying “almost 309 million” or “308.7 million” will serve your purposes and not be unethical.
9. Additionally, do not make statistics mean what they do not mean. Otherwise, you would be pushing the boundaries on ethics. In the example about your survey of students, if you were to say, “75% of college freshmen support . . .” That is not what the research said. Seventy-five percent of the students you surveyed indicated agreement, but since your study did not meet scientific standards regarding size of sample and how you found the sample, you can only use the information in relation to students in your college, not the whole country. One of the authors had a statistics professor who often liked to say, “Numbers will tell you whatever you want if you torture them long enough,” meaning you can always twist or manipulate statistics to meet your goals if you want to.
10. An effective technique with numerical data is to use comparisons. “The National Debt is 17 trillion dollars. What does that mean? It means that every American citizen owes \$55,100.” “It means that if the money were stacked as hundred dollar bills, it would go to . . .” Or another example, “There are 29 million Americans with diabetes. That is 9.3%. In terms closer to home, of the 32 people in this classroom, 3 of us would have diabetes.” Of course, in this last example, the class may not be made up of those in risk groups for diabetes, so you would not want to say, “Three of us have diabetes.” It is only a comparison for the audience to grasp the significance of the topic.
11. Finally, because statistics can be confusing, slow down when you say them, give more emphasis, gesture—small ways of helping the audience grasp them.

## Testimony

**Testimony** is the words of others. You might think of them as quoted material. Obviously, all quoted material or testimony is not the same. Some quotations you just use because they are funny, compelling, or attention-getting. They work well as openings to introductions. Other types of testimony are more useful for proving your arguments.

Testimony can also give an audience insight into the feelings or perceptions of others. Testimony is basically divided into two categories: **expert** and **peer**.

### ***Expert Testimony***

What is an expert? Here is a quotation of the humorous kind: An expert is “one who knows more and more about less and less” (Nicholas Butler). Actually, an expert for our purposes is someone with recognized credentials, knowledge, education, and/ or experience in a subject. Experts spend time studying the facts and putting the facts together. They may not be scholars who publish original research but they have in-depth knowledge. They may not have certain levels of education, but they have real-world experience in the topic.

For example, one of the authors is attending a quilt show this week to talk to experts in quilting. This expertise was gained through years of making, preserving, reading about, and showing quilts, even if they never took Quilting 101 in college. To quote an expert on expertise, “To be an expert, someone needs to have considerable knowledge on a topic or considerable skill in accomplishing something” (Weinstein, 1993). In using expert testimony, you should follow these guidelines:

- Use the expert’s testimony in his or her relevant field, not outside of it. A person may have a Nobel Prize in economics, but that does not make him or her an expert in bio-ethics.
- Provide at least some of the expert’s relevant credentials.
- Choose experts to quote whom your audience will respect and/or whose name or affiliations they will recognize as credible.
- Make it clear that you are quoting the expert testimony verbatim or paraphrasing it. If verbatim, say “Quote . . . end of quote” (not unquote—you cannot unquote someone).
- If you interviewed the expert yourself, make that clear in the speech also. “When I spoke with Dr. Mary Thompson, principal of Park Lake High School, on October 12, she informed me that . . .”

Expert testimony is one of your strongest supporting materials to prove your arguments, but in a sense, by clearly citing the source’s credentials, you are arguing that your source is truly an expert (if the audience is unfamiliar with him or her) in order to validate his or her information.

### ***Peer Testimony***

Any quotation from a friend, family member, or classmate about an incident or topic would be peer testimony. It is useful in helping the audience understand a topic from a personal point of view. For example, in the spring of 2011, a devastating tornado came through the town where one of the authors and many of their students live. One of those students gave a dramatic personal experience speech in class about surviving the tornado in a building that was destroyed and literally disappeared because she and her coworkers (it was a chain restaurant) were able to get to safety in the freezer. While she may not have had an advanced degree in and field related to tornadoes or the destruction they can cause, this student certainly had a good deal of knowledge on the subject based on her experience of surviving a tornado.

# Chapter 11

## Introductions and Conclusions

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Recognize the functions of introductions and conclusions;
- Identify the primary elements of a speech introduction;
- Identify the primary elements of a speech conclusion;
- Construct introductions and conclusions.

### General Guidelines for Introductions and Conclusions

Can you imagine how strange a speech would sound without an introduction? Or how jarring it would be if, after making a point, a speaker just walked off the podium and sat down? You would most likely be pretty confused, and the takeaway from that speech—even if the content was really good—would likely be, “I was confused” or “That was a weird speech.”

This is just one of the reasons all speeches need introductions and conclusions. Introductions and conclusions serve to frame the speech and give it a clearly defined beginning and end. They help the audience to see what is to come in the speech, and then let them mentally prepare for the end. In doing this, introductions and conclusions provide a “preview/review” of your speech as a means to reiterate to your audience what you are talking about.

If you remember back to Chapter 2, we talked about “planned redundancy” as a strategy for reminding the audience about your topic and what you are trying to accomplish with your speech. Since speeches are auditory and live, you need to make sure the audience remembers what you are saying. So one of the primary functions of an introduction is to preview what you will be covering in your speech, and in the conclusion review what you have covered. It may seem like you are repeating yourself and saying the same things over and over, but that repetition ensures that your audience understands and retains what you are saying.

The challenge, however, is that there is much more that a speaker must do in her introduction and conclusion than just preview or review her topic and main points. The roles that introductions and conclusions fulfill are numerous, and, when done correctly, can make your speech stronger. The challenge with all this, though, is that the introduction and conclusion aren’t what your audience wants or needs to hear; that is primarily contained in the body section where the bulk of your research and information will be housed. So to that end, the introduction and conclusion need to be relatively short and to the point.

The general rule is that the introduction and conclusion should each be about 10% of your total speech, leaving 80% for the body section. Let’s say that your informative speech has a time limit of 5-7 minutes: if we average that out to 6 minutes that gives us 360 seconds. Ten percent of 360 is 36, meaning your introduction should come in at just over half a minute. That isn’t to say that your speech instructor will be timing you and penalize you for hitting the 40 second mark, but rather to highlight the fact that you need to be economical with your time. An introduction or conclusion that lasts 90 seconds is taking up 25% of your speech!

The challenge that arises from this relatively short amount of time is that there is a lot you need to get done in that 10%, and all of it is vital to establishing yourself as a knowledgeable and credible speaker. In the following sections,



we will discuss specifically what you should include in the introduction and conclusion, and offer a number of options for accomplishing each.

## Structuring the Introduction

A common concern many students have as the date of their first major speech approaches is “I don’t know how I should start my speech.” What they are really saying is they aren’t sure what words will be memorable, attention-capturing, and clever enough to get their audience interested or, on a more basic level, sound good. This is a problem most speakers have, since the first words you say, in many ways, set the tone for the rest of your speech. There may not be any one “best” way to start a speech, but we can provide some helpful guidelines that will make starting a speech much easier.

With that in mind, there are five basic elements that you will want to incorporate into your introduction. And while you have some leeway to structure your introduction in a way that best fits with your speech and you wouldn’t necessarily do all of these in the order below, the following order of these five elements is fairly standard. Unless you have a specific reason to do otherwise, it is probably a pretty good order for you to use.

### Element 1: Get the Audience’s Attention

The first major purpose of an introduction is to gain your audience’s attention and make them interested in what you have to say. While many audiences may be polite and not talk while you’re speaking, actually getting them to listen to what you are saying is a completely different challenge. Let’s face it—we’ve all tuned someone out at some point because we weren’t interested in what they had to say. If you do not get the audience’s attention at the outset, it will only become more difficult to do so as you continue speaking.

That’s why every speech should start with an **attention getter**, or some sort of statement or question that piques the audience’s interest in what you have to say at the very start of a speech. Sometime these are called “grabbers.” The first words out of your mouth should be something that will perk up the audience’s ears. Starting a speech with “Hey everybody. I’m going to talk to you today about soccer” already sounds boring and has not tried to engage the individuals in the audience who don’t care about soccer. Once your audience has deemed your speech to be boring, informing, persuading, or entertaining them becomes exponentially more difficult. So let’s briefly discuss what you can do to capture your audience’s attention from the onset.

First, when selecting an attention-getting device, you want to make sure that the option you choose is actually appropriate and relevant to your specific audience. Different audiences will have different backgrounds and knowledge, so you should use your audience analysis to determine whether specific information you plan on using would be appropriate for a specific audience. For example, if you’re giving a speech on family units to a group of individuals over the age of sixty-five, starting your speech with a reference to the television show *Gossip Girl* may not be the best idea because the audience may be unfamiliar with that show.

You will also want to choose an attention-getting device appropriate for your speech topic. Ideally, your attention-getting device should have a relevant connection to your speech. Imagine if a speaker pulled condoms out of his pocket, yelled “Free sex!” and threw the condoms at the audience in the beginning of a speech about the economy. While this may clearly get the audience’s attention, this isn’t really a good way to prepare an audience for a speech about the stock market. To help you out, below we have listed a number of different attention getters that you may find useful for opening your speech.

## **Anecdote**

An **anecdote** is a brief account or story of an interesting or humorous event. Notice the emphasis here is on the word “brief.” A common mistake speakers make when telling an anecdote is to make the anecdote too long. An example of an anecdote used in a speech about the pervasiveness of technology might look something like this:

In July 2009, a high school girl named Miranda Becker was walking along a main boulevard near her home on Staten Island, New York, typing in a message on her cell phone. Not paying attention to the world around her, she took a step and fell right into an open manhole.

Notice that the anecdote is short and has a clear point. From here the speaker can begin to make his or her point about how technology is controlling our lives.

A second type of anecdote is a parable or fable. A parable or fable is an allegorical anecdote designed to teach general life lessons. The most widely known parables for most Americans are those given in the Bible and the best-known fables are Aesop’s Fables (<http://www.umass.edu/aesop/index.php>). So if you decide your speech will focus on the benefits of remaining in college for more than four years in order to obtain multiple degrees, you may want to adapt some version of “The Tortoise and The Hare” as your attention getter.

## **Startling Statement/Statistic/Fact**

Another way to start your speech is to surprise your audience with startling information about your topic. Often, startling statements come in the form of statistics and strange facts. The goal of a good startling statistic is that it surprises the audience and gets them engaged in your topic. For example, if you’re giving a speech about oil conservation, you could start by saying, “A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel.” You could start a speech on the psychology of dreams by noting, “The average person has over 1,460 dreams a year.”

A strange fact, on the other hand, is a statement that does not involve numbers but is equally surprising to most audiences. For example, you could start a speech on the gambling industry by saying, “There are no clocks in any casinos in Las Vegas.” You could start a speech on the Harlem Globetrotters by saying, “In 2000, Pope John Paul II became the most famous honorary member of the Harlem Globetrotters.” All four of these examples came from a great website for strange facts (<http://www.strangefacts.com>). Always double-check any facts, statistics, or quotes you find online.

Although startling statements are fun, it is important to use them ethically. First, make sure that your startling statement is factual. The Internet is full of startling statements and claims that are simply not factual, so when you find a statement you’d like to use, you have an ethical duty to ascertain its truth before you use it and to provide a reliable citation. Second, make sure that your startling statement is relevant to your speech and not just thrown in for shock value. We’ve all heard startling claims made in the media that are clearly made for purposes of shock or fear mongering, such as “Do you know what common household appliance could kill you? We’ll tell you at 11:00.” As speakers, we have an ethical obligation to avoid playing on people’s emotions in this way.

## **A Rhetorical Question**

A **rhetorical question** is a question to which no actual reply is expected. For example, a speaker talking about the history of Mother’s Day could start by asking the audience, “Do you remember the last time you told your mom you loved her?” In this case, the speaker does not expect the audience to shout out an answer, but rather to think about the questions as the speech goes on. It is always best to add something like, “think to yourself” if you don’t want someone to answer the question out loud.

## **A Story**

It is sometimes helpful to begin your speech in a way that your audience finds familiar, since this can make them feel more connected to your speech. This may be particularly helpful for topics that your audience is unfamiliar with. One of the best and easiest ways to do this is to begin with a story that your audience is likely to have heard before. These types of stories come in a number of forms, but the most common ones include fables, tall tales, ghost stories, parables, fairy tales, myths, and legends.

Two primary issues that you should be aware of often arise with using stories as attention getters. First, you shouldn't let your story go on for too long. If you are going to use a story to begin your speech, you need to think of it more in terms of summarizing the story rather than actually reciting the entire thing. Even a relatively simple story like "The Tortoise and the Hare" can take a couple of minutes to get through in its entirety, so you'll need to cut it down to the main points or highlights. The second issue with using stories as attention getters is that the story must in some way relate to your speech. If you begin your speech by recounting the events in "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," your speech will in some way need to deal with finding balance or coming to a compromise about a matter. If your story doesn't relate to your topic, you will likely confuse your audience and they may spend the remainder of your speech trying to figure out the connection rather than listening to what you have to say.

A personal story is another option here. You may consider starting your speech with a story about yourself that is relevant to your topic. Some of the best speeches are ones that come from personal knowledge and experience. If you are an expert or have firsthand experience related to your topic, sharing this information with the audience is a great way to show that you are credible during your attention getter. For example, if you had a gastric bypass surgery and you wanted to give an informative speech about the procedure, you could introduce your speech in this way:

*In the fall of 2015, I decided that it was time that I took my life into my own hands. After suffering for years with the disease of obesity, I decided to take a leap of faith and get a gastric bypass in an attempt to finally beat the disease.*

If you use a personal example, don't get carried away with the focus on yourself and your own life. Your speech topic is the purpose of the attention getter, not the other way around. Another pitfall in using a personal example is that it may be too personal for you to maintain your composure. For example, a student once started a speech about her grandmother by stating, "My grandmother died of cancer at 3:30 this morning." The student then proceeded to cry nonstop for five minutes. While this is an extreme example, we strongly recommend that you avoid any material that could get you upset while speaking. When speakers have an emotional breakdown during their speech, audience members stop listening to the message and become very uncomfortable.

## **Immediate Reference to Subject**

The most direct (but probably the least interesting of the possible attention getters) is to tell your audience the subject of your speech. Here's an example:

We are surrounded by statistical information in today's world, so understanding statistics is becoming paramount to citizenship in the twenty-first century.

This sentence explicitly tells an audience that the speech they are about to hear is about the importance of understanding statistics. While this isn't the most entertaining or interesting attention getter, it is very clear and direct. And note that it justifies the importance of the audience paying attention while avoiding being completely snooze-inducing, as it would have been if it were reworded as, "I want to talk to you about statistics."

## **Reference to Current Events**

Referring to a current news event that relates to your topic is often an effective way to capture attention, as it immediately makes the audience aware of how relevant the topic is in today's world. For example, consider this attention getter for a persuasive speech on frivolous lawsuits:

*On January 10 of this year, Scott Anthony Gomez, Jr., and a fellow inmate escaped from a Pueblo, Colorado, jail. During their escape the duo attempted to rappel from the roof of the jail using a makeshift ladder of bed sheets. During Gomez's attempt to scale the building, he slipped, fell forty feet, and injured his back. After being quickly apprehended, Gomez filed a lawsuit against the jail for making it too easy for him to escape.*

In this case, the speaker is highlighting a news event that illustrates what a frivolous lawsuit is, setting up the speech topic of a need for change in how such lawsuits are handled.

## **Humor**

Humor is another effective method for gaining an audience's attention. Humor is an amazing tool when used properly. We cannot begin to explain all the facets of humor within this text, but we can say that humor is a great way of focusing an audience on what you are saying. However, humor is a double-edged sword. If you do not wield the sword carefully, you can turn your audience against you very quickly.

When using humor, you really need to know your audience and understand what they will find humorous. One of the biggest mistakes a speaker can make is to use some form of humor that the audience either doesn't find funny or finds offensive. Think about how incompetent the character of Michael Scott seems on the television program *The Office*, in large part because of his ineffective use of humor. We always recommend that you test out humor of any kind on a sample of potential audience members prior to actually using it during a speech. If you do use a typical narrative "joke," don't say it happened to you. Anyone who heard the joke before will think you are less than truthful!

Now that we've warned you about the perils of using humor, let's talk about how to use humor as an attention getter. Humor can be incorporated into several of the attention-getting devices mentioned. You could use a humorous anecdote, quotation, or current event. As with other attention-getting devices, you need to make sure your humor is relevant to your topic, as one of the biggest mistakes some novices make when using humor is to add humor that really doesn't support the overall goal of the speech. So when looking for humorous attention getters you want to make sure that the humor is not going to be offensive to your audience and relevant to your speech.

For example, here's a humorous quotation from Nicolas Chamfort, a French author during the sixteenth century: "The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless." While this quotation could be effective for some audiences, other audiences may find this humorous quotation offensive. The Chamfort quotation could be appropriate for a speech on the ills of modern society, but probably not for a speech on the state of modern religious conflict. It also would not be appropriate in an area that had just experienced damaging floods. You want to make sure that the leap from your attention getter to your topic isn't too complicated for your audience, or the attention getter will backfire.

This list of attention-getting devices represents a thorough, but not necessarily exhaustive, range of ways that you can begin your speech. Certainly these would be the more common attention getters that most people employ. Again, as mentioned earlier, your selection of attention getter is not only dependent on your audience, your topic, and the occasion, but also on your preferences and skills as a speaker. If you know that you are a bad storyteller, you might elect not to start your speech with a story. If you tell jokes that no one laughs at, avoid starting your speech off with humor.

Other factors like suspense (introduce a story and finish it at the end) or conflict (telling a story with strong opposing forces and tension) can also be used.

## Element 2: Establish Your Credibility

Whether you are informing, persuading, or entertaining an audience, one of the things they will be expecting is for you to know what you are talking about. So the fourth element of an introduction is to let your audience know that you are a knowledgeable and credible source for this information. To do this, you will need to explain how you know what you know about your topic.

For some people, this will be simple. If you are informing your audience how a baseball is thrown, and you have played baseball since you were eight years old, that makes you a fairly credible source. You probably know what you are talking about. So let us know that by saying something like, “Having played baseball for over ten years, including two years as the starting pitcher on my high school’s varsity team, I can tell you about the ways that pitchers use to throw different kind of balls in a baseball game.” With regard to persuasive speaking, if you are trying to convince your audience to join Big Brothers Big Sisters and you have been volunteering for years, let them know: “I’ve been serving with Big Brothers Big Sisters for the last two years, and I can tell you that the experience is very rewarding.” By telling your audience you volunteer, you are saying to them “I’m not asking you to do anything I wouldn’t do myself.” And if you do it (and have done it for two years) then it must be a good experience.

However, you may be speaking on a subject with which you have no history of credibility. If you are just curious about when streetlights were installed at intersections and why they are red, yellow, and green, you can do that. But you will still need to give your audience some sort of reason to trust your knowledge. Since you were required to do research, you are at least more knowledgeable on the subject than anyone else in the class. In this case you might say, “After doing some research and reading several books on the subject, I want to share what I’ve learned about the history and evolution of streetlights in America.”

## Element 3: Establish Rapport

The next element of your introduction will be to establish rapport with your audience. **Rapport** is basically a relationship or connection you make with your audience. In everyday life, we say that two people have a rapport when they get along really well and are good friends. In your introduction, you will want to explain to your audience why you are giving them this information and why it is important to them. You will be making a connection through this shared information and explaining to them how it will benefit them. One of the best examples of rapport we have seen came from an informative speech on the poet Lord Byron:

*You may be asking yourselves why you need to know about Lord Byron. If you take Humanities 1202 as I did last semester, you will be discussing his life and works, so after this speech you will have a good basis for the class material.*

What is important here is that this speaker used the audience analysis techniques discussed in Chapter 2 to determine the demographic make-up of her audience and determine what would motivate them to listen. Knowing that they are all college students (as your audience will be), she enticed them to listen with the suggestion that this information would benefit them in a future class they might take.

Another important thing to note here is that there is not necessarily a right or wrong way to establish rapport with your audience. You as the speaker must determine what you think will work best and help make a connection. Take for example an informative speech on “how to throw a baseball.” How would you establish rapport with your audience on that topic? Maybe you choose to focus on the age of your audience, and noting that they are all relatively young and that some of them are already parents, you might say, “A lot of people in this room have or may have children

someday, and if you decide you want to throw a ball with them or help them with sports, here are three steps you can use to teach them how to throw a baseball.” Will everyone in the class have kids someday? Probably not, but it is reasonable to guess that most about your audience will relate to this approach based on a demographic analysis.

#### **Element 4: Preview Your Topic/Purpose/Central Idea**

The second major function of an introduction after getting the audience’s attention is to reveal the purpose of your speech to your audience. Have you ever sat through a speech wondering what the basic point was? Have you ever come away after a speech and had no idea what the speaker was talking about? An introduction is important because it forces the speaker to be aware of explaining the topic of the speech to the audience.

When previewing your topic in the introduction, be explicit with regard to exactly what your topic is. Spell it out for them if you have to. While it may not be great writing, the sentence “I’d like to tell you about how to properly change your car’s oil” is clear and leaves no doubt what your speech will be about. This might be a good place for you to review the material in Chapter 4 about writing central idea statements and specific purposes.

While not a hard and fast rule, you will probably also want to avoid having the audience “guess” what your topic is through clues. Consider the following topic reveal:

*Today I’d like to talk to you about a man who overcame great adversity to become the President of the United States. During his time in office he faced increasing opposition from conservative voices in government, as well as some dissension among his own party, all while being thrust into a war he didn’t want.*

As an attention getter, this may not be bad, but what it doesn’t do is reveal the topic. The speaker at this point might assume the audience has clearly figured out who this speech is about and moved on. Unfortunately, the above passage could refer to either Abraham Lincoln or Barack Obama, and members of the audience might either be confused or disappointed when they figure out the speech isn’t covering what they thought it was.

It should also be noted here that at no point in your introduction do you ever want to read your specific purpose statement as a way of revealing your topic. Your specific purpose is included on your outline as a way for your instructor’s sake and to keep you on track during preparation. The language used in the specific purpose (“To inform my audience...”) is too stilted and awkward to actually be read aloud.

#### **Element 5: Preview Your Main Points**

Just like previewing your topic, previewing your main points helps your audience know what to expect throughout the course of your speech and prepares them for what you are going to speak on. Your preview of main points should be clear and easy to follow so that there is no question in your audience’s minds what they are. Long, complicated, or verbose main points can get confusing. Be succinct and simple: “Today, in our discussion of Abraham Lincoln’s life, we will look at his birth, his role a president, and his assassination.” From that there is little question as to what specific aspects of Lincoln’s life the speech will cover. However, if you want to be extra sure they get it, you can always enumerate them by using signposts: “In discussing how to make chocolate chip cookies, first we will cover what ingredients you need, second we will talk about how to mix them, and third we will look at baking them.” What these five elements do is prepare your audience for the bulk of the speech (i.e. the body section) by letting them know what they can expect, why they should listen, and why they can trust you as a speaker. Having all five elements starts your speech off on much more solid ground that you would get without having them.

## Example Introductions

Below you will find examples of informative and persuasive introductions. Notice that each contains the five elements necessary for a good intro: an attention getter, the establishment of rapport with the audience, the speaker's credibility, a clear topic reveal, and clearly articulated main points.

### Informative Speech Introductions

Topic: Allergies

*My parents knew that something was really wrong when my mom received a call from my home economics teacher saying that she needed to get to the school immediately and pick me up. This was all because of an allergy, something that everyone in this room is either vaguely or extremely familiar with. Allergies affect a large number of people, and three very common allergies include pet and animal allergies, seasonal allergies, and food allergies. All three of these allergies take control over certain areas of my life, as all three types affect me, starting when I was just a kid and continuing today. Because of this, I have done extensive research on the subject, and would like to share some of what I've learned with all of you today. Whether you just finished your freshman year of college, you are a new parent, or you have kids that are grown and out of the house, allergies will most likely affect everyone in this room at some point, so it will benefit you all to know more about them, specifically the three most common sources of allergies and the most recent approaches to treating them*

Topic: Seasonal Affective Disorder

*When winter is approaching and the days are getting darker and shorter, do you feel a dramatic reduction in energy or do you sleep longer than usual during the fall or winter months? If you answered yes to either of these questions, you may be one of the millions of people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. For most people these problems do not cause great suffering in their life, but for an estimated six percent of the United States population these problems can result in major suffering. As a student in the registered nursing program here at Dalton State, I became interested in SAD after learning more about it and want to share this information with all of you in case you recognize some of these symptoms in yourself or someone you love. In order to fully understand SAD, it is important to look at the medical definition of SAD, the symptoms of this disorder, and the measures that are commonly used to ease symptoms.*

### Persuasive Speech Introductions

Topic: Term Life Insurance

*You have cried silent tears and uttered desperate prayers, but as you watch the medical team unhook the tubes, turn off the heart monitor and shoot furtive, helpless glances your way, you face the unmistakable reality that cancer has won and you are left with unimaginable grief, despair and yes, financial burden. Most of us would not choose to cause our loved ones financial pain on top of the emotional pain of our deaths, but by failing to plan for their financial needs, that is exactly what we do. I have learned a lot about life insurance in my research for this presentation, from taking a thirteen-week course about financial matters, and from the experience of purchasing a term life insurance policy just last year. I know most of you probably have not thought much about life insurance, but someday each and every one of us in this room will pass away and somebody is going to have to pay for our funerals. Term life insurance is affordable, protects those you love from the financial devastation of your uninsured death, and reinforces your commitment to their financial and emotional well-being while you are living. Let's examine the definition of term life insurance and then its benefits.*

## Structuring the Conclusion

Similar to the introduction, the conclusion has four specific elements that you will want to incorporate in order to make it as strong as possible. Given the nature of these elements and what they do, these should generally be incorporated into your conclusion in the order they are presented below.

### Element 1: Signal the End

The first thing a good conclusion should do is to signal the end of a speech. You may be thinking that telling an audience that you're about to stop speaking is a "no brainer," but many speakers really don't prepare their audience for the end. When a speaker just suddenly stops speaking, the audience is left confused and disappointed. Instead, you want to make sure that audiences are left knowledgeable and satisfied with your speech. In a way, it gives them time to begin mentally organizing and cataloging all the points you have made for further consideration later.

Generally, the easiest way to signal that it is the end of your speech is to begin your conclusion with the words, "In conclusion." Similarly, "In summary" or "To conclude" work just as well. While these may seem very blunt ways of communicating the end of your speech to the audience, you want it to be extremely clear to everyone that you are wrapping things up. Certainly you can choose to employ more elegant, interesting, or creative language here, but you then run the risk of the audience not catching on to the fact that your speech is ending.

On the other hand, saying "In conclusion" (and definitely saying it more than once) can have an unintended negative effect. The audience may figure you are finished and turn you off, sort of like how we get up and leave during the credits in a movie. Therefore, you can also go straight to the summary, which is element 2.

### Element 2: Restate Main Points

In the introduction of a speech you delivered a preview of your main points, now in the conclusion you will deliver a review. The reason for this stems from the fact that one of the biggest differences between written and oral communication is the necessity of repetition in oral communication (the issue of "planned redundancy" again). When you preview your main points in the introduction, effectively discuss and make transitions to your main points during the body of the speech, and finally, review the main points in the conclusion, you increase the likelihood that the audience will retain your main points after the speech is over. Remember, your English instructor can re-read your essays as many times as he or she wants, but your audience – and your instructor – only have one opportunity to catch and remember the points you are trying to get across in your speech.

Because you are trying to remind the audience of your main points, you want to be sure not to bring up any new material or ideas. For example, if you said, "There are several other issues related to this topic, such as...but I don't have time for them," that would make the audience confused and perhaps wonder why you did not address those in the body section. Or if you were giving a persuasive speech on wind energy and you ended with, "Wind energy is the energy of the future, but there are still a few problems with it, such as noise and killing lots of birds," you are bringing up a counter-argument that should have been dealt with in the body of the speech.

This is a good place to remind you that the introduction, preview, transitions, and conclusion are for helping the audience be interested, prepared to listen, to retain and to follow your speech. The hard core facts and content are in the body. If you are tempted to cram lots of into the conclusion, that is not the place for it, nor is it the place to provide the important steps to a solution. The conclusion is too late for that.

As you progress as a public speaker, you will want to work on rephrasing your summary statement so that it does not sound like an exact repeat of the preview. For example, if your preview was:



The three arguments in favor of medical marijuana that I will present are that it would make necessary treatments available to all, it would cut down on the costs to law enforcement, and it would bring revenue to state budgets.

Your summary might be:

*In the minutes we've had together, I have shown you that approving medical marijuana in our state will greatly help persons with a variety of chronic and severe conditions. Also, funds spent on law enforcement to find and convict legitimate marijuana users would go down as revenues from medical marijuana to the state budget would go up.*

### **Element 3: Clincher**

The fourth and final element of your conclusion is the clincher, or something memorable with which to conclude your speech. The **clincher** is sometimes referred to as a Concluding Device, but regardless, these are the very last words you will say in your speech, so you need to make them count. This is the last thing your audience will hear, so you want to make it good. In a certain way, you might think of your speech as a nice dinner at a fancy restaurant: the introduction is the appetizer that gets everyone ready for the main course, the body section is the “meat and vegetables,” and the conclusion is like dessert. But have you ever had a nice meal that ended with a dessert that didn't really taste good? Regardless of how good the rest of the meal was, you probably walked away thinking, *It was okay, but I just remember not liking it at the end.* A good clincher prevents your audience from thinking that way, and in fact can even make an audience remember a speech more favorably.

In many ways the clincher is like the inverse of the attention-getter. You want to start the speech off with something strong, and you want to end the speech with something strong. To that end, similar to what we discussed above with attention getters, there are a number of ways you can make your clincher strong and memorable.

### **Conclude with a Challenge**

One way you can end your speech is with a challenge. A challenge is a call to engage in some kind of activity that requires a contest or special effort. In a speech on the necessity of fundraising, a speaker could conclude by challenging the audience to raise 10 percent more than their original projections. In a speech on eating more vegetables, you could challenge your audience to increase their current intake of vegetables by two portions daily. In both of these challenges, audience members are being asked to go out of their way to do something different that involves effort on their part.

In a challenge, try to make it aspirational but reasonable. The challenge should be something they can strive for but not see as something impossible. Two or three more servings a day of fruits and vegetables is reasonable, but six probably would be seen as too much.

In the same category as a challenge, probably the most common persuasive concluding device is the appeal for action or the call to action. In essence, the appeal for action occurs when a speaker asks her or his audience to engage in a specific behavior. When a speaker concludes by asking the audience “to do” something, the speaker wants to see an actual change. Whether the speaker appeals for people to eat more fruit, buy a car, vote for a candidate, oppose the death penalty, or sing more in the shower, the speaker is asking the audience to engage in action.

One specific type of appeal for action is the immediate call to action. Whereas some appeals ask for people to engage in behavior in the future, the immediate call to action asks people to engage in behavior right now. If a speaker wants to see a new traffic light placed at a dangerous intersection, he or she may conclude by asking all the

audience members to sign a digital petition right then and there, using a computer the speaker has made available. For a speech on eating more vegetables, pass out raw veggies and dip at the conclusion of the speech; someone giving a speech on petitioning a lawmaker for a new law could provide audience members with a prewritten e-mail they can send to the lawmaker.

If you are giving a persuasive speech about a solution to a problem, you should not relegate the call to action to the very end of the speech. It should probably be a main point where you can deal with the steps and specifics of the solution in more detail. For example, perhaps a speaker has been discussing the problems associated with the disappearance of art education in the United States. The speaker could then propose a solution of creating more community-based art experiences for school children as a way to fill this gap. Although this can be an effective conclusion, a speaker must ask herself or himself whether the solution should be discussed in more depth as a stand-alone main point within the body of the speech so that audience concerns about the proposed solution may be addressed.

### **Conclude with a Quotation**

Another way you can conclude a speech is by providing a quotation relevant to the speech topic. When using a quotation, you need to think about whether your goal is to end on a persuasive note or an informative note. Some quotations will have a clear call to action, while other quotations summarize or provoke thought. For example, let's say you are delivering an informative speech about dissident writers in the former Soviet Union. You could end by citing this quotation from Alexander Solzhenitsyn: "A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason no regime has ever loved great writers."

Notice that this quotation underscores the idea of writers as dissidents, but it doesn't ask listeners to put forth effort to engage in any specific thought process or behavior. If, on the other hand, you were delivering a persuasive speech urging your audience to sponsor a child in a developing country for \$40 per month, you might use this quotation by Forest Witcraft: "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different, because I was important in the life of a child." In this case, the quotation leaves the audience with the message that monetary sacrifices are worth taking, that they make our lives worthwhile, and that the right thing to do is to go ahead and make that sacrifice.

### **Conclude by Visualizing the Future**

The purpose of a conclusion that refers to the future is to help your audience imagine the future you believe can occur. If you are giving a speech on the development of video games for learning, you could conclude by depicting the classroom of the future where video games are perceived as true learning tools. More often, speakers use visualization of the future to depict how society or how individual listeners' lives would be different, if the speaker's persuasive attempt worked. For example, if a speaker pro-poses that a solution to illiteracy is hiring more reading specialists in public schools, the speaker could ask her or his audience to imagine a world without illiteracy. In this use of visualization, the goal is to persuade the audience to adopt the speaker's point of view. By showing that the speaker's vision of the future is a positive one, the conclusion should help to persuade the audience to help create this future.

### **Conclude by Inspiration**

By definition, the word inspire means to affect or arouse someone. Both affect and arouse have strong emotional connotations. The ultimate goal of an inspirational concluding device is similar to an "appeal for action" but the ultimate goal is more lofty or ambiguous; the goal is to stir someone's emotions in a specific manner. This is done by sharing a story, poem, or quotation that appeals to the audience basic values and therefore appeals to emotions. Stories or allusions to "underdogs" who overcame obstacles to achieve something worthwhile or those who make

sacrifices for the good of others can help inspire. You probably know of such stories (Olympic athletes and a well-known figure such as Captain Sullenberg are examples) that would be of value, as long as they are relevant to your topic and purpose. Poetry is sometimes used to inspire, but you want to use a short passage (eight lines or less) of poetry that is clear to the audience.

## **Conclude with Advice**

The next concluding device is one that should be used primarily by speakers who are recognized as expert authorities on a given subject. Advice is essentially a speaker's opinion about what should or should not be done. The problem with opinions is that everyone has them, and one person's opinion is not necessarily any more correct than another's. There needs to be a really good reason your opinion—and therefore your advice—should matter to your audience. If, for example, you are an expert in holistic medicine, you might conclude a speech on healthy living by giving advice about the benefits of alternative treatments for illnesses. If you have worked in several fast food restaurants and know some signs to look for in a clean, well-managed one, you can give some advice about those signs.

## **Conclude with a Question**

Another way you can end a speech is to ask a rhetorical question that forces the audience to ponder an idea. Maybe you are giving a speech on the importance of the environment, so you end the speech by saying, "Think about your children's future. What kind of world do you want them raised in? A world that is clean, vibrant, and beautiful—or one that is filled with smog, pollution, filth, and disease?" Notice that you aren't actually asking the audience to verbally or nonverbally answer the question; the goal of this question is to force the audience into thinking about what kind of world they want for their children.

## **Refer Back to the Introduction**

This method provides a good sense of closure to the speech and can be one of the most effective methods. If you started the speech with a startling statistic or fact, such as "Last year, according to the official website of the American Humane Society, four million pets were euthanized in shelters in the United States," in the end you could say, "Remember that shocking number of four million euthanized pets? With your donation of time or money to the Northwest Georgia Rescue Shelter, you can help lower that number in our region."

## **Conclude with an Anecdote or Personal Story**

As with your attention getter, a brief story can be a strong way to conclude. However, it must be relevant and not go on too long. Combining this method and the previous one, you might finish telling a story that you started in the introduction as your clincher. This method is probably better with persuasive speeches where you want to end with a strong emotional appeal.

## **Conclude with a Reference to Audience or Audience Self-Interest**

The last concluding device involves a direct reference to your audience. This concluding device is used when a speaker attempts to answer the basic audience question, "What's in it for me?" (the WIIFM question) The goal of this concluding device is to spell out the direct benefits a behavior or thought change has for audience members. For example, a speaker talking about stress reduction techniques could conclude by clearly listing all the physical health benefits stress reduction offers (e.g., improved reflexes, improved immune system, improved hearing, reduction in blood pressure). In this case, the speaker is clearly spelling out why audience members should care about the topic and what's in it for them.

## Informative versus Persuasive Conclusions

As you read through the above possible ways to conclude a speech, hopefully you noticed that some of the methods are more appropriate for persuasive speeches and others are more appropriate for informative speeches. An appeal to action, for example, may not be appropriate for an informative speech since asking your audience to do something often borders on persuasion, which isn't what an informative speech is intended to do. Similarly, if your persuasive speech is on the importance of voting in the next presidential election, an appeal to action clincher would probably be one of your stronger options.

### Example Conclusions

Here are two examples of conclusions:

#### *Informative Speech Conclusion*

Topic: Anxiety

In closing, anxiety is a complex emotion that afflicts people of all ages and social backgrounds and is experienced uniquely by each individual. We have seen that there are multiple symptoms, causes, and remedies, all of which can oftentimes be related either directly or indirectly to cognitive behaviors. While most people do not enjoy anxiety, it seems to be part of the universal human experience, so realize that you are not alone, but also realize that you are not powerless against it. With that said, the following quote, attributed to an anonymous source, could not be more true, "Worry does not relieve tomorrow of its stress; it merely empties today of its strength."

#### *Persuasive Speech Conclusion*

Topic: Adopting a Rescue Animal

In conclusion, I believe you should adopt a rescue animal because it helps stop forms of animal cruelty, you can add a healthy companion to your home, and it is a relatively simple process that can save a life. Each and every one of you should go to your nearest animal shelter, which may include the Catoosa Citizens for Animal Care, the Humane Society of NWGA in Dalton, the Murray County Humane Society, or the multiple other shelters in the area to bring a new animal companion into your life. I'll leave you with a paraphrased quote from Deborah Jacobs's article "Westminster Dog Show Junkie" on Forbes.com: You may start out thinking that you are rescuing the animal, and ultimately find that the animal rescues you right back.

### **Something to Think About**

Read out loud one of the example introductions earlier in the chapter, and time your reading. If an introduction should not be longer than about 10% of the total speech time (although there can be some wiggle room on that percentage and it is not meant to be a hard and fast rule) how long would the speech attached to this introduction be? (You'll have to do the math!) If you had to give a shorter speech using this introduction, how would you edit it to make it for the time limit but still be an effective introduction?

# Chapter 12

## Visual Aids

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

#### Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- List and explain reasons why presentation aids are important in public speaking and how they function;
- Describe the various computer-based and non-computer based types of presentation aids available to the students;
- Explain the correct use of various types of presentation aids;
- Design professional-looking slides using presentation

#### What Are Visual Aids?

When you give a speech, you are presenting much more than just a collection of words and ideas. Because you are speaking “live and in person,” your audience members will experience your speech through all five of their senses: hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. In some speaking situations, the speaker appeals only to the sense of hearing, more or less ignoring the other senses except to avoid visual distractions by dressing and presenting himself or herself in an appropriate manner. But the speaking event can be greatly enriched by appeals to the other senses. This is the role of **visual aids**, also called presentation aids.

**Visual aids** are the resources beyond the speech itself that a speaker uses to enhance the message conveyed to the audience. The type of presentation aids that speakers most typically make use of are visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs, maps, and the like. Audible aids include musical excerpts, audio speech excerpts, and sound effects. A speaker may also use fragrance samples or food samples as olfactory (sense of smell) or gustatory (sense of taste) aids. Finally, presentation aids can be three-dimensional objects, animals, and people; they can change over a period of time, as in the case of a how-to demonstration.

As you can see, the range of possible presentation aids is almost infinite. However, all presentation aids have one thing in common: To be effective, each presentation aid a speaker uses must be a direct, uncluttered example of a specific element of the speech. It is understandable that someone presenting a speech about Abraham Lincoln might want to include a photograph of him, but because everyone already knows what Lincoln looked like, the picture would not contribute much to the message unless, perhaps, the message was specifically about the changes in Lincoln’s appearance during his time in office.

Other visual artifacts are more likely to deliver information more directly relevant to the speech—a diagram of the interior of Ford’s Theater where Lincoln was assassinated, a facsimile of the messy and much-edited Gettysburg Address, or a photograph of the Lincoln family, for example. The key is that each presentation aid must directly express an idea in your speech.

Moreover, presentation aids must be used at the time when you are presenting the specific ideas related to the aid. For example, if you are speaking about coral reefs and one of your supporting points is about the location of the world’s major reefs, it would make sense to display a map of these reefs while you’re talking about location. If you

display it while you are explaining what coral actually is, or describing the kinds of fish that feed on a reef, the map will not serve as a useful visual aid – in fact, it's likely to be a distraction.

Presentation aids must also be easy to use. At a conference on organic farming, one of the authors watched as the facilitator opened the orientation session by creating a conceptual map (or “mind map”) of our concerns using a large newsprint pad on an easel. In his shirt pocket were wide-tipped felt markers in several colors. As he was using the black marker to write the word “pollution,” he dropped the cap on the floor, and it rolled a few inches under the easel. When he bent over to pick up the cap, all the other markers fell out of his pocket. They rolled about too, and when he tried to retrieve them, he bumped the easel, causing the easel and newsprint pad to tumble over on top of him. The audience responded with amusement and thundering applause, but the serious tone of his speech was ruined. The next two days of the conference were punctuated with allusions to the unforgettable orientation speech. This is not how you will want your speech to be remembered.

To be effective, presentation aids must also be easy for the listeners to see and understand. In this chapter, we will present some principles and strategies to help you incorporate effective presentation aids into your speech. We will begin by discussing the functions that good presentation aids fulfill. Next, we will explore some of the many types of presentation aids and how best to design and utilize them. We will also describe various media that can be used for presentation aids. We will conclude with tips for successful preparation and use of presentation aids in a speech.

## **Functions of Presentation Aids**

Why should you use presentation aids? If you have prepared and rehearsed your speech adequately, shouldn't a good speech with a good delivery be enough to stand on its own? While it is true that impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech, it is also important to recognize that a good speech can often be made even better by the strategic use of presentation aids. Presentation aids can fulfill several functions: they can serve to improve your audience's understanding of the information you are conveying, enhance audience memory and retention of the message, add variety and interest to your speech, and enhance your credibility as a speaker. Let's examine each of these functions.

### ***Improving Audience Understanding***

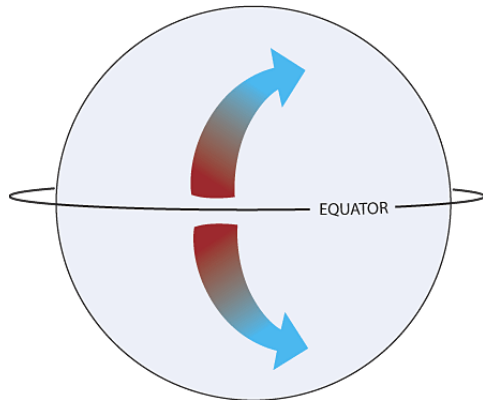
Human communication is a complex process that often leads to misunderstandings. If you are like most people, you can easily remember incidents when you misunderstood a message or when someone else misunderstood what you said to them. Misunderstandings happen in public speaking just as they do in everyday conversations.

One reason for misunderstandings is the fact that perception and interpretation are highly complex individual processes. Most of us have seen the image in which, depending on your perception, you see either the outline of a vase or the facial profiles of two people facing each other. Or perhaps you have seen the image of the woman who may or may not be young, depending on your frame of reference at the time. This shows how interpretations can differ, and it means that your presentations must be based on careful thought and preparation to maximize the likelihood that your listeners will understand your presentations as you intend them to do so.

As a speaker, one of your basic goals is to help your audience understand your message. To reduce misunderstanding, presentation aids can be used to clarify or to emphasize.

### ***Clarifying***

Clarification is important in a speech because if some of the information you convey is unclear, your listeners will come away puzzled or possibly even misled. Presentation aids can help clarify a message if the information is complex or if the point being made is a visual one.



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If your speech is about the impact of the Coriolis Effect on tropical storms, for instance, you will have great difficulty clarifying it without a diagram because the process is a complex one. A diagram of the Coriolis Effect would be effective because it shows the audience the interaction between equatorial wind patterns and wind patterns moving in other directions. The diagram allows the audience to process the information in two ways: through your verbal explanation and through the visual elements of the diagram.

### Emphasizing

When you use a presentational aid for emphasis, you impress your listeners with the importance of an idea. In a speech on water conservation, you might try to show the environmental proportions of the resource. When you use a conceptual drawing like the one below ("Planetary Water Supply"), you show that if the world water supply were equal to ten gallons, only ten drops would be available and drinkable for human or household consumption. This drawing is effective because it emphasizes the scarcity of useful water and thus draws attention to this important information in your speech.

**Global Warming: Predictions of Future Catastrophes**  
 As scientists forecast, the average global temperature is projected to rise 2-3 degrees Celsius over the next 50 years

**Far-reaching forecasts**

- Natural disasters (torrential rains, floods, landslides, avalanches and soil erosion)
- Greenhouse gases (released as the permafrost thaws)
- Methane (emitted from coastal sediments)
- Ice floes in Greenland, the Arctic and Antarctic (threat as ocean levels rise by 3 meters)
- Surface (flooding of coastal areas)
- Crop production (shortage of food for millions of people, mainly in Africa)
- Movement of Gulf Stream to the north of the Atlantic Ocean (threat of severe cold in Europe)

**World Oceans**

- Inflows of saline water reduce fresh water supplies
- Change to biological productivity, the availability of nutrients, ecological structures and the function of maritime ecosystems
- Change of plankton activity negatively affects the oceans capability to absorb and store greenhouse gases

**Water shortages and danger of flooding**

- Change in traditional precipitation levels (medium and high latitude of the Northern hemisphere - increase in torrential rain and snow. Tropic and subtropics of both hemispheres - decrease in precipitation)
- Countries where up to 5 billion people live may face serious water shortages by 2025

**Ecosystems and biodiversity**

- From 15% to 40% of all animal species could be threatened with extinction
- The forest systems and their functions will change
- In deserts, arid and semi-arid ecosystems, conditions could become even more extreme
- Threat to ecosystems, river discharges and water resources (in the past 10 years almost 2/3 of glaciers in the Himalayas have disappeared, in the Andes they have been significantly reduced or have disappeared)

**Human health**

- Increase in cardiovascular, respiratory and other diseases
- Expansion of habitat for those species of insects and animals that transmit diseases
- Change in propagation process of pollen and spores (rise in cases of asthma and allergy)

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### Aiding Retention and Recall

The second function that presentation aids can serve is to increase the audience's chances of remembering your speech. An article by the U.S. Department of Labor (1996) summarized research on how people learn and remember. The authors found that "83% of human learning occurs visually, and the remaining 17% through the other senses—11% through hearing, 3.5% through smell, 1% through taste, and 1.5% through touch." The researchers also found that the people involved in the research retained 10 percent of what they heard from an oral presentation, 35 percent from a visual presentation, and 65 percent from a visual and oral presentation (Lockard & Sidowski, 1961). It's amazing to see how the combined effect of both the visual and oral components can contribute to long-term memory.

For this reason, exposure to an image can serve as a memory aid to your listeners. When your graphic images deliver information effectively and when your listeners understand them clearly, audience members are likely to remember your message long after your speech is over. Moreover, people often are able to remember information that is presented in sequential steps more easily than if that

information is presented in an unorganized pattern. When you use a presentation aid to display the organization of your speech (such as can be done with PowerPoint slides), you will help your listeners to observe, follow, and remember the sequence of information you conveyed to them. This is why some instructors display a lecture outline for their students to follow during class and why a slide with a preview of your main points can be helpful as you move into the body of your speech.

An added plus of using presentation aids is that they can boost *your* memory while you are speaking. Using your presentation aids while you rehearse your speech will familiarize you with the association between a given place in your speech and the presentation aid that accompanies that material.

### ***Adding Variety and Interest***

A third function of presentation aids is simply to make your speech more interesting. For example, wouldn't a speech on varieties of roses have greater impact if you accompanied your remarks with a picture of each rose? You can imagine that your audience would be even more enthralled if you had the ability to display an actual flower of each variety in a bud vase. Similarly, if you were speaking to a group of gourmet cooks about Indian spices, you might want to provide tiny samples of spices that they could smell and taste during your speech.

### ***Enhancing a Speaker's Credibility***

Presentation aids alone will not be enough to create a professional image. As we mentioned earlier, impressive presentation aids will not rescue a poor speech. However, even if you give a good speech, you run the risk of appearing unprofessional if your presentation aids are poorly executed. Conversely, a high quality presentation will contribute to your professional image. This means that in addition to containing important information, your presentation aids must be clear, clean, uncluttered, organized, and large enough for the audience to see and interpret correctly. Misspellings and poorly designed presentation aids can damage your credibility as a speaker.

In addition, make sure that you give proper credit to the source of any presentation aids that you take from other sources. Using a statistical chart or a map without proper credit will detract from your credibility, just as using a quotation in your speech without credit would. This situation will usually take place with digital aids such as PowerPoint slides. The source of a chart or the data shown in a chart form should be cited at the bottom the slide.

If you focus your efforts on producing presentation aids that contribute effectively to your meaning, that look professional, and that are handled well, your audience will most likely appreciate your efforts and pay close attention to your message. That attention will help them learn or understand your topic in a new way and will thus help the audience see you as a knowledgeable, competent, and credible speaker. With the prevalence of digital communication, the audience expectation of quality visual aids has increased.

### ***Avoiding Problems with Presentation Aids***

Using presentation aids can come with some risks. However, with a little forethought and adequate practice, you can choose presentation aids that enhance your message and boost your professional appearance in front of an audience. One principle to keep in mind is to use only as many presentation aids as necessary to present your message or to fulfill your classroom assignment. The number and the technical sophistication of your presentation aids should never overshadow your speech.

Another important consideration is technology. Keep your presentation aids within the limits of the working technology available to you. Whether or not your classroom technology works on the day of your speech, you will still have to present. What will you do if the computer file containing your slides is corrupted? What will you do if the easel is broken? What if you had counted on stacking your visuals on a table that disappears right when you need it?



You must be prepared to adapt to an uncomfortable and scary situation. This is why we urge students to go to the classroom well ahead of time to test the equipment and ascertain the condition of items they're planning to use. As the speaker, you are responsible for arranging the things you need to make your presentation aids work as intended. Carry a roll of duct tape so you can display your poster even if the easel is gone. Find an extra chair if your table has disappeared. Test the computer setup. Have your slides on a flash drive AND send it to yourself as an attachment or post to a Cloud service. Have an alternative plan prepared in case there is some glitch that prevents your computer-based presentation aids from being usable. And of course, you must know how to use the technology.

More important than the method of delivery is the audience's ability to see and understand the presentation aid. It must deliver clear information, and it must not distract from the message. Avoid overly elaborate presentation aids because they can distract the audience's attention from your message. Instead, simplify as much as possible, emphasizing the information you want your audience to understand.

Another thing to remember is that presentation aids do not "speak for themselves." When you display a visual aid, you should explain what it shows, pointing out and naming the most important features. If you use an audio aid such as a musical excerpt, you need to tell your audience what to listen for. Similarly, if you use a video clip, it is up to you as the speaker to point out the characteristics in the video that support the point you are making—but probably beforehand, so you are not speaking over the video. At the same time, a visual aid should be quickly accessible to the audience. This is where simplicity comes in. Just as in organization of a speech you would not want to use 20 main points. But more like 3-5, you should limit categories of information on a visual aid.

## **Types of Presentation Aids**

Now that we've explored some basic hints for preparing visual aids, let's look at the most common types of visual aids: charts, graphs, representations, objects/models, and people.

### **Graphs**

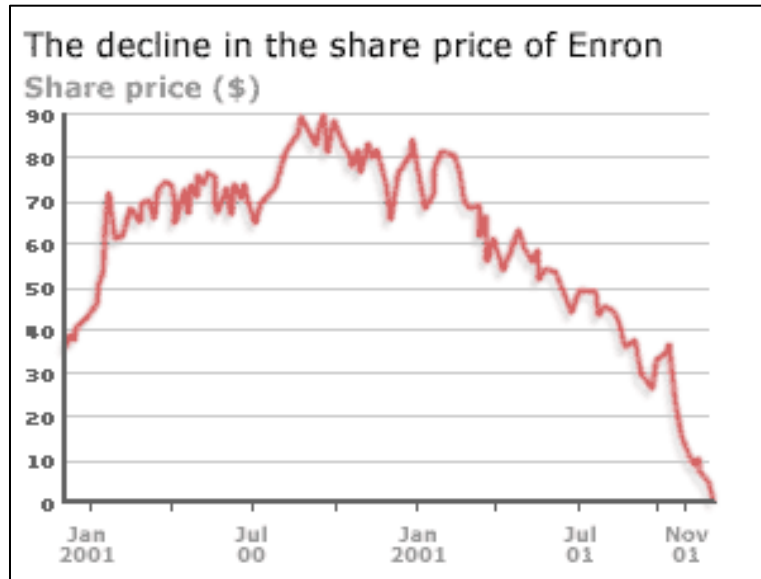
Strictly speaking, a graph may be considered a type of chart, but graphs are so widely used that we will discuss them separately. A graph is a pictorial representation of the relationships of quantitative data using dots, lines, bars, pie slices, and the like. Graphs show how one factor (such as size, weight, number of items) varies in comparison to other items. Whereas a statistical chart may report the mean ages of individuals entering college, a graph would show how the mean age changes over time. A statistical chart may report the amount of computers sold in the United States, while a graph will use bars or lines to show the breakdown of those computers by operating systems such as Windows, Macintosh, and Linux.

Public speakers can show graphs using a range of different formats. Some of those formats are specialized for various professional fields. Very complex graphs often contain too much information that is not related to the purpose of a student's speech. If the graph is cluttered, it becomes difficult to comprehend. In this section, we're going to analyze the common graphs speakers utilize in their speeches:

- Line Graphs
- Bar Graphs
- Pie Graphs
- Pictographs

## Line Graph

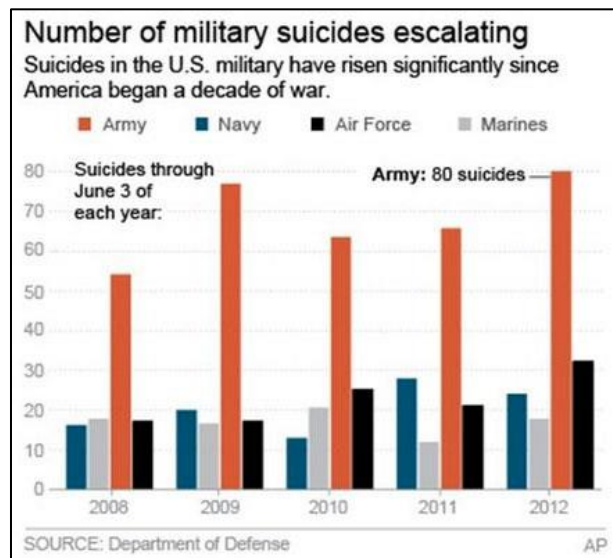
A **line graph** is designed to show trends over time. Above, we see a line graph depicting the fall of Enron's stock price from August 2000 to January 2002. Notice that although it has some steep rises, the line has an overall downward trend clearly depicting the plummeting of Enron's stock price. This is far more effective in showing the relationship of numbers than a chart or reading the numbers aloud.



<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1758345.stm>

## Bar Graph

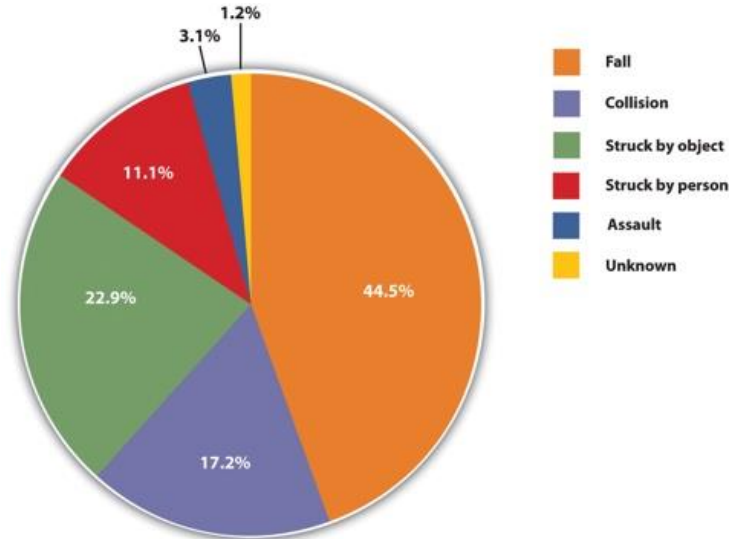
**Bar graphs** are useful for showing the differences between quantities. They can be used for population demographics, fuel costs, math ability in different grades, and many other kinds of data. The bar graph here. It is relatively simple and is carefully labeled, making it easy for you to guide your audience through the quantities of each type of death. The bar graph is designed to show the difference between rates of suicides and homicides across the military.



<https://billmoyers.com/2012/07/24/military-suicides-surge/>

## Pie Graph

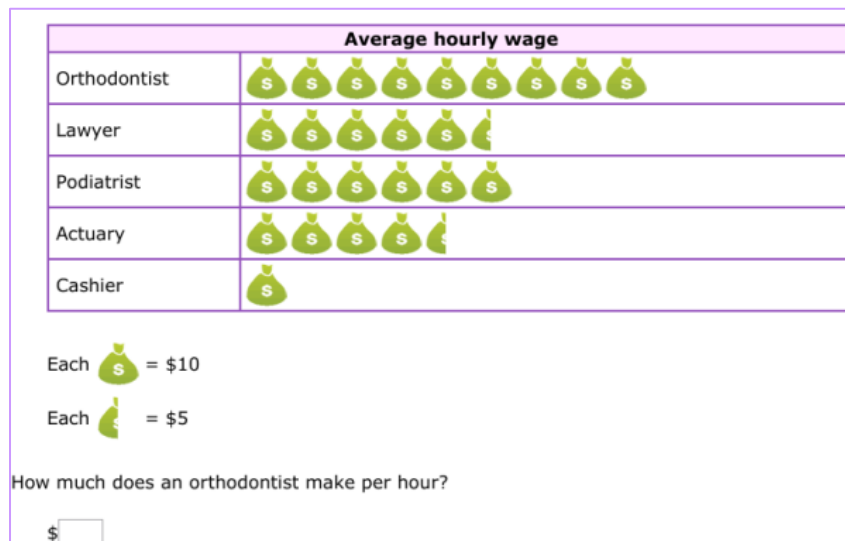
**Pie graphs** are usually depicted as circles and are designed to show proportional relationships within sets of data; in other words, they show parts of or percentages of a whole. They should be simplified as much as possible without eliminating important information. As with other graphs, the sections of the pie need to be plotted proportionally. In the pie graph shown in Figure 9.13 ("Causes of Concussions in Children") we see a clear and proportional chart that has been color-coded. Color-coding is useful when it's difficult to fit the explanations in the actual sections of the graph; in that case, you need to include a legend, or key, to indicate what the colors in the graph mean. In this graph, audience members can see very quickly that falls are the primary reason children receive concussions.



<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-rockland-standupspcakout/chapter/types-of-presentation-aids/>

## Pictograph

Similar to bar graphs, **pictographs** use numbers or sizes of iconic symbols to dramatize differences in amounts. Pictographs, although interesting, do not allow for depiction of specific statistical data.

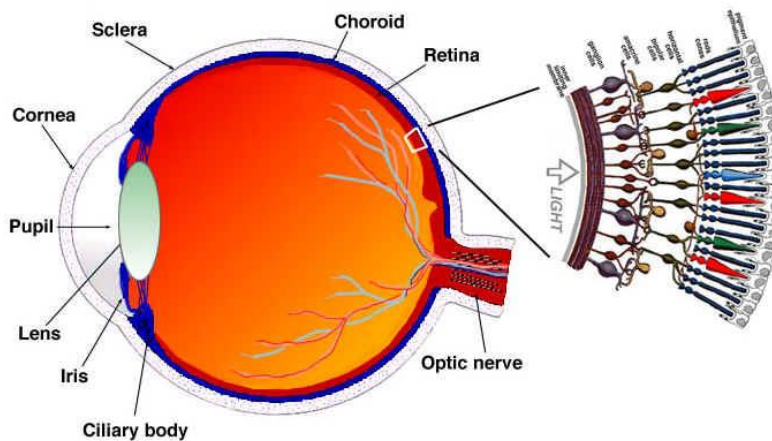


<https://www.ixl.com/math/grade-5/interpret-pictographs>

## Diagrams

**Diagrams** are drawings or sketches that outline and explain the parts of an object, process, or phenomenon that cannot be readily seen. Like graphs, diagrams can be considered a type of chart, as in the case of organization charts and process flow charts.

When you use a diagram, be sure to explain each part of the phenomenon, paying special attention to elements that are complicated or prone to misunderstanding. In the example shown you might wish to highlight that the light stimulus is reversed when it is processed through the brain or that the optic nerve is not a single stalk as many people think.



<http://www.biologymad.com/NervousSystem/eyenotes.htm>

## Photographs and Drawings

Sometimes a photograph or a drawing is the best way to show an unfamiliar but important detail. It is common to put photographs on PowerPoint slides as “clip art,” but they should be relevant and not detract from the message of the slide.

## Video or Audio Recordings

Another very useful type of presentation aid is a video or audio recording. Whether it is a short video from a website such as YouTube or Vimeo, a segment from a song, or a piece of a podcast, a well-chosen video or audio recording may be a good choice to enhance your speech. Imagine, for example, that you’re giving a speech on how Lap-Band surgeries help people lose weight. One of the sections of your speech could explain how the Lap-Band works, so you could easily show a forty-three second video available on YouTube to demonstrate the part of the surgery. Maybe you could include a recording of a real patient explaining why he or she decided to get the Lap-Band.

There is one major warning to using audio and video clips during a speech: do not forget that they are supposed to be aids to your speech, not the speech itself! In addition, be sure to avoid these five mistakes that speakers often make when using audio and video clips:

- Avoid choosing clips that are too long for the overall length of the speech. Your instructor can give you some guidelines for how long video and audio clips should be for the speeches in your class, if they are allowed (and make sure they are).

- Practice with the audio or video equipment prior to speaking. If you are unfamiliar with the equipment, you'll look foolish trying to figure out how it works. This fiddling around will not only take your audience out of your speech but also have a negative impact on your credibility. It also wastes valuable time. Also be sure that the speakers on the computer are on and at the right volume level.
- Cue the clip to the appropriate place prior to beginning your speech. We cannot tell you the number of times we've seen students spend valuable speech time trying to find a clip on YouTube or a DVD. You need to make sure your clip is ready to go before you start speaking. Later in this chapter we will look at using video links in slides.
- In addition to cuing the clip to the appropriate place, the browser window should be open and ready to go. If there are advertisements before the video, be sure to have the video cued to play after the ad. The audience should not have to sit through a commercial. There is a website called TubeChop that can allow you to cut a segment out of a YouTube video, then creating a new link. It has limitations but can be useful.
- The audience must be given context before the video or audio clip is played, specifically what the clip is and why it relates to the speech.

### ***Objects or Models***

Objects and models are another form of presentation aid that can be very helpful in getting your audience to understand your message. Objects refer to anything you could hold up and talk about during your speech. If you're talking about the importance of not using plastic water bottles, you might hold up a plastic water bottle and a stainless steel water bottle as examples.

Models, on the other hand, are re-creations of physical objects that you cannot have readily available with you during a speech. If you're giving a speech on heart murmurs, you may be able to show how heart murmurs work by holding up a model of the human heart. As will be discussed in the section on handouts below, a speaker should never pass an object or model around during a speech. It is highly distracting.

### ***The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Presentation Slides***

In some industries and businesses, there is an assumption that speakers will use presentation slides. They allow visualization of concepts, they are easily portable, they can be embedded with videos and audio, words can dance around the screen—why wouldn't a speaker use them? You will probably also be expected to have slide presentations in future assignments in college. Knowing how to use them, beyond the basic technology, is vital to being a proficient presenter.

But why not use them? Franck Frommer, a French journalist and communication expert, published the book *How PowerPoint Makes You Stupid* (2012), whose title says it all. He criticizes the "linearity" of PowerPoint and similar presentation software, meaning that audiences are not encouraged to see the relationship of ideas and that PowerPoint hurts critical thinking in the audience. Slide follows slide of bulleted information without one slide being more important.

Already in mid-2000s, critics such as the eminent graphic expert and NASA consultant Edward Tufte (2005) charged that PowerPoint's tendency to force the user to put a certain number of bullet points on each slide in a certain format was a serious threat to the accurate presentation of data. As Tufte put it, "the rigid slide-by-slide hierarchies, indifferent to content, slice and dice the evidence into arbitrary compartments, producing an anti-narrative with choppy continuity."

Tufte argues that poor decision making, such as was involved with the 2003 space shuttle Columbia disaster, may have been related to the shortcomings of such presentation aids in NASA meetings. While more recent versions of PowerPoint and similar programs allow much more creative freedom in designing slides, this freedom comes with a responsibility—the user needs to take responsibility for using the technology to support the speech and not get carried away with the many special effects the software is capable of producing.

It should be mentioned here that Prezi helps address one of the major criticisms of PowerPoint. Because Prezi, in its design stage, looks something like a mind map on a very large canvas with grid lines, it allows you to show the relationship and hierarchy of ideas better. For example, you can see and design the slides so that the “Big Ideas” are in big circles and the subordinate ideas are in smaller ones.

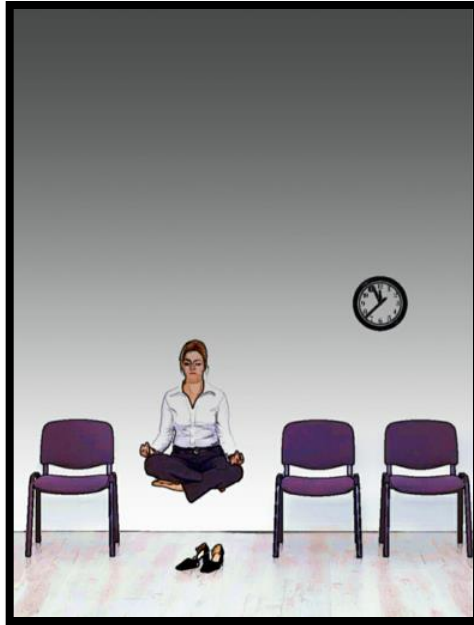
In addition to recognizing the truth behind Frommer’s and Tufte’s critiques, we have all sat through a presenter who committed the errors of putting far too much text on the slide. When a speaker does this, the audience is confused—do they read the text or listen to the speaker? An audience member cannot do both. Then, the speaker feels the need to read the slides rather than use PowerPoint for what it does best, visual reinforcement and clarification. We have also seen many poorly designed PowerPoint slides, either through haste or lack of knowledge: slides where the graphics are distorted (elongated or squatty), words and graphics not balanced, text too small, words printed over photographs, garish or nauseating colors, or animated figures left up on the screen for too long and distracting the audience. What about you? Can you think about PowerPoint “don’ts” that have hurt your reception of a presentation or lecture?

### **More suggestions:**

- When you are deciding to use a visual aid, make sure it is something you have the ability to use in the room where you will be speaking, it’s appropriate for the setting, the topic, and the audience, and that your audience will be able to see it.
- Avoid using “on-the-fly” visual aids like chalkboards and white-erase boards.
- Keep graphics and highlights simple, with few added colors except what you want to highlight.
- Direct the audience to the visual aid and what they should focus on when you want them to relate to that information.

# Chapter 13

## Interviewing



From Fiona Fletch, the author of *The Art of Interview Skills*:

*Working in Staff development: designing training, coaching, mentoring opportunities for people, helping people to enjoy their work enables me to make a contribution in a different way from when I was a nurse. During my working life, I have been interviewed many times for a variety of jobs, I have also sat on Interview panels, run training courses on Interview skills for staff involved with Interviewing and currently one of the most rewarding aspects of my work is inspiring people with confidence, so that they shine at interviews and are successful getting the jobs that they really want!*

### Confidence is Essential

Self-confidence is an essential ingredient in the successful recipe for your interview success! What is self-confidence? The origin of the word confidence is the Latin word *confidere*, which means to trust or have faith in. So to have self-confidence means to approach what you are doing with faith in yourself and your abilities.

One of the most important contributions to your self-confidence is the knowledge that you are sufficiently prepared. In his recently published book, David Beckham describes how he prepared for a very important free kick in the 92nd minute of a 2001 match against Greece.

*“Confidence is a funny thing; people often say that you need luck to win. But for me, confidence comes down to preparation. I took two deep breaths, eyed the corner of the net and emptied my mind of everything else except one thought ‘I am going to score.’ There was one focus; there was no doubt in my mind, no negativity, just a sense of complete reassurance.”*

## Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

Preparation takes place in three key parts:

1. The psychological preparation and choosing the right language “I emptied my mind of everything else except one thought I am going to score, no doubt in my mind.”
2. The physical preparation of having practiced hundreds of free kicks during his career, taking two deep breaths, eying the corner of the net, practicing a speech out loud.
3. The one focus “no doubt in my mind, no negativity, just one thought I am going to achieve.”

## Creating the Right State

So translating this for your interview:

**Choosing the right language:** that you create a positive mantra about being well prepared, are answering the questions with ease and have practiced out loud so you have heard yourself answering questions.

1. **Your physical preparation:** what you are wearing, that you are well hydrated & energized, that your body language is open and you are relaxed, confident and smiling at the interviewing panel.
2. **That you have the right focus:** thorough preparation into the company that you are applying to work with, knowledge of the job from the job description and job specification, applying your experience and skills to match what they are looking for.

## Creating the Right State and Achieving Interview Success

In this triangular model, having each side of the triangle working together will ensure that you have a really clear strategy on creating your future success.

### *Physiology*

Open body language; smiling at the panel or interviewers. Wear what looks professional but something you feel comfortable wearing. This will help you feel confident.

### *Language*

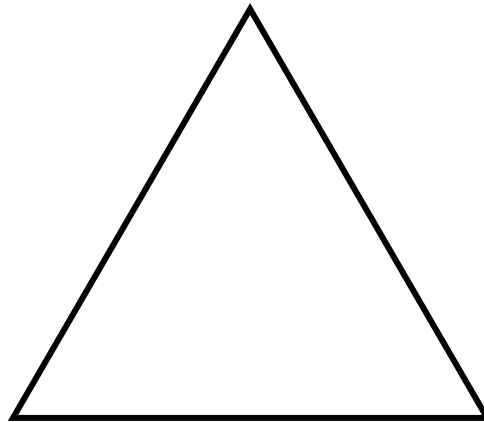
Positive self-talk, having practicing answers. Adapt what you are saying to their language and their job specification. Knowledge of the role, organization, your skills & experience. Positive mental rehearsal – seeing yourself succeeding and answering the questions well.

### *Focus*

I am not suggesting that you go into your interview roaring like a lion. However, how you see yourself at your interview has a big impact on your preparation. Positive mental rehearsal involves seeing yourself at the interview looking and sounding confident, seeing yourself answering the questions well and smiling. In order to be able to achieve your goal of the successful interview; you need to be working on all three key areas as your preparation.



It may help to label the 3 parts of the blank triangle below to help you focus on this.



## **Preparing the Key Ingredients that Contribute Towards Your Interview Success**

### ***How to get an interview with a winning Resume***

The preparation can begin even before the job is advertised. Giving an up to date resume is a great starting point for any job application because it focuses you on your experiences.

#### ***Tips on creating an effective resume:***

- Choose a clear font such as Arial or Times New Roman, size 10 or 12. Make headings stand out using a bold font.
- Ensure your name, address, telephone number and email contact details are at the top of your first page. Think carefully about how your email address and telephone answering message come across as these are potential employers' first impression of you.
- Remember that your potential employer may have received 40-200 applications for one vacancy, so someone may skim read and match the resume experience with the job listing and expectations, so tailoring your resume to the job is essential to ensure you get an interview.
- One or two pages is best for a basic resume.
- Have a positive personal profile and key skills that represent you and your experience.
- Career summary: begin with your most recent work experience first.
- Avoid abbreviations and words that you wouldn't normally use.
- Bullet points are an effective way of highlighting your achievements in work, college or volunteering.
- Shine a light on your positive qualities. Positive people are much more attractive to employers.

- Make sure you have ensured your dates flow, if you changed jobs and had an extended holiday, make sure to write this down and what you gained from the experience, avoid gaps in dates. (Stay-at-home parents and those with other reasons for gaps in your resume can get further tips from your career advisement center).
- Write references available on request rather than waste valuable space with names, addresses.
- Double-check spell check.
- Get a friend or colleague to read through your completed resume.
- Be proud of your resume as it represents all of your personal and professional accomplishments; be prepared to talk about yourself through your resume.

Once you have created your resume, keep it up to date and you can add information that is relevant to a particular role. Make sure you are familiar with everything you have written about and that is a true representation of who you are. At a recent successful interview, I was asked to talk through my resume and why I had made the career changes I had. An example of that resume is posted below.



Linköping University – Innovative, well ranked, European

Interested in Engineering and its various branches? Kick-start your career with an English-taught master's degree.

### **An example of a concise, skills focused CV:**

#### **Key Skills**

Address, Phone number E-mail, website

A highly motivated, versatile, enthusiastic Professional Coach and Trainer. With twenty-one years experience of designing and delivering training and coaching within the Corporate, Voluntary, Public and Education sectors. Passionate about empowering people to work towards their potential. Company Director of successful Coaching and Training business Fiona Setch Training & Coaching for the past twelve years.

**Communication skills** – Communicating with people at all levels of an organization; facilitating meetings, delivering presentations and training courses. Gaining rapport with individuals and groups; motivating people within training and acting as a positive role model when working on specific objectives.

**Coaching skills** – Dynamic coach works to empower the trainee with practical solutions. Highly effective at improving individual and team performance through coaching. Inspires confidence with clients.

**Creates a positive learning environment** – Whatever the training course, a positive, creative learning environment is established using to ensure a good balance of effective learning as well as an enjoyable experience. Courses and Workshops consistently evaluate well.

**Enjoyment of work** – Passionate about development opportunities for individuals and assisting people to reach their potential in their roles. This shines through in presentations and is motivating for people attending training courses. Received award for most outstanding student on CIPD Certificate in Training Practice course in 1999.

**Diversity of clients** – Wide ranges of clients within a variety of working environments: small business owners, medical consultants, senior nursing staff, junior nurses, ancillary staff, hotel services, volunteers, education lecturers, fundraising staff, Nursery staff, policemen, secretarial staff, manufacturing industry, factory workers, first line and senior managers. Work variety includes supervision, inspiring coaching as well as designing and delivering training.

**Team working** – Works well within a team; supports and inspires colleagues. Experience of working within a local team, national team and a virtual team.

**Good Customer Care Skills** – Works well with individuals and organizations to achieve the objectives set for the training. Establishes rapport with all levels of people and maintains good working relationships with customers. Regularly asked to perform follow up work.

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Accredited Fireworks Career Coach Certificate in Coaching Supervision

Post Graduate Certificate in Executive Coaching

LeTTOL Certificate in Teaching Online

Consultant in Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator Step one and two.

Diploma in Life Coaching

Diploma in Business Coaching

ENB RO1 Certificate in Supervisory Skills

Practitioner Certificate in Neuro Linguistic Programming

Certificate in Education CIPD Certificate in Training Practice

City & Guilds 730 Teaching Adults in Further Education

#### **Published work**

#### **Date of Birth Interests and Activities**

1982 – 1985 Registered General Nursing, Newcastle

“Looking after Yourself”; a book chapter in the Palliative Care Nursing textbook “Palliative Nursing, Improving end of life care” (Kingham & Gaines 2007)

Articles on ‘Team Building’, ‘Motivating Self’, ‘Motivating Others’ in The Hospital Doctor Newspaper, April

2004 ‘Interview Skills for Consultants’ in ENT & Audiology News, Dec 2010

“The Final Frontier “, a perspectives article. Coaching at Work magazine, July 2011.

## Project – Your interview

When the job is advertised, or you locate a role in the local newspaper or on a website. There are a number of things that you can do to ensure you are as prepared as you can be. Occasionally an interview coaching client attends one of my workshops or coaching sessions with a jumbled pile of information, in which somewhere is their resume, application form, job description, company information, an old presentation . . .

The first thing I suggest to them is that they start treating their job searching as a project and get organized! For one job application you may have the following headings:

- Copy of the job announcement, with key words highlighted
- Job description & job specification
- Resume adapted for role
- Information about the company
- Copy of application form, covering letter
- A record of any conversations that you may have had with the company or recruitment agency so you are clear about who said what, dates etc. When you are this organized, if you are unsuccessful at your interview you have all the information to hand when you next need it, which will save you time.

Further research to assist your interview preparation

Other factors to take into consideration while getting yourself organized during your preparation:

- You are likely to be using several different methods of career hunting such as online advertisements, company websites, newspaper adverts and recruitment agency. It is vitally important to keep a record of who you have talked to and what you talked about
- When you receive the information, if it is a paper copy, photocopy the application form and put in your project file, so that when you complete it, it is clean. Always photocopy a copy before you send it, so you have an accurate record of what you said.
- Check the details of the time frame of the application and interview process; an online application will require you to plan your time completing your form online, some companies give you up to 90 minutes to complete an online application form before having to access their portal again.
- Find out as much as you can about the organization, their website, arrange an informal visit if it is possible so you can see for yourself what the environment is like.

I was once applying for a job as a Nurse Facilitator within an emerging Health Care Company, what I hadn't realized was that my new working environment would be within a Call Centre. The person who I spoke to on the phone about the job assured me that it would not be possible to have an informal visit, so I asked them to describe the working environment. When they described the environment, I was able to make my mind up about applying for the job and save myself a lengthy application process. Sometimes the process of applying for another job can make you appreciate where you are currently working.

## ***The Informal Visit***

If you are applying for a role where this is available, I suggest that you make the effort to attend if possible. This is demonstrating that you are interested in the role. Remember that you are presenting yourself during any informal contact that you make with your potential employer, so be professional.

Tips for an Informal visit:

- If information is available on their company website, make sure that you have read about the company first, found out general information about the company and the position you are applying for.
- Dress professionally.
- Your interview process has started as you walk through the office doors. Even if the person showing you around or welcoming you is not the person you will interview with, they may be asked their opinion about you.
- Make sure all electronic items are switched off.
- Smile and listen to what the person talking to you is saying, keep eye contact.
- Accept any information pack / leaflet they have to offer you, even if you have a lot of online information. The member of staff will probably have put a lot of time and effort into preparing their role facilitating this informal visit.
- Have a positive statement about yourself ready for when asked what you are doing now and why you are seeking this change of job.
- Sit down directly after the informal visit and write down your immediate thoughts, reflections and any concerns that you have from the experience. This will be very useful information when you come to preparing your interview questions. If an informal visit is not possible, is there anything else you could do? For example, if I was applying for seasonal work at a store in the mall, I would go to one of the stores and walk around as a potential employee and ask myself “What is unique about this company and what can I bring that will contribute to that?” Some large companies have very informative websites with virtual tours and case scenarios of each departments work, extensive career sections. Check out all aspects and write notes as part of your preparation.

## ***Take care with your Social Media***

Just like you may check out a potential employer’s website, Facebook or Twitter to see what image and information the company is giving out...look at your own social media accounts. Employers will likely be reviewing them as well. While speaking at a recent graduate career fair, I heard some examples of people who had been using their social media to tell their world how much alcohol they enjoyed, that they were having “a... raging hangover” with choice language and that the offer of that job they had worked so hard for had been rescinded. The job offer “pending references” may also include the informal reference of what you choose to say about yourself in social media. Think before you write: once you write this about yourself any potential employer can read it and it may cloud their opinion on whether you match their job specification. PhD Senior Marketing Manager, Bio Business Unit.

## ***Preparing for your Interview***

If you have organized it as we discussed earlier, you will have everything at hand...so get ready to prepare for your interview!

## ***The Competency Based Interview***

Whether an interview is face-to-face or by telephone or through an online conference, most interviews are competency based.

A competency is a behavior that you must have or be able to acquire to be effective in the role. The majority of companies will break down each vacancy into a number of core competencies and the interview panel will ask questions that require the candidates to show evidence of demonstrating them.

Some of the most popular competencies are:

- People management
- Communication skills
- Team working skills
- Leadership skills
- Customer care skills
- Problem solving

## ***The Job Specification***

The job specification provides essential information. The interview panel will want to hear specific examples of how you can demonstrate the skills and abilities that they consider essential for the post.

So, prepare by writing down the key competencies (skills) required for the job. Then list your actual experience which shows how you learned or have demonstrated those skills.

<b>Required Skills from the Job Specification</b>	<b>Your Actual Experience</b>
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## ***Matching Your Skills to the Job Requirements***

<b>Required Skills from the Job Specification</b>	<b>Your Actual Experience</b>
<b>People Management Leadership Skills</b> <b>Communication Skills</b> <b>Team Working Skills</b> <b>Customer Care Skills</b> <b>Problem Solving</b>	Leading team meetings and helping staff on induction Leading team discussions Clear communication Motivating colleagues Organizational skills Enthusiastic about work Specific example of where you have enhanced communication such as listening to a colleague Writing a leaflet Chairing a meeting and ensuring the minutes clear to read Helping colleagues with tasks Assisting staff to agree to disagree

	Enthusiastic about role, company and customers An example e.g. particular telephone call that clarified the situation for the customer Having good rapport with customer Good listening skills Some feedback that you have received Listening to the situation and providing several possible solutions Thinking creatively about the problem Have a positive example of a time you solved a problem Try and have three examples of each competency prepared which will ensure you have a very thorough approach.
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**Why This Approach Works**

When you prepare in this way, with the detail of specific examples that explain your knowledge and experience, you will have prepared for the key questions that they will be asking you.

Such as:

**Q:** Tell us what are the key skills that you think are important for this role?

**A:** *Highlight the competencies / skills that they have asked for with your specific example that demonstrate this.*

**Q:** Give an example of a time when you have assisted a team member.

**A:** *This is asking you about team working & people management skills; however, you can also weave in effective communication skills and problem solving skills.*

**Q:** Can you tell us how you demonstrate good customer care skills?

**A:** *This is asking about your skills with customers, also about how you would represent the organization, department. You can answer this generally and also use an example of good customer care that you will have prepared. Some positive feedback you have received from a customer also underlines your customer care skills well.*



**Q:** We are looking for someone who works well under pressure; can you tell us how you would demonstrate this?

**A:** *This is looking for your organizational skills, time management and some positive examples of how you work under pressure – have some examples prepared. Also an opportunity to talk about the day to day things that you do to relax: reading, sport, time with family.*

**Q:** Tell us about your strengths.

**A:** *Talk about the things that you really enjoy and know that you are good at remembering to include at least two of the skills that they are looking for from the job specification. If you have an example that illuminates these skills such as, “One of my skills is that I enjoy providing positive leadership to people, for example when we were planning a team building event I enjoyed making sure that everybody had a chance to contribute. I also make sure that I give challenging as well as positive feedback to my team.”*

**Q:** Can you tell us about your weaknesses.

**A:** *The key to this type of question is to talk about something that you have improved on, an area of weakness that you are/ or have transformed / are working on such as “One of my weaknesses is that I have very high and exacting standards and I can get disappointed when other people do not contribute as fully as I do. I have realized that not everyone is as enthusiastic as me and that I need to be aware of my colleagues other areas of expertise.” Or “I am aware that in the past I have overcommitted myself and have had feedback that my time management could be improved; I have worked hard on being more assertive and prioritizing my workload and am pleased that this area is much more focused now.” Don’t be too hard on yourself in this question and don’t go for the worst feedback that you have ever received; choose something that you can feel positive about and that is the way you will come across to the panel.*

### ***Allowing yourself to shine!***

One of the most common elements of feedback given to unsuccessful candidates is that they “*didn’t sell themselves as well as the successful candidate.*”

I worked with a medical client who felt very uncomfortable with the concept of “selling himself.” He felt he sounded arrogant and boastful about himself, which in turn made him very negative about how he answered the interview questions. Thinking back to the triangle of Creating the Right State, he did not have the right focus by this negativity; so when we reframed his language, this meant something to him and his work and refocused him.

### ***Changing the focus to feel more comfortable***

So instead of thinking about “selling himself,” he said he felt more comfortable with “*allowing himself to shine.*” He said that he was just imparting information to the interview panel about what he did every day for his patients. By doing this, his focus shifted to a more positive outcome and he was delighted when he was successful at his next interview.

### ***The internal candidate – make no assumptions***

This is especially important if you are an internal candidate for a job within the organization you already work in. Make no assumptions that the panel will know how you work, prepare as you would for an interview in a company you don’t know.

**Q:** Tell us about your career history and why you are applying for this role.

**A:** Well, as you know from my resume and work here, I have all the skills that you are looking for.

*Sitting on the interview panel, I would be thinking, “Which part of your resume or role... I can’t remember those details. You are the fourth person I have interviewed today.” That answer does not allow me to tick any competencies on my interview panel answer sheet, so reluctantly (as I know you and what you are capable of), you have left me no choice but to tick has not met the required standard. A more suitable answer to the same question would be:*



**A:** Having left University with a degree in Communication Skills, I have enjoyed working within the Customer Services department here for the past two years. I think that I have gained knowledge and experience with handling problems within the Customer Service department and also working as a shift supervisor for the past six months, I have gained some insight into the problems that staff and customers face. I enjoy working for this company and would welcome the opportunity this new position would offer me.

This answer gives me the information about your professional background, that you enjoy working for this company, you have some people management experience, and are enthusiastic about your work.

*“I want to put a ding in the Universe” ~ Steve Jobs*

## **Putting a Ding in the Universe**

There is such a difference in writing things down and saying them out loud. Getting focused on answering questions out loud will really help you in how you come across at your interview.

Try saying out loud this inspiring quote from the co-founder of Apple Steve Jobs. I find it almost impossible not to smile when I am saying these words. This is how you need to be when presenting yourself at your interview, answering questions with enthusiasm. You getting this job can contribute to that ding in the universe!



## ***A Presentation at an Interview is a Great Opportunity and Your First Question***

If you are asked to prepare a presentation as part of your interview, this is a great opportunity as it is in effect your first question! Make sure that you practice delivering your presentation out loud and that it is within the time that they have asked you. So, if it is a ten minute presentation, deliver a nine minute, thirty seconds presentation.

While delivering your presentation at the interview, the panel is also looking at:

- How you cope under pressure
- Your organization skills and time management.
- Your leadership skills
- Your communication skills.

## ***Interview Stress – can you avoid it?***

No. But you can use the energy that comes out of a stressful situation to your advantage. When working with my interview skills clients, I encourage them to transform their interview nerves into creative apprehension.

## **False Evidence Appearing Real**

One of the things that happens to us is that we get fearful and start worrying about what may happen at the interview. I would like to suggest that if you break the word fear down into the acronym this can serve as an interruption to your negative pattern.

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

Where is the evidence that you won't perform well at the interview? Our brain searches for evidence that we won't do well. 95% of the things we worry about never happen. However, it appears real even though it is not true. So, if this happens at your next interview, think to yourself, *"It's just false evidence appearing real, I am prepared, organized and I have practiced my answers out loud – Bring it on!"*

## ***Creating your own future history: Positive mental rehearsal***

When Muhammad Ali prepared for his fights, he used his own unique form of mental preparation that he called creating your own future history. By visualizing his success with such detail, clarity, and focus, he could predict accurately when his opponent was "going down" after a knockout punch. It was a very successful strategy and it worked for him fourteen out of his seventeen title fights. When asked about the three that he lost he said, "I guess on those occasions, my opponent had created a better future history than me." This type of preparation is called positive mental rehearsal, where you visualize yourself in the interview answering the questions well, visualize that your presentation was very well received, and that your answers are flowing.

## ***Beware of Imposter Syndrome***

Imposter Syndrome is a term described by Clinical Psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in 1978. Sometimes called Imposter Phenomenon in which people are unable to internalize their accomplishments. People with Imposter Syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved. Any proof of success is dismissed as luck, or timing, as in, "I was just in the right place at the right time," or as a result of deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent and competent than they believe themselves to be despite external evidence.

Originally thought to be particularly common among women who are successful in their careers, it has since been shown to be equally common in men.

Quotes from people to illustrate Imposter Syndrome include:

*"I have offended God and mankind because my work didn't reach the quality it should have."* ~ Leonardo da Vinci

“At anytime, I still expect that the no-talent police will come and arrest me.” ~ Mike Myers

“I have written 11 books, but each time I think...uh oh they are going to find me out now.” ~ Maya Angelou

“I would wake up in the morning before going to a shoot, and think, I can’t do this, I’m a fraud.” ~ Kate Winslet

### **At the Interview**

The first 90 seconds of the interview are crucial, so practice introducing yourself positively, using open body language, smiling and make eye contact with anyone in the room.

If you have a presentation, deliver it well, with enthusiasm and enjoy your first question of the interview. Enjoy your interview and have a positive closing statement.

*Any questions?*

Here are some examples of questions that you can ask an interview panel:

- Can you tell me about the potential career progression within this position?
- How do you see this role developing over the next 6 months?
- What type of introduction to the position or training will I receive?
- When do you expect to fill the role?

Thank the panel at the end of the interview and smile. Tell the interviewer or panel that you welcome the opportunity to contribute your skills and experience to this team. A positive ending to the interview demonstrates that you would be a valued member of their staff.

### **Reflect on your Interview**

After the interview, reflect on your experience, perhaps using the Reflective learning cycle from chapter one. If you are successful, enjoy celebrating your new job!

If you are not successful on this occasion, make sure that you get feedback on your interview and build from that feedback into your personal reflection on this interview, most importantly, figure out how you can transfer this learning back into your next experience.

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