Speech communication involves the ability to understand and be understood. One of life’s most important functions is the ability to communicate effectively with others. Communication gets you hired, makes your ideas more powerful, and allows you to change this world for the better. Becoming a better speaker involves learning to get your ideas across to others in an easy-to-understand, interesting way. *Speaking with a Purpose* is designed to assist you in learning to prepare, organize, and deliver well-received speeches and presentations. Good speakers are not born with the ability to speak effectively; they develop the ability to speak well as the result of commitment and hard work. The key to success in speaking is practice. The more speeches that you prepare and present successfully, the more proficient, relaxed, and confident you will become.

**THE COMMUNICATIVE ACT**

Communication, at its core, is an amazing process. In a current view, communication is similar to Bluetooth wireless technology between the speaker and the receiver of a message. The speaker can see a beautiful red leather chair, and through descriptive words (which almost act like computer binary), the image of the chair can be passed to the receiver—transferred through words, words that we don’t often realize we are deciphering. If the message is passed without any interference, the receiver can now imagine a fairly similar red leather chair to the one that was described.
Becoming a more competent communicator will increase our ability to create more vivid images in the minds of our audiences, coworkers, or bosses. This skill has the opportunity to gives us more clout, a stronger leadership ability, and invariably more power in life.

The study of communication and our speaking ability is not a new phenomenon. Early Greek and Roman empires, at the dawn of time, knew the important components of leadership. These societies taught the up-and-coming leaders math, science, and rhetoric (speech communication). The early foundations of society knew that it wasn’t enough just to “know” the information. How we deliver the information is just as pivotal. In a global world coupled with a competitive job climate, our ability to communicate effectively is paramount.

Five elements are involved in the speech communication process: a speaker, a message, a channel (through which the message is sent), an audience, and a response. Each time a speaker communicates a message to others, these elements are present. In speaking situations, these elements interact with each other. A simple speech situation can be summarized as follows:

1. A speaker wishes to communicate an idea. (I want to sell you a Slap Chop food chopper.)
2. The speaker encodes the idea in a message. (I organize my thoughts on its attributes.)
3. The message is sent through a channel to an audience. (I present to you how great this item is.)
4. The audience receives and decodes the message. (You watch my demonstration and think it looks great.)
5. The audience responds to the message. (You go out and buy your very own Slap Chop food chopper.)

As you can see, the communication process is complex. In order to understand it better, it might be helpful to consider each of the five elements in the process separately.

Speaker

In the previous model, the process of communication begins with a speaker who wishes to communicate an idea or some ideas. The image that the audience has of the speaker affects the message. Those in the audience who perceive a speaker as being competent or full of integrity will be more likely to believe what the speaker says.

Message

The second element in the communication process is the message. In order to ensure that the listener attends to the message and understands it, the speaker must encode it in a language that is both interesting and clear. Emphasis, variety, and descriptive language help make material interesting. Words that are specific and familiar help to make a message clear.
Channel

The channel is the means through which a message is transmitted. In a modern view, the channels for messages to travel through are vast and continuously growing. Facebook, Skype, Twitter, and Reddit all allow messages to be passed from one individual to another as do sign language and ancient smoke signals. In the speaking situation, multiple channels can be involved. Messages can be transmitted through hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching channels. If you are talking about coffee beans and the smell of the Columbian beans fills the room, it isn’t just the verbal message that is conveying the information.

Audience

Without an audience, communication does not take place. A person stranded on an island can put a note in a bottle or stand on the shore screaming for help. However, unless someone reads the note or hears the screams, nothing will have been accomplished. This emphasizes the fact that all communication by a speaker must be directed to an audience.

Response

The success or failure of a communication is determined by audience response. The title of this book, Speaking with a Purpose, underlines the fact that in order to be successful when communicating, the speaker’s purpose—to inform, to persuade, or to entertain—must be achieved. Therefore, the success or failure of a communication is measured by whether or not those in the audience responded in some way to the message.

COMMUNICATION MODELS

The prior speech communication components are derived from the original study of communication conducted in the 1940s by Claude Shannon who worked at Bell Telephone Company, and Warren Weaver, a mathematician. Together Shannon and Weaver expressed the communication relationship through the following linear model (Figure 1.1).

![Communication Model (Linear)](image-url)

**FIGURE 1.1** Communication Model (Linear)
Although Shannon and Weaver received praise for their theory, which seemed to represent how people talk over a telephone, it didn’t fit the complexities associated with people as they speak in person. Eventually in the 1960s, the earlier linear model was changed to a cyclical process. By adding the concept of feedback, this new theory took into account that even when you are speaking, your audience is giving messages right back to you (Figure 1.2). The messages that you receive back from your audience (feedback) allow you to adapt to better fit the current environment. The old adage “You cannot not communicate” seems to reference the addition of the feedback loop to the following modern communication model.

**COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS**

Communication breakdowns occur because of some failure in the communication process. If you invite a friend to your house for a Friday night dinner and they come Thursday night, the message you gave them was either inaccurate or misunderstood. If because you were daydreaming you fail to hear your instructor announce that the next class meeting has been called off, you might be the only class member present on that day. Communication breakdowns occur at some point during the speech situation. Perhaps the speaker has failed to correctly analyze the audience. Maybe the message has been encoded in technical terms that the audience cannot understand. Or it might be that the microphone the speaker is using significantly distorts the message. Any of these factors could result in a breakdown of communication.

Usually communication breakdowns can be traced to one of the five elements in the speech communication process: the speaker, message, channel,
audience, or response. Consider the following situations and determine where the breakdowns in communication occurred:

1. Some of the members of your audience fail to understand parts of your speech on the addictive nature of the computer game The Sims because of the terminology you use. (Remember, you are most likely to talk to a general audience. What is clear to avid fans of the game might seem like gibberish to those who are not.)

2. What you are wearing draws attention to itself, interfering with your message. (The clothes you wear should not distract or detract from what you are saying. Dressing too flamboyantly or too casually can conflict with what you are saying.)

3. The computer is not recognizing your USB drive. (A good rule when planning to use visual aids in a speech is “be prepared to do without them if need be.” An audience will admire the speaker who is able to do this.)

4. The room you are speaking in is large and it is difficult for those in the back to hear you. (If you haven’t checked this out beforehand, you can only ask those in the back to move forward or increase your volume.)

5. Some type of external noise interferes with your audience’s ability to hear you. (Remain silent until the noise stops. Unless your audience can hear you, communication is not taking place.)

**LISTENING**

Listening for all intensive purposes equates to being smart. Management studies continually identify that the number one trait for successful managers to embody is the ability to be a good listener. However, the ability to increase your listening strength is different from your ability to have strong biceps. With lifting weights you see tangible reminders of your hard work. Increasing your listening ability takes similar repetitions and perseverance, but you don’t have the visual results of your hard effort—although you will see improvements across your learning, speaking, and working endeavors. As a student you have many opportunities to sculpt your ability. The end result of this process is becoming a better student, spending less time studying, being a more desirable employee, and being a better friend and family member.

Listening is an active process involving both concentration and thinking. Sometimes there is a barrier that interferes with the listener’s concentration. Following are eight barriers to concentration in listening.

**Barriers to Listening**

**EXTERNAL NOISE** External noise includes noises both inside and outside the listening area. Talking, footsteps, whispering, coughing, cell phones on vibrate, and street noise are some of the things that make it difficult to pay attention to a speaker. As a listener, you can avoid some distractions by arriving early enough at a lecture to get a seat where you can see and hear easily.
As a speaker, you can aid your audience by remaining silent until an emergency vehicle passes by or by talking loud enough to overcome the hum of the florescent lights.

**INTERNAL NOISE** Sometimes inner distractions caused by personal problems or concerns can be so intense that it is extremely difficult to listen carefully. This internal “noise” aka grocery list—who to call after class, how to respond to an e-mail, and so on—can often be massively distracting. The realization that you most likely won’t have the most profound thought in class while competing with the information being delivered and that you can most likely have the same thoughts directly after the class is finished help to focus the listening.

**BIAS TOWARD SPEAKER** If a speaker’s voice or appearance or mannerisms annoy you, listening carefully will become difficult. An instructor whose voice is raspy, who paces the floor, or who prefaces everything with you know can make a semester seem like an eternity. Work to overcome this listening barrier by concentrating on the content of the speech rather than the delivery.

**EMOTIONAL REACTION** Sometimes a word or phrase can cause a negative response that can interfere with a listener’s ability to concentrate. Loaded words like honky or greaser or the use of profanity can trigger emotional responses that interfere with a person’s ability to listen effectively. Try to screen out emotional reactions by resolving to hear everything a speaker has to say before making a judgment.

**DAYDREAMING** Who hasn’t at one time or another drifted off into a pleasant daydream rather than pay attention? The tendency to daydream is influenced by two factors. First, a listener is able to think at a much faster rate than a speaker can speak. Consequently, while the speaker is talking at about 130 words per minute, the listener has roughly 800 words per minute of retention ability. So the listener has plenty of thinking time left over. Good listeners use the extra words per minute to reorganize what was said and figure out how they can use the information. Less savvy listeners often let the extra mental capacity to take them for excursions down tropical beaches. Daydreaming can be a serious barrier to listening. Learning to listen actively can help you avoid the tendency to daydream.

**FAKING ATTENTION** Faking attention is a technique that is usually learned in the first or second grade. There students learn to sit at their desks while leaning forward with hands propped under their chins and an interested expression on their faces. Whether we learned it in school or not, we have all at one time or another been guilty of faking attention. The problem with faking attention is that it can be a difficult habit to break.

**FATIGUE** Listening is an active process that requires the energy of the listener. If you are tired from too much studying or partying the night before,
you will find it difficult to concentrate on what the speaker is saying. If you know that you will be attending an important speech or lecture, make sure that you are well rested.

**IMPROPER NOTE TAKING** Taking notes ineffectively is worse than not taking notes at all. Students who attempt to write down too much of what a speaker is saying often wind up missing the point the speaker is trying to make. The way to avoid this problem is to develop effective note-taking skills.

**Ways to Improve Listening**

**PREPARE TO LISTEN** The first thing you do before attending a speech or lecture is to prepare yourself to listen. This means knowing something about the subject beforehand so that you can listen actively rather than passively. It is best to listen from a personally invested stance. Ask yourself what this information can do for you.

**AVOID DISTRACTIONS** As indicated previously, distractions can interfere with concentration and make it difficult to listen. Attempt to limit external distractions by your selection of good seating location for a speech. Internal distractions are harder to screen out. The fact that you are aware that you are being bothered by them should alert you to redouble your efforts to concentrate. You have the ability to not succumb to the distractions.

**IDENTIFY THE CENTRAL IDEA** If the speech you are listening to has been well prepared, the central idea should be stated in the introduction. You might have already gotten a clue as to the central idea from the title. However, whether the speaker states the idea as a complete sentence or it is implicit in the message, as a listener you must be aware of what it is since the central idea is the main point of the speech.

**IDENTIFY THE MAIN POINTS** Most effective speeches involve a central idea supported by a number of main points. The listener’s job is to sort out these main points from the supporting materials. This takes thinking and concentration. When identifying main points, listen for signals: “Some of the reasons that . . .” or “In addition . . .” Phrases like these tip you off to the fact that important ideas are forthcoming.

**THINK ALONG WITH THE SPEAKER** In order to listen actively, you must think along with the speaker. As you are listening, try to reconstruct the organizational pattern of the speech. Determine whether the speaker is supporting each new idea with a variety of supporting materials. Relate what the speaker is saying to your own knowledge, interests, and life. Responding to the speech in this way will not only improve your active listening but will also provide insights that will aid you in developing your own speeches.
TAKE EFFECTIVE NOTES  Learning to take effective notes is an excellent way to improve your listening skills. Note taking promotes active listening and concentration. Rather than just listening passively to a speaker, the note taker must listen with the mind in order to identify the speaker’s important ideas. It takes clear thinking and concentration to sort out main ideas from supporting details. Below are several note-taking tips.

1. Write Down Only Important Ideas. A good speech is planned around a central idea and several main points. The central idea is usually stated in the introduction of the speech. Sometimes a speaker will also list in the introduction the main points to be covered. Listen for signals that indicate that main ideas are forthcoming. Words like specifically, further, and first indicate that a speaker is moving from one point to another.

2. Write Legibly. Sometimes note takers write so hurriedly that when they finish, they can’t read their own notes. If your notes are illegible, you are probably writing down too much.

3. Keep Up. If you find that you are falling behind in your note taking, skip a few lines and begin again. Later, when you expand your notes, you can fill in the missing information.

4. Use Your Own Words. One of the best ways to show that you understand something is to be able to explain it in your own words. When you translate the ideas of another into your own vocabulary, they will be easier to understand and remember.

5. Be Brief. A common mistake among inexperienced note takers is the tendency to write down too much. Don’t try to write down everything the speaker says. A set of notes should be a summary of a speaker’s main ideas.

6. Don’t Erase. Rather than waste time erasing, draw a line through the mistake and continue. Remember, the notes you are taking are for your own use. If you want your notes to be neat, you can rewrite or type them later.

7. Don’t Worry about Spelling. If you’re not sure about how a word is spelled, write it phonetically. You can check the spelling later when you expand your notes.

8. Date Your Notes. Whether you are taking notes by hand or by computer, you should get into the habit of dating them with the day, month, and year. This will enable you to pinpoint a missed lecture or the specific date of a speech.

9. Expand Your Notes. If the notes you are taking are for the purpose of helping you remember information or to aid you in studying for an exam, it is wise to expand them as soon after a lecture as possible.

GETTING STARTED

If you are like most students, the thought of taking a speech course far from excites you. You most likely have some anxiety about standing up in front of a group of classmates to deliver a speech. You might be unclear as to how to
develop a clear and interesting message. Possibly you are afraid you might forget what you planned to say in your speech, say the wrong thing, or say it ineffectively and be embarrassed. All the prior are legitimate concerns and this book and your course will allow you to overcome these fears. When all is said and done, you have much more on the line with a speaking orientated class than just a grade: You have the opportunity to create a more powerful, meaningful existence.

In today’s global society, the person who can’t communicate effectively is operating under a distinct handicap. People who are successful at the corporate level are invariably required to speak both within and outside the organization. Business and industrial employees are often required to take courses at the company’s expense in order to improve their speech skills. Make no mistake, the ability to communicate effectively can often mean the difference between success and failure in the workplace.

People tend to equate the ability to speak well with the ability to think well. To a great extent, this is due to the fact that effective speakers are able to get their ideas across to others in an easy-to-understand, interesting way. Remember, every time you speak, you are communicating something about who you are to others. If you want others to see you as an effective communicator, two broad guidelines can help to ensure success: (1) say something worthwhile, and (2) say it in a confident, natural way.

**Say Something Worthwhile**

When you prepare a speech, you are concerned with two things: what you want to say and how you want to say it. What you say is called the content of your speech, which includes your subject, main idea and supporting material, organization, and the way you word your speech. Whenever you can, you should choose a worthwhile subject from your own area of interest so that you are familiar with what you are talking about and have some concern for your subject. Next, you must develop the subject with your audience in mind. An audience will pay attention to something that is either useful or interesting to them. If you can show your audience that your subject is useful to them, this will give them a reason to pay attention. Point out how your speech will be useful to your listeners in the introduction. If your subject is interesting to them, you can get their attention in the introduction and hold it throughout the speech.

If, however, your subject does not seem useful to your audience, is not interesting in itself, yet you still want to choose it because you feel it is worthwhile, in order to hold their attention you must make it interesting to them. Suggestions for getting and holding the attention of your audience are found in Chapter 2. Keep in mind that the less interesting or useful a subject is, the more difficult it will be to hold the audience’s attention. For example, unless you were in a class of art students, an informative speech on Salvador Dali’s contribution to modern art would take a lot more imagination and effort to make it interesting to a typical audience than a speech on the Beatle’s influence on rock and roll.
Similarly, your listeners would be more likely to see the usefulness of a speech on the effects of alcohol on the mind and body than on one demonstrating how to make an arrow. Almost everyone takes a drink now and then or knows someone who does, perhaps taking more than he or she should. Knowing what the positives and negatives of drinking alcohol are would most likely seem useful to many. On the other hand, knowing how to make an arrow would probably only seem useful to a bow hunter or an avid archer.

This does not mean, however, that a speech demonstrating how to make an arrow could not be made interesting to a general audience. A number of years ago, one of my students, a Native American from a Wisconsin Chippewa tribe, delivered a speech on how to make an arrow. He brought in a modern apparatus for aligning the feathers and the arrowhead on the arrow shaft so that the arrow would be in perfect balance. He showed us a variety of modern arrows and bows. Then he showed us a number of bows and arrows that had been made by the members of his or other Ojibwa tribes over 150 years earlier. The arrowheads were flint, and the feathers had come from eagles or hawks. When he put the primitive arrows on the apparatus, they were way out of balance. The bows were obviously nowhere near as powerful as the ones made today. He explained that Indians wore moccasins and learned to walk without making a sound so that they could get close enough to hit whatever they were stalking with their primitive weapons. The speech was interesting and informative. It cleared up some misconceptions the class had from watching cowboy and Indian movies and gave the class a greater appreciation of the contributions and resourcefulness of Native Americans.

**Say It in a Confident Way**

The way you say something is called *delivery*. Delivery includes such things as eye contact, facial expression, body movement, personal appearance, and voice. Effective delivery should seem confident and natural. Besides an increase in volume for a larger audience, there are a number of differences between public speaking and ordinary conversation. First, public speaking is intentional. As the title of this text emphasizes, a speech is delivered with a clear purpose in mind. Second, a speech is more carefully prepared than everyday conversation. A subject is chosen and developed with a specific audience in mind, and words are chosen more carefully. If you want to deliver an effective speech, you must be clear about what you want to say and whom you are trying to reach. Remember, in most cases, the only interaction with your audience that you have in a speech situation is their nonverbal response.

Your delivery will seem more confident and natural if you use a conversational style. A conversational style makes frequent use of the personal experiences, which gives it an air of familiarity, as if the speaker were talking to close friends. Use your own vocabulary but eliminate words that might be considered overly casual or inappropriate. If you try to use words with which you are unfamiliar, your style will seem stilted and unnatural. You should, however, choose your words carefully. Keep in mind that speech is more formal than ordinary conversation, and your language should be a bit more formal too.
The advantage of using your own vocabulary when delivering a speech is that you will feel more natural and comfortable. Talking about something you feel is important and about which you are sincere will help you exude confidence.

At this point, you might be asking yourself, “How can I have confidence, when the thought of giving a speech gives my stomach butterflies?”

PROJECTING CONFIDENCE

Keep in mind that if you choose a topic from your own area of interest that you feel is worthwhile, prepare your speech carefully with a clear purpose and your audience in mind, and regularly practice your delivery beforehand, you will project confidence when delivering your speech. You might feel anxious (or nervous) before and during the speech, but unless you tell your audience that you are nervous, most likely they won’t know.

For years I taught a course for business and professional people at a local university. The course was designed to improve speaking ability, particularly in the area of delivery. Most of the students who took that course were successful executive types with high-level jobs who were highly motivated to improve their ability to communicate effectively. The course met for 3 hr once a week, and at every class meeting, the whole class delivered a speech. After the speeches were delivered, the class discussed the presentations they had just experienced. The students soon discovered that although some felt nervous while delivering their speeches, this nervousness was not discernible to their audience. If someone said, “Boy, was I nervous,” the response would invariably be, “You didn’t look nervous.” Once it became clear that their nervousness was not apparent to their classmates, the butterflies disappeared.

Another benefit of the course was that delivering a speech at every meeting gave each student important experience in speaking in front of a group. Since everyone was in the same boat, the group was highly supportive. The more speeches those students gave, the better they got. There is nothing like success to boost your confidence.

On the positive side, being a bit nervous before giving a speech is an indication that you are “keyed up,” a desirable reaction. Have you ever watched a performer pace back and forth before going on stage or an athlete bending, stretching, or just moving around before competing? They are keyed up and they are letting off a bit of the nervous energy or excitement that is building up for that moment on stage, on the field, in the ring, or wherever they are going to perform. This energy works to their advantage, and it can work to yours, too, when you let it help you deliver an enthusiastic speech.

Energize Yourself

When you will be giving a speech in class, you won’t be able to pace the floor, jump up and down, or do knee bends, but you can exercise isometrically, which should help you release some of your nervous energy. An isometric exercise is a procedure by which you contract a muscle for about 8 to 10 s against
some immovable resistance, for example a chair, table, or floor. Here are some
isometric exercises you can try:

1. While sitting on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, grasp each side of
the chair and attempt to lift yourself.
2. Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Put your hands on top of
your knees while drawing in your abdominal muscles. Attempt to lift
your heels off the floor.
3. While sitting on a chair, place the palms of your hands on the sides of
the chair and press inward as hard as you can with spread fingers.

A few minutes before it is your turn to speak, breathe in slowly and deeply
through your nose until your lungs are full. Hold the breath for a count of four
or five and slowly breathe out with jaw and lips relaxed, as if you are yawn-
ing. Repeat three or four times. Then, when it is your turn to speak, stand up
and walk briskly and confidently up to the podium to deliver your speech.

The Truth about Nervousness

Nervousness is learned behavior. Stage fright is the fear that you will not do
as well in front of an audience as you would like to. The symptoms of stage
fright might be any of the following: rapid pulse, dry mouth, difficulty swal-
lowing, trembling, sweaty palms, or queasy stomach. The phrase “butterflies
in the stomach” is often used in regard to stage fright. Most people have no
difficulty when communicating to others in small groups or in one-on-one
situations; but, in larger groups this can often pose a problem.

Public speaking is probably the course feared by more students than any
other. Why? Because many see the situation as threatening. They fear that
others will be able to see their weaknesses and imperfections whether real
or imaginary. Worrying too much, about what others will think about you is
what causes stage fright, or to use a better term, speech fright.

This particular fear usually diminishes after the confidence-building se-
quence of easy speaking activities in the early part of the semester. The positive
feedback from classmates and from your own instructor is very powerful, and
when supplemented with positive self-talk, is very effective in replacing those
fears from childhood. A more appropriate or rational nervousness is created
because you care about what the audience thinks about you. This is especially
ture when you stand before a group of your peers. This concern for the opinion
of your fellow human beings is appropriate if not carried too far. Appropriate
caring causes you to do all you can to do your best. It gives you the extra rush of
energy that you need to be really alive in front of an audience. Albert Ellis said
in his book A New Guide to Rational Living that 98% of our anxiety is overconcern
about what others will think of us. Overconcern is then the problem. Overcon-
cern is usually stimulated and reinforced by negative self-talk such as, “I’m so
nervous!”, “I can’t do this!”, “I know I’ll forget everything!”, or that old clas-
ic self-fulfilling prophecy, “When I get in front of an audience my mind goes
blank!” Say any of these affirmations enough and they tend to become the truth.
Your strongest “word of honor” seems to be that spoken of yourself to yourself!
One really fascinating view of nervousness is that, on a physiological level, the physical signs of nervousness parallel the physical signs of excitement. That is to say that two people may experience the same symptoms and one may name it nervousness and the other may name it excitement. I urge every student to rename their nervous feelings sincerely as excitement and see how that changes their perception of their feelings.

For several semesters, I had students rank themselves as speakers and had the audience rank the speaker in terms of how nervous they were. I used a scale of 0 to 20. It was quite consistent that the speaker perceived himself to be twice as nervous as the audience would perceive him to be. That is, if a speaker said he was an 18 on the nervousness scale, the audience on the average would perceive him to be right close to 9 on that same scale. It is reassuring to realize that as a speaker a person only appears half as nervous to the audience as he thinks he appears.

**HOW TO DEVELOP SELF-CONFIDENCE**

As the oft-quoted saying “Nothing succeeds like success” implies, the experience of doing well in the speech activities in class will go a long way toward helping you develop greater self-confidence. To this end, always talk about something you really know, prepare, and practice very well. Be sincere and talk about things that really matter to you. Never ever try to “con” an audience into believing that you know something you do not. You cannot fool an audience. They can almost always tell exactly how much you do or do not know, how much time you have spent preparing, and above all how much time you spent rehearsing. Being well-prepared and well-rehearsed create almost certain success. This is what builds confidence.

Physically there are several very important things you can do to build self-confidence. First, be sure that you do not form the habit of holding your breath or breathing very shallowly. Many people, without even realizing it, breathe less deeply or even hold their breath when they experience stress. This can really backfire, as it can diminish the flow of oxygen to the brain, which may trigger a fear response that is mistaken for nervousness, not a physical reaction to lack of oxygen. Posture is also very important in developing self-confidence. If you stand with your weight evenly balanced on both feet, spine erect, head up, and arms loose at your side, your body will experience balance and comfort.

Psychologically there are several very important steps you can take to develop greater self-confidence. You can practice positive self-talk, repeatedly saying to yourself with as much conviction as you can create, “I can do this,” “I can take it one step at a time,” “I can become an excellent speaker,” “This class is getting easier every week,” and “I really want to learn to be a powerful speaker!” A second physiological exercise is to banish all talk of fear and nervousness. Substitute other less loaded words when you talk of your concerns. From now on, instead of “I’m really nervous,” say “I’m really excited.” If you are compelled to acknowledge your previous levels of nervousness,
always say “In the past I have had some problems with nervousness, but it is getting better all of the time.” Such relanguaging or renaming of something is a powerful way to gain control over your psychological reactions. Constantly using “I am very excited” and eliminating the fear and nervousness talk is a powerful technique for changing your whole response pattern to the public-speaking situation. In order for this to be effective in lessening nervousness, you do not have to believe strongly in your positive self-talk, but you do have to eliminate negative self-talk, or the positive and negative statements will cancel each other, leaving you to experience little growth in this area.

Another very powerful psychological idea is to change your focus from concern for yourself to concern for the audience. All too often a speaker is so focused on the impression he is making that he forgets to be really focused on how well the audience is hearing, seeing, understanding, and so forth. When your attention is turned back on yourself, your mind will be filled with questions like “Do I look scared?”, “Do I sound stupid?” “What if I forget?”, “Can they see my knees shaking?” and so on. The speaker who can forget himself and really be concerned whether the audience understands the very important ideas he is sharing will experience a genuine shift to a nurturing connection with the audience. This is the feeling that causes many a speaker to get “hooked” on public speaking. It is a very powerful feeling when you realize that you can share an idea that could change someone’s life. This can only happen if you talk about things that are so very interesting and important to you that you truly want every person in the audience to understand. This means preparing well and working on that shift of focus. I have seen speakers experience this shift of focus, and when they had that experience, it eliminated most of their excessive nervousness.

**Food Feeds Your Confidence**

In addition to the pervious well-proven methods for increasing your confidence, it is important to heed the advice of the adage: “You are what you eat.” Although drinking a Monster Energy Drink might seem like a good idea right before your speech, you are significantly altering your biology just by speaking in public, and it is best to limit the other variables interacting in your ecosystem. During normal daily life, the result of drinking something sugar filled or caffeinated might be positive, but excess sugar or caffeine, coupled with some stress, often play havoc on the body of the speaker. There has also been a recent movement in America to reduce or eliminate the consumption of wheat for many people. This diet, called gluten free, has been proven to help a growing segment of people to reduce cloudy thinking, excessive nervousness as well as many other physical ailments.

**Stretch Your Comfort Zone**

Your comfort zone is defined by your self-concept, your family culture, your community and national culture, and so on. As long as you are not violating any of the “rules” of any of these belief systems, you are in your comfort zone.
Some of these rules are appropriate but many are just habits handed down which end up creating a big rut that controls the direction of our life more than most of us realize. A more general approach to building confidence is to look constantly for opportunities to stretch your comfort zone in every area of life. If you are more comfortable waiting for someone else to speak first, push yourself to speak first as often as possible. Be on the lookout for little ways you can stretch that comfort zone. Push yourself in class. Keep more questions in store. Ask for information. Try dressing differently. Seek leadership roles. Volunteer some time at the library literacy program. Go to a town council meeting and ask a question. Take voice lessons. Take flying lessons. Go horseback riding. Drive somewhere you have never been. Challenge yourself to be aware and to act by choice, not by habit. Try out for a role in a community theater play.

**Visual Imagery Is a Powerful Tool**

The next delivery topic is a visual imagery technique specifically for developing confidence in public speaking. Mental rehearsal is another name for visual imagery. This technique is a fascinating tool for changing behavior, and the same procedure presented on the next few pages can be adapted to create behavior change in any area of life. You could even use it to practice remembering more and scoring better on the quizzes and to stop procrastinating and do that paperwork and other preparations early. Be creative and see how many areas you can find to try the three-step method of visual imagery you are now going to learn.

**VISUAL IMAGERY FOR CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Visual imagery for behavior change is a powerful technique. The legendary tennis coach Vic Braden was known for his quote “Learn to think like a winner—think positive and visualize your strengths.” Braden took this idea to the courts as he statistically counted how many first serves his students would get into the service box by just serving the ball without any prior thinking. Then he coached his students to visualize, in their minds, their serve hit perfect and going into the service box. After visualizing the serve, the students had a significant improved percentage of actual serves that would go into the service box.

The subconscious mind does not seem to differentiate between actual physical rehearsal and mental rehearsal (visual imagery) when the mental rehearsal is done with the same concentration and vivid feelings associated with the actual physical rehearsal. The benefits from mental rehearsal done well are many. The rehearsal is completely under the control of the person doing the imagery; therefore, each rehearsal can be a positive, strengthening experience. The time involved is much less than actual practice requires, therefore more practice can be done. The troublesome spots in an activity can be repeatedly practiced easily. The subconscious mind can build a storehouse of “success” feelings about an activity. These feelings then encourage continued successful performance just as actual successful rehearsal would.
The visual imagery pattern I recommend for speech students desiring to experience more confidence and greater speaking skill in front of an audience is a simple three-step pattern. It is suggested that you practice using this pattern (or your own personal version of it) at least three times a day. Each session should be brief (2 to 5 min) but as intensely vivid and “real” as you can create it. Do this brief visual imagery three or more times a day for 2 to 3 weeks or longer and you will find a tremendous development of skill and confidence as the result. Each session should take only 2 to 3 min. Visual imagery can be done in any place where you can be uninterrupted for a few minutes. The very best schedule is morning, midday, and evening. Detailed instructions for using the visual imagery pattern follow.

A SCRIPT FOR USING VISUAL IMAGERY TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING

Step One: Systematic Relaxation
Pay particular attention to shoulders, face, and stomach muscles. The purpose of step one is to focus attention away from your outer environment onto your physical body, then relax your body sufficiently to avoid it becoming a distraction later in the process when you focus your attention within yourself. Sit in a centered posture—do not recline. Start with your toes and systematically relax every part of your body up to the very top of your head. Tensing and relaxing is good if at first your shoulders or other large muscle groups are very tense.

Step Two: Favorite Peaceful Place
Picture a vivid sensory-rich scene in nature. You should use this same scene over and over or at least until you change projects. I usually use the beach. Focus on all the sensory details possible—sky, water, waves, sunlight, sun’s warmth, sounds of birds and water, feel of sand underfoot, and so on. See yourself walking along the beach experiencing the colors, sights, sounds, touches, and freedom of the beach as vividly as you can.

Step Three: Rehearsing Your Desired Behavior
Picture yourself doing the behavior you desire to do just as perfectly as you hope to learn to do it—speaking with confidence and skill. The sequence I recommend is to see yourself sitting at your desk, aware that you are the next speaker. When it is your turn, you rise confidently and walk to the podium. You look confidently at individuals in the audience, and then begin with a ringing powerful opening statement. See yourself standing and speaking with real authority and clarity. You do not have to “hear” any actual words. Feel the energy and enthusiasm in your delivery. See people in the audience nodding their heads in agreement with your ideas. Feel your strong desire to communicate the interest and the importance of the information you are sharing. See yourself finishing with a strong dynamic ending statement. Hear the loud
spontaneous applause as your audience acknowledges your excellent speech. Notice how you really enjoy the feeling of having done a good job. Feel this enjoyment. This is a very important ingredient in the visualization—your enjoyment of your success. See yourself now returning to your seat with the same sincere and confident attitude. See yourself sitting with a big smile on your face—very pleased with yourself. Enjoy and strengthen this feeling for a few moments before you open your eyes and are finished with the session.

**ETHICS IN COMMUNICATION**

Ethics in communication requires honesty. It requires a communicator to give only truthful and accurate information to an audience. This is an important responsibility and one not to be taken lightly.

Unfortunately, there are those in our society who believe in getting by any way they can. Too many political candidates offer us whatever it takes to ensure their election. We get daily accounts of those in government and business who have violated our trust in order to further their own causes. Too many advertisers justify their sales pitches with the slogan *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware).

We are constantly bombarded with TV and radio commercials that promise us instant satisfaction if only we buy the advertised product. “Brush with our brand of toothpaste” or “buy our hair spray and shampoo” — these ads tell us and we will be successful, approved of, popular, or whatever we desire. And, too often, even though we realize that what we are receiving is often fabrication and misrepresentation, we just shake our heads and do nothing but regret that we can’t trust many of the advertisers, politicians, elected officials, and others who have a direct influence on our lives. That is unfortunate because as receivers of messages we have the right to demand that those who communicate to us provide us with honest and accurate information.

Most of the ethical decisions that we make in our lives are based on our moral standards and values. Our decisions to respect the rights of others, to treat others with dignity, and to be true to our word are all ethical choices we make based on the value system to which we ascribe.

As a speaker, you have an ethical responsibility to your listeners to give them the same kind of honest and accurate information you would want them to give you. Document the statistics you use in your speech. Avoid using vague phrases such as “recent studies indicate” or “the latest surveys show.” Instead, indicate exactly when and by whom the statistics you are stating were compiled. This will increase your credibility in the minds of your listeners. Chances are that some in your audience have been misled in the past by statistics. Pointing out exactly where your statistics came from and who compiled them will make the statistics you are using both reputable and unbiased and will set your audience’s minds at ease.

When you back up your statements with the testimony of others, make sure you choose experts whom your audience will consider well qualified and objective. If the experts are unknown to your audience, give information about them that will establish their qualifications and objectivity.
Be especially careful when citing information you have gotten from the Internet. Wikipedia is not a quality source to cite in a speech. It is a good idea to save the material you are citing so that you can compare it to other sources you are using. When evaluating information you find on the Internet, make sure the material is current, objective, and reputable. The better the reputation of the author or the reliability of the sponsoring organization, the more likely it will be that the information is accurate.

Always make sure that your purpose is absolutely clear to the audience. For example, if your purpose is to persuade your audience to vote against establishing the death penalty in their state, let them know early on that that is what you are asking them to do. In the interest of fairness, it is also wise to present some of the arguments from the other side. This will demonstrate to your audience that you are interested in their reaching a well-informed decision. Furthermore, it will enable you to point out some of the weaknesses in the opposing viewpoint as well.

Whenever you use the ideas of others, you must give them credit. Even if you put their opinions or assertions in your own words by paraphrasing them rather than quoting them verbatim, you have a responsibility to acknowledge the source of information that is not your own. Presenting their words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism. Plagiarism can involve either presenting the ideas of others’ word for word as they were written or spoken or paraphrasing the ideas in your own words. It makes no difference. Whenever you use the ideas of others without giving them credit, you are stealing from them. It doesn’t matter whether you do this intentionally or through carelessness; it is stealing nonetheless. In the context of public speaking, plagiarism shouldn’t exist because in nearly every case you will sound more qualified if you reference someone else as stating the information rather than you misleading the audience as if the words were your own.

Sometimes you may engage in plagiarism without intending to or even being aware of it. Suppose, for example, that you are a member of a group opposed to the manufacturing and sale of land mines in the United States. Because you have attended many meetings and are preoccupied with the issue, you have accumulated a substantial amount of material on this topic. Certainly some of the information from fliers and other handouts could have been taken from unidentified sources. Some of the ideas that you now embrace as your own could have come from others. Presenting them without giving credit to these sources would make you guilty of plagiarism. You can protect yourself by indicating to your audience that some of your ideas have come from the anti-land-mine organization of which you are a member. An added benefit will be that indicating your membership in the organization will also increase your credibility.

Make no mistake, plagiarism is the presenting of someone’s words and ideas as if they were your own whether intentional or not, and the penalties for plagiarism at many schools are often severe, ranging from a failing grade on the assignment to failing the course or even being expelled from school. Some of the synonyms for plagiarize listed in Roget’s Thesaurus are counterfeit, filch, lift, pinch, pirate, sneak, steal, and swipe.
Those who are caught plagiarizing outside the school often suffer significant penalties as well. Careers have been ruined, promotions denied, elections lost, and reputations irreparably damaged all because someone used the words or ideas of others in spoken or written communication, without giving the originator of those words or ideas credit.

Obviously then, you must be careful to take comprehensive notes that include the name of the author, the title, where you found the information, and date of publication when gathering information for your speech. If you are quoting the material exactly, use quotation marks and make sure of the word order and punctuation. If you are paraphrasing, make sure you capture the author’s meaning. It is also a great idea if you cut and paste information from an online source to instantly change the color of the text you paste into your document as well as put where you found the information in parenthesis. The change of color will keep it obvious that the words were in fact taken from another source and were never created by you.

An ethical speaker avoids exaggeration and distortion. While we expect our friends to increase the size of the deer they shot or the length of the fish they caught when telling us about it, overstating the facts in a speech is unacceptable. Your audience deserves honest and accurate information. Equally unacceptable is distortion or misrepresentation of the facts. Unfortunately, one of my former students learned this the hard way. In delivering a speech on the evil of drinking and driving, she told the audience in graphic detail how her brother, his wife, and two little children had been killed by a drunken driver in an auto accident a few months earlier. The speech was very moving and many in the audience had tears in their eyes. As the class was leaving, someone asked her how the rest of the family was holding up under the strain and she said she had made the story up to make the speech more effective. As a result of this misrepresentation, her reputation in the class was damaged and she suffered a loss of credibility for the rest of the semester. What it all boils down to is this. An ethical speaker has a responsibility to present accurate and honest information that is free from exaggeration, distortion, or bias.

An ethical speaker must be tolerant of others. The strength of our world lies in its diversity. People will always have differing viewpoints, beliefs, and values, but an ethical speaker has a responsibility to respect the variety of individuals that comprise the globe. The use of biased language or unkind references to others because of their race, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, or viewpoints is unacceptable. As an ethical speaker you must be willing to listen to views that are different from your own. And in a global world, we must all realize that we are going to be dealing with a large group of society that doesn’t share our same background.

Finally, what an audience thinks of you has a definite effect on their reaction to what you are saying to them. If they see you as being ethical, friendly, and competent, they will respond to you in a receptive and friendly manner. What is even more important is that you see yourself as being ethical, friendly, and competent. The more accurate a picture you have of yourself and your self-worth, the more likely it will be that you will communicate ethically, accurately, and successfully.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe some communication breakdowns that you have experienced and identify the causes. What could you have done to improve the situation?
2. Why do you think visualization helps our speaking ability?
3. Can you describe how you feel when you have butterflies in your stomach?

EXERCISES

1. List some similarities between public speaking and answering questions at a job interview?
2. List five ways technology has changed public speaking?
3. In a group, discuss how the Internet has made public speaking more or less powerful for society? Describe your view.