

CHAPTER

1

# Welcome to Public Speaking



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

**Objective 1.1** Identify the principal things you will learn in this course and how they will benefit you outside the classroom.

**Objective 1.2** Describe public speaking as a communication process in which the speaker and listeners jointly create meaning and understanding.

**Objective 1.3** Name the elements of a rhetorical situation and explain the steps by which a speech affects the situation.

**Objective 1.4** Define the public forum and describe how studying public speaking will prepare you to participate effectively in it.

**Objective 1.5** Identify the principal ethical obligations of listeners and speakers.



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## OUTLINE

### Why Study Public Speaking?

Develop Specific Communication Skills | Focus on Critical Thinking and Strategic Planning | Apply What You Learn

### Public Speaking and Communication

The Audience's View | The Speaker's View | The Interplay

### The Rhetorical Situation

The Audience | The Occasion | The Speaker | The Speech | Constraints and Opportunities

### The Public Forum

Characteristics of the Public Forum | The Health of the Public Forum | Public Speaking and the Public Forum

### Ethics: Respect for Audience, Topic, and Occasion

Respect for Your Listeners | Respect for Your Topic | Responsibility for Your Statements | Concern for the Consequences of Your Speech

Welcome to Public Speaking, one of the most important courses you will ever take. If that sounds like too strong a claim, consider what these students had to say after taking a public speaking course:

I used to be terrified of speaking in public. I've learned that solid preparation is the key to overcoming my fears. I still get nervous, but now I know how to control my nervousness and focus on communicating with my audience.

This class has taught me to be a better listener. I'm more aware of weak arguments, fuzzy logic, and unsupported claims. I think critically about what I am being persuaded to do and why.

Before taking this class, I used to be the most boring speaker! My speeches were well researched, but my delivery was poor. Now I make eye contact with my audience members and use my voice and pauses to set a tone and emphasize key points.

I've learned more about the structure of speeches, especially the importance of an attention-grabber at the beginning of my speech and a preview of my main points to give the audience a "road map" of what I'm going to say.

These students noticed right away that a public speaking course helped them to develop or to refine their communication skills. You will notice a difference by the end of your course, too—and as you move beyond the classroom, you will find that the knowledge and experience you gain from the course also help you to be a more successful worker and a more effective citizen.

## OBJECTIVE 1.1

## Why Study Public Speaking?

You may have enrolled in this course because you expect to be making public presentations and you want to learn how to do that better and more easily. Maybe your goal is to speak more forcefully or to be less nervous. Perhaps you want to become better organized, to learn more about how to prepare a speech, or to think more clearly and more critically. You may even have chosen the course because it meets at a convenient time, is a requirement for graduation, or has a good instructor.



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## Develop Specific Communication Skills

Whatever your reasons for studying public speaking, this class will enable you to develop or improve a variety of communication skills, such as how to:

- Listen carefully and critically in order to understand and evaluate what others say.
- Decide what you want to speak about.
- Select what to say.
- Find the material for a speech by examining your own experience, consulting with others, using the Internet, and visiting a library.
- Think critically about what you read and observe so that you will reason soundly when addressing an audience.
- Organize a speech to make it clear, coherent, sensible, and effective.
- Use language skillfully to convey both meaning and mood.



- Use your voice and your body to present yourself and your message in an effective, compelling way.
- Overcome speech anxiety and use any nervousness to your advantage.
- Use visual aids to enhance your message.
- Adapt general principles to your speaking situation, with emphasis on the dimensions of informing, persuading, and entertaining.
- Understand and benefit from reactions to your speeches so that the audience's response helps you improve your skills.

This set of skills has been studied and taught for about 2,500 years (in different ways over the years, of course), so you are taking part in a very old and valuable academic tradition.



As one in a group of speakers, this advocate must make his message distinctive and adapt it to the audience. These tasks require good strategic planning.

## Focus on Critical Thinking and Strategic Planning

Besides improving these specific skills as a communicator, you also will be applying and refining two invaluable general skills that are emphasized throughout this book: critical thinking and strategic planning.

**Critical Thinking.** Public speaking is in large measure an exercise in **critical thinking**, the ability to form and defend your own judgments rather than blindly accepting or instantly rejecting what you hear or read. Critical thinkers can analyze and understand various points of view, and they can quickly recognize the difference between fact and opinion.

**Facts**, as we will see in detail later, are statements that—at least in theory—can be *verified* by someone else. If a speaker says that the world's population has doubled every 25 years, that statement can be tested by checking population statistics. In contrast, **opinions** are *subjective* statements that presumably are based on experience or expertise. If a speaker asserts that the world's population is growing too fast, that opinion cannot be verified externally; it stands or falls depending on the insight and judgment of the person who offers it.

As a listener, critical thinking will help you to recognize a speaker's unstated assumptions. As a speaker, it will help you to form precise statements that embody your thoughts. Overall, critical thinking will place ideas into a broader context, showing how they relate to other things that you already know or believe.

**Strategic Planning.** A speaker operates in a world of choices, including whether to speak, when to speak, what to say, how to phrase a point and how to explain or defend it, how to organize the message, what tone to give it, and exactly how to relate a message to the audience. Some speakers make these choices unconsciously, without real thought (and relying on luck). But effective speakers make their choices *strategically*; through **strategic planning** they identify their goals and then determine how best to achieve them.

### critical thinking

The ability to form and defend your own judgments rather than blindly accepting or instantly rejecting what you hear or read.

### facts

Statements that can be verified by someone other than the speaker.

### opinions

Subjective judgments based on experience or expertise, not capable of being verified by someone else.

### strategic planning

The process of identifying your goals and then determining how best to achieve them.



## Apply What You Learn

Public speaking combines theory and practice that you can apply to your daily life. As you study creative and critical thinking, sensitivity to audiences, and effective speech presentation, the skills you learn will:

- Help you critically evaluate messages and appeals of all kinds.
- Make you more sensitive to people and situations.
- Enable you to recognize and adapt to diverse audiences and complex occasions.
- Increase your self-confidence and your willingness to engage in serious dialogue with others.<sup>1</sup>



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Outside the classroom, these attributes will enhance your personal, professional, and civic life. Sensitivity to others and to their perspectives will help you in personal relationships as well as when, for instance, you speak to neighborhood groups, Scout troops, parent-teacher associations, or religious organizations. Employers and career counselors often put “good communication skills” at the top of the list of qualities they seek in people.<sup>2</sup> The reason is simple: Each year our economy becomes more dependent on information and the ability to communicate it.

Your study of public speaking also will help make you a more competent, more active citizen. You will be better able to understand public issues and controversies, to decide what you think about them, and to participate effectively in addressing them—whether on your campus, in your neighborhood, or in the larger public forum.

### OBJECTIVE 1.2

## Public Speaking and Communication

In one sense, we all know what public speaking is: a speaker transmits a message orally to an audience. But this simple view does not explain just how the speaker and listeners participate in **communication**, interacting in order to build connections whereby they can understand each other and recognize common interests.

Early theories of communication viewed public speaking as a series of one-way messages sent from speaker to audience. In fact, however, the audience participates along with the speaker in creating shared meaning and understanding. The speaker’s ideas and values are tested and refined through interaction with the audience, and listeners’ knowledge and understanding are modified through interaction with the speaker. Thus, public speaking is a *continuous* communication process in which messages and signals circulate back and forth between speaker and listeners.

## The Audience’s View

From the audience’s point of view, each listener comes to the speech with a framework of prior knowledge, beliefs, and values, and each listener “decodes,” or interprets, the speaker’s message within this personal framework. In a large or culturally diverse audience, the frameworks used by listeners may vary greatly.

To a particular listener, some ideas will be more important, or *salient*, than other ideas. In a speech about carrying weapons on campus, for example, some listeners

### communication

Interaction that builds connections between people that helps them to understand each other and to recognize common interests.

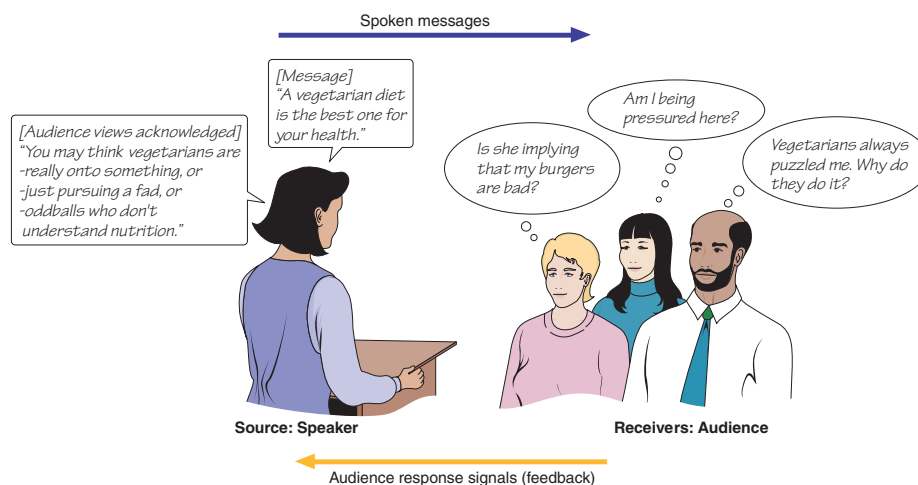
will be focused on personal liberty, others on campus safety, and still others on the dangers of gun violence. The speech may support, challenge, or modify any of these frameworks, but each listener's framework will shape how he or she interprets and understands the speech. Audience members work actively to assess what the speaker says against what they already know or believe, and they constantly make judgments about the message and convey them back to the speaker through facial responses and other nonverbal clues.

## The Speaker's View

From the speaker's point of view, knowing about the audience is crucial in preparing and delivering a speech. A speech about campus social life, for example, would be different for an audience of prospective students than for an audience of alumni, or even for an audience of current students. Even if the basic points of the speech were the same, the nature of the audience would affect how they are developed and explained and what tone or attitude the speaker projects. In preparing the speech, the speaker would analyze the audience and try to match listeners' expectations appropriately. Moreover, as listeners respond during the speech (by frowning, nodding approval, looking puzzled, etc.), the speaker would constantly modify how key points are organized and phrased and would try to acknowledge or respond to the audience's concerns.

## The Interplay

Figure 1.1 depicts this interplay between speaker and audience. Suppose that you plan to speak about the benefits of a vegetarian diet. In preparing the speech, you'll remember that some listeners think vegetarianism is healthful; others think it is a passing fad; others come from cultures in which eating meat is prohibited, so that vegetarianism is not a matter of choice; and still others associate vegetarianism with eccentrics who don't really understand nutrition. As you speak, you'll be watching for **feedback**, responses from the audience that signal how they are reacting to what you say. Most responses will be nonverbal, such as frowns or



**Figure 1.1** Public speaking as a communication process.

### feedback

Responses from the audience to the speaker, often in the form of nonverbal cues.



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 Starbucks” at  
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nods of agreement. Feedback might prompt you to acknowledge that some people doubt the merits of vegetarian diets; you might even admit that you had doubts yourself but now are a committed vegetarian. Throughout the speech—from its preparation through its presentation—you will be sensitive to how well your ideas match your audience, and you’ll use feedback to improve the fit as you speak.

You may convince some audience members to change their beliefs; others may interpret your message in ways consistent with their beliefs; and if the discrepancy between their beliefs and your message is too great, some listeners will reject your message. In any case, the audience will be actively involved as you speak, interpreting and testing what you say against their own beliefs and values, and letting you know their reactions. In short, the speaker and listeners simultaneously participate in creating the message.

### OBJECTIVE 1.3

## The Rhetorical Situation

Public speaking occurs *in a specific situation*. Unlike great dramatic or literary works, which “speak to the ages,” the principal test of a good speech is whether it responds most effectively to the needs of the situation in which it is presented.<sup>5</sup>

The **situation** is the specific context in which a speech is given. Compared with poems and stories, which are read long after they were written, most speeches have a short life span. For example, student Jeremy Johnson’s first speech to his classmates concerned an important and timely issue:

Almost every week, there are new reports of genocidal violence in the Darfur region of Sudan. Innocent civilians, women and children among them, are killed or raped every day by marauding bands of Janjaweed militia whose goal is ethnic cleansing of the non-Arab peoples in their region. The crisis of Darfur is one of the greatest human catastrophes of our time—worse than Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, or even Iraq. But our government and our attention have been so preoccupied with other wars and conflicts around the world that we have forgotten the people of Darfur and have abandoned our international human rights ideals.

Although Jeremy’s speech probably could be appreciated long after the violence in Sudan subsides, it was created in response to a particular event and was designed primarily to be heard by a particular audience.

The study of how messages affect people has long been called **rhetoric**. This ancient discipline is concerned with the role that messages play in:

- Shaping, reaffirming, and modifying people’s values
- Binding people closer together or moving them farther apart
- Celebrating significant events
- Creating a sense of identity among people
- Conveying information and helping people to learn
- Nurturing, strengthening, or changing people’s beliefs
- Leading people to take (or not to take) action

A **rhetorical situation**, then, is a situation in which people’s understanding can be changed through messages.<sup>6</sup> The following example shows how student Katie

#### situation

The particular context in which a speech takes place.

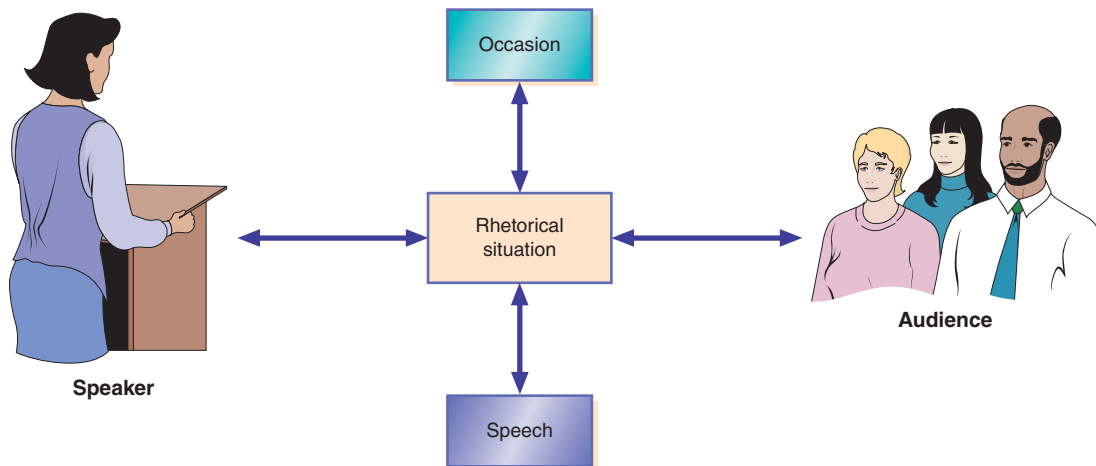
#### rhetoric

The study of how messages affect people.

#### rhetorical situation

A situation in which people’s understanding can be changed through messages.





**Figure 1.2** Determinants of the rhetorical situation.

Jacobson responded to a rhetorical situation posed by recent armed robberies on her university campus:

It's easy to feel safe on our familiar campus, but crime is on the rise, and the university is partly to blame. Poor lighting both on and off campus provides many shadows for crimes to take place unseen. University police seem more interested in patrolling weekend parties than making weeknight walks between dorms and the library. And campus shuttle services are unreliable late at night, forcing students to walk through dangerous, unlit areas. We need to contact the university administration and let them know that they should take our safety seriously.

But it's not just up to the administration. We also need to take our personal safety seriously. Take self-defense classes. Lock your bikes. Familiarize yourself with the emergency telephone boxes on campus. Don't leave valuables in plain sight. Be careful where you publish your personal identification information. Show the university officials that you are doing what you can to be safe; then ask them to do what they can.

Katie's message addressed a particular audience and asked its members to consider a specific problem and solution. The speech was timely—Katie knew that the recent robberies would be on her audience members' minds. The message also affected how students thought about the problem and how they understood possible solutions, both those that university administrators could effect and those that students could implement.

Figure 1.2 shows the four basic factors that determine the success of any rhetorical situation: the audience, the occasion, the speaker, and the speech itself. Each of the arrows goes in two directions. That is because each of the factors affects our understanding of the rhetorical situation, but our understanding of the situation also affects how we view each of the factors. As we will see, rhetorical situations both impose constraints and create opportunities.

## The Audience

Unlike a poem or a novel, a speech is presented for a specific audience, and its success in achieving its goals depends on the reactions of those listeners. This is why audience analysis, discussed in Chapter 5, is so important. The audience helps



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to create the rhetorical situation by affecting, among other things, your choice of what to emphasize in the speech, what level of knowledge to assume, how to organize the speech, and what your specific purpose will be.

Most speakers, most of the time, want to present their ideas in ways that achieve **identification** with the audience; that is, they try to find common ground between what they know about the audience and what they want to say.<sup>7</sup> Without distorting their own message, they try to emphasize the elements that are most likely to strike a responsive chord among audience members. Thus, an African American speaker who is addressing a mostly white audience might emphasize their shared American dream.

Sometimes, though, a speaker may deliberately *avoid* identification with the audience and may even try to antagonize listeners. The same African American might point out that the American dream is *not* shared equally by all citizens. Such a tactic may suggest that the speaker is a person of high integrity who will not hold back punches simply to gain the audience’s approval. Or the strategy may be intended to influence some other audience that is overhearing the speech.<sup>8</sup> Whether the goal is to identify or to criticize, however, knowledge of the audience is critical in assessing the rhetorical situation.

Sometimes, audience members are prepared to incorporate what the speaker says into their systems of beliefs. At other times they may be skeptical or downright hostile. The degree of interference they offer to the speaker’s purpose is an important factor when assessing how the audience contributes to the nature of the rhetorical situation.

Audiences also provide important feedback. If listeners frown or stare blankly when you make an important point, they may not understand you. To respond to the rhetorical situation, you will want to explain that point further. If listeners appear lost, you may want to summarize your main points before moving on. If you’ve said something that you think is funny but no one laughs or smiles, you might either rephrase the comment or decide to let it pass. And when listeners nod supportively, you should feel more confident and reassured. Audience feedback will let you know whether you have assessed the rhetorical situation accurately and responded to it appropriately.

You can also get valuable feedback by placing yourself in the role of an audience member. If possible, review a video of your speech. At first, you may feel uncomfortable watching a recording of yourself; you may be oversensitive to details that no one else would notice. But do not worry about these details. Instead, try to view yourself as the audience saw and heard you. Watching a video after the fact allows you a critical distance that helps you to assess aspects you can improve before giving your next speech.

#### identification

Formation of common bonds between the speaker and the audience.

#### ceremonial

Speaking that focuses on the present and is usually concerned with praise.

#### deliberative

Speaking that focuses on the future and is usually concerned with what should be done.

## The Occasion

The occasion is the place and event where the speech is given. It may be a community meeting, a classroom speech assignment, a business presentation, a local fundraising reception, an informal group gathering, or any other time and place where people assemble and relate to one another.

Some speech occasions are **ceremonial** (this is also known as *epideictic*, and is discussed in Chapter 16), such as presenting or accepting an award, introducing someone, delivering a eulogy, or commemorating an event. Others are primarily **deliberative**, such as making an oral report, delivering a sales presentation,

advocating a policy, or refuting another person's argument. Ceremonial speaking focuses on the present and is usually concerned with what is praiseworthy in the subject. Deliberative speaking focuses on the future and is usually concerned with what should be done.

Many occasions combine ceremonial and deliberative elements. For example, a chief executive officer (CEO) who has been newly appointed in the wake of a fiscal scandal in the company will likely have to speak to the company's employees and stockholders. The occasion is deliberative in that the CEO speaks about the state and the direction of the company in light of the financial circumstances. The occasion is also ceremonial, though, because the CEO's presence demonstrates both a new chapter in the company's history and a personal interest in the well-being of the workers and stockholders, and also because the speech seeks to reassure and reaffirm the company's dedication to employees and investors.

Similarly, the president's State of the Union address is a ceremonial ritual prescribed by the U.S. Constitution. But, especially in recent years, it's the occasion when the president is expected to persuade the public to support, and the Congress to enact, the administration's legislative proposals. This expectation makes the State of the Union a deliberative occasion as well.

A third category of speech occasion, traditionally known as **forensic**, is concerned with rendering judgments about events in the past. Although this is the dominant form of speaking in courts of law, it plays only a small role in public speaking elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever the occasion, the audience arrives with ideas about what is and what is not *appropriate behavior*. Such expectations have developed over time, and they limit what a speaker can do in responding to the rhetorical situation. For example, listeners expect a eulogy to offer a favorable view of the deceased, and they normally would think it inappropriate for a speaker to dwell on the person's failings. On the other hand, an after-dinner speech is usually expected to be lighthearted; a speaker who instead presents a highly technical lecture would not be responding appropriately to the occasion.

*Simultaneous events* further define the occasion. For example, the fact that a presidential campaign is under way helps to define the occasion for a speech about health care reform. The retirement of a popular athlete helps to set the stage for a speech about retirement trends in industry. And if listeners only last week were urged to give up tobacco, that may affect their judgments about a speech that now asks them to give up red meat.

Another way to think about the occasion is to note that it presents the speaker with an **exigence**—a problem that cannot be avoided but that can be solved, or at least managed, through the development of an appropriate message. Of course, the exigence is not always clear-cut. In designing the speech, often the speaker will play a major role in describing what the exigence is. In any event, satisfactorily addressing the exigence is the goal of the speech.

"A commencement speech about school reform, delivered at Western State University in June 2013" is an example of an occasion; "growing unease about the quality of public education" is the rhetorical situation to which this speech was a response. The speech responds to the rhetorical situation of growing unease among people about the quality of public education, but the expectation that a commencement speech will inspire the graduates also helps to define the rhetorical situation.

Each type of occasion raises certain expectations about what is appropriate behavior, and these expectations help to define the rhetorical situation. For example,

#### **forensic**

Speaking that focuses on the past and is usually concerned with justice.

#### **exigence**

A problem that cannot be avoided but that can be solved, or at least managed, through the development of an appropriate message.



if an engineer is presenting the features of a new product to the marketing group, everyone will be focused on the product's best features and how to make them more salable. The occasion will be deliberative. Unlike a ceremonial occasion, it will not emphasize good wishes or feelings about the product or the staff. And unlike a forensic occasion, it will not concentrate on the company's past sales performance with other products. Rather, the focus will be on how best to design the new product to achieve a strong sales record in the future.

## The Speaker

The same speech delivered by different speakers can produce quite different reactions and effects. Your interest in the subject—as made evident through voice, delivery, and the vividness of your imagery—helps to determine how the audience will react to the speech. Your *ethos* affects whether listeners will pay attention and will regard you as believable. Fortunately, many of the skills that enable speakers to contribute positively to a rhetorical situation can be learned. Previous public speaking experience will also affect your comfort level, and the ability to respond to audience feedback will make you more flexible in any rhetorical situation.

Speakers have a purpose in mind. The three most general purposes of speeches are to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.

- **Informing** provides listeners with new information or ideas.
- **Persuading** influences listeners' attitudes and behavior (either to strengthen existing beliefs or to support new ones).
- **Entertaining** stimulates a sense of community by celebrating common bonds among speaker and listeners.

Although these general purposes may seem to be completely separate, they often coexist in a single speech—as when a speaker aims *both* to share new information and also to use that information to influence attitudes and behavior (or to stimulate a sense of community). For this reason, in Chapter 6 we will classify purposes in a more detailed way. For now, though, focus on the general purposes and realize that you must have (1) something about which to inform the audience, (2) some position you want to persuade them to take, or (3) some subject with which to entertain them. Therefore any speaker also has one or more specific purposes. Here are some examples:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| GENERAL PURPOSE:  | Informing   |
| SPECIFIC PURPOSE: | Explaining the main steps in the construction of the college library.   |
| GENERAL PURPOSE:  | Persuading  |
| SPECIFIC PURPOSE: | Urging listeners to endorse the president's economic proposals and to send supportive e-mails to the president and our elected officials. |
| GENERAL PURPOSE:  | Entertaining  |
| SPECIFIC PURPOSE: | "Roasting" the boss on the eve of her retirement.   |

In each case, the specific purpose is the standard to use in deciding whether the speaker achieved the goal and responded adequately to the rhetorical situation.

By this standard, good speeches are ones in which the speaker achieved the purpose; bad speeches are those in which the speaker did not. Yet clearly this standard is not enough. We do not want to regard as good a speech that misleads

### informing

Providing listeners with new information or ideas.

### persuading

Influencing listeners' attitudes and behavior.

### entertaining

Stimulating a sense of community through the celebration of common bonds among speaker and listeners.

or manipulates the audience, even if it achieves the speaker's purpose. And if the speaker's purpose itself is unworthy—such as reinforcing negative cultural or racial stereotypes, for instance—we would evaluate the speech harshly even if it does achieve the speaker's purpose.

## The Speech

Although we tend to think of the situation as something to which the speech responds, the message itself also works to *shape the situation*. Before Katie Jacobson spoke about crime on campus, her audience thought it was a problem for the campus police to solve, but during the speech, they began to see campus crime as a problem that called for individuals to take responsibility for the solution. The message had redefined the situation.

In most cases, an audience's understanding of a situation can be improved by a speech that is organized effectively, that includes interesting examples and memorable phrases, and that is presented enthusiastically. Although many factors determine whether a speech responds successfully to a rhetorical situation, by understanding the basic factors involved you can better shape your message as a speaker and can participate more fully as a listener.

## Constraints and Opportunities

Your speech not only responds to the situation but also modifies it. In doing that, you face opportunities as well as constraints. Your goal is to devise a **strategy**—a plan of action—that will respond to the constraints and take advantage of the opportunities.

### strategy

A plan of action to achieve stated goals.

## CHOOSE A STRATEGY: Understanding the Rhetorical Situation

### The Situation

You are a member of a seven-person campus committee that wants to propose a new intramural activity for your school. First, your committee must agree on one activity to support. Each member will have five minutes to present an idea to the committee at your next meeting. You would like to propose lacrosse, which you have always been interested in since you learned the game as a child, but you know it is not a popular sport.

### Making Choices

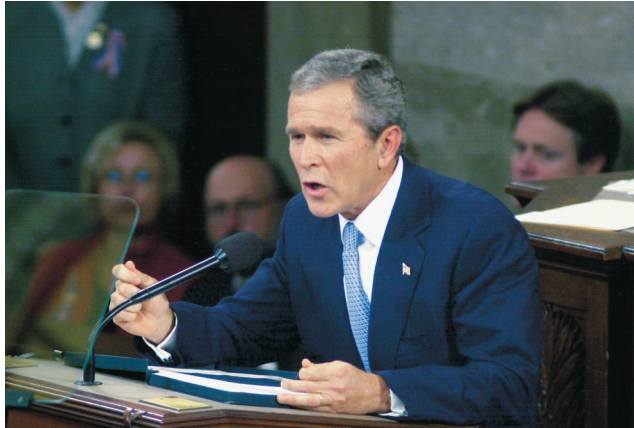
1. For your presentation, would you plan to try to identify with your audience or would you avoid identification with them? What are the potential benefits or drawbacks of each strategy?
2. What type of behavior is most appropriate for this situation: Will listeners expect a lighthearted tone, a serious demeanor, or something in between? A broad overview or a detailed one?

3. In this situation, is the purpose of your presentation to inform, to persuade, to entertain, or a combination of some or all of these? Explain why.

### What If...

The committee decides to support your idea for a new intramural activity and asks you to present it to the student government. You will have 5 to 10 minutes to make your pitch. How would your answers above be affected by the following conditions?

1. In addition to presenting your idea, you need to include estimates for how much it will cost to fund the program for a year, and you know that student government officials will balk at what seems to be a very high cost.
2. A campus-wide poll taken by your committee shows that most students in the governing group aren't interested in your activity but that large numbers of students overall are excited about your proposal.



President George W. Bush addresses a joint session of Congress and the nation after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. How would you describe this specific rhetorical situation? What needs were posed by the audience, occasion, speaker, and speech?

The following example illustrates the double-sided nature of the rhetorical situation. On September 11, 2001, the nation watched in horror as two commercial airplanes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City. A third plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A fourth plane, thought to be headed for another national landmark, crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, following heroic efforts by the passengers to thwart the hijackers' plans. Thousands of lives were lost in the crashes and the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center, from office personnel to rescue workers. This was the single deadliest act of terrorism on U.S. soil in history. Americans needed to know what their government was doing to protect them.

This context defined a rhetorical situation. The audience was the American people, who needed to be consoled and protected. The occasion was one of collective grief, uncertainty, and fear. In times of national

crisis, people look to the president for leadership. President George W. Bush was still in his first year of office after the contested vote count of the 2000 election. He needed to prove that he could handle the crisis and lead the nation.

On the evening of September 20, 2001, in what is widely recognized as the finest hour in an otherwise controversial presidency, President Bush spoke to a joint session of Congress and to the nation. His speech consisted of both the prepared text and its oral presentation by the president. His text, prepared by lead speechwriter Michael Gerson and other staff members, began responding to the situation by honoring those who had died in the terrorist attack. He said that the courage of those who died spoke for the strong "state of the union." At the same time, the speech set forth plans to calm fears and prevent further attacks. President Bush set out his new foreign policy to combat terrorism around the world and also announced a new administrative position of coordinator of homeland security to strengthen domestic defenses.

The speech responded to the immediate situation of the terrorist attack and created a new situation of a war on terrorism, refocusing Americans' attention from fear, grief, and mourning to indignation, resolve, and unity. In short, although President Bush was *constrained* by the needs to provide meaning, reassurance, and focus, he made the choice to characterize the situation as a war on terrorism, and by doing so he took advantage of an *opportunity*. Every rhetorical situation consists of a mix of constraints and opportunities.

Similarly, when you give a speech in class, your rhetorical situation is influenced by the audience and by the values its members hold. These are your situation's constraints. At the same time, you have the opportunity to modify listeners' beliefs and values by what you say.

Since ancient times, a speaker's opportunities—the speech elements about which the speaker can make choices—have been grouped under five major headings:

- **Invention** is the generation of materials for the speech. You produce (or "invent," to use the rhetorical term) these materials through a combination of analysis, research, and judgment. You begin by identifying what *could* go into

#### invention

The generation of materials for a speech.



the speech, then you conduct research to determine what ideas are supportable, and then you select the most effective materials for your purpose and audience.

- **Arrangement** is the structuring of ideas and materials in the speech. This includes the organization of materials for each main idea, the ordering and connecting of main ideas within the body of the speech, and the overall structure of the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.
- **Style** is the distinctive character that may make a speech recognizable or memorable. Style is achieved primarily through language, and it reflects the speaker's awareness of how language can be used both to "show" and to "tell"—both to evoke emotions and to convey descriptive meaning.
- **Delivery** is the presentation of the speech. Whereas the preceding activities are performed by the speaker alone, delivery involves actually sharing the message with the audience. Skillful delivery involves the effective use of voice, gesture, facial expression, physical movement, and visual aids.
- **Memory** was an extremely important category of skills at a time when most speeches were memorized. Today, however, most speakers use either **extemporaneous presentation** (referring to an outline) or **manuscript presentation** (reading a written script). Even so, some dimensions of memory are still very important—for example, keeping track of main ideas, phrasing ideas so that listeners will remember them, and precisely wording an effective introduction and conclusion. Memory skills also are critical in rehearsing your speech mentally and in practicing it aloud before presentation.

#### arrangement

The structuring of materials within the main ideas, the organization of main ideas within the body of the speech, and the overall structure of introduction, body, and conclusion.

#### style

The distinctive character that may make a speech recognizable or memorable.

#### delivery

The presentation of the speech to an audience.

#### memory

Mental recall of the key ideas and the basic structure of the speech.

#### extemporaneous presentation

A mode of delivery in which the speech is planned and structured carefully but a specific text is not written in advance nor memorized.

#### manuscript presentation

A mode of delivery in which the speaker reads aloud the prepared text of the speech.

## The Public Forum

### OBJECTIVE 1.4

The word **public** in "public speaking" is important in at least two respects. First, it designates speaking that is open and accessible by others. A person who speaks publicly is inviting others to listen carefully and to think about and appraise the message. The speaker's goal is that of informed choice, not forced compliance, on the part of the audience.

Second, speaking is public when it affects people beyond the immediate audience. If you urge classmates to lobby for higher student activity fees, your remarks will have consequences for people who are not even present to hear you. If you explain how to examine the terms of a lease before signing it, listeners can follow your directions in ways that will affect others as well.

From the speaker's point of view, giving a speech means entering into the **public forum**. Centuries ago, the forum was a physical place where citizens gathered to discuss issues affecting them. Today, the public forum is not an actual place to which we go; instead, it is an imagined "space" that exists wherever people have the freedom to exchange ideas about matters that affect themselves and others. For example, in the United States religion usually is thought to be a private matter, but religious freedom is an important public value. So when, in early 2012, the federal government proposed rules requiring religious institutions to offer health insurance coverage for contraception, the resulting controversy prompted vigorous debates among citizens who wrote letters and made telephone calls to express their opinions.

#### public

Open to or accessible by others; affects others.

#### public forum

A space (imagined, rather than physical) in which citizens gather to discuss issues affecting them; discussion characterized by certain assumptions about the need for cooperative action and subjective judgment to resolve a problem.

We sometimes think of the public forum only when large questions of national or international affairs are involved, but *anytime* you deliberate about matters that affect you and others, you are participating in the public forum. Holding a classroom discussion, determining the rules for a residence hall, making policy in your local community, urging students to volunteer their time for a worthy cause, campaigning on behalf of a candidate for mayor, and trying to raise funds for a new city park are all examples of participation in the public forum. In principle, everyone has the chance not only to listen but to be heard as well.

The public forum used to develop only slowly and gradually, as individuals came to see that they shared a problem or concern about which something needed to be done. Now, however, electronic communication can make the emergence of the public forum almost instantaneous. Examples include the speed with which social media brought people together around the “Arab spring” protests of 2011, the Occupy movement in the United States in the fall of 2011, and in early 2012 a reversal of a prominent cancer research foundation’s decision to discontinue support for Planned Parenthood.

## Characteristics of the Public Forum

The public forum is created whenever the following conditions are met:

1. *Some problem affects people collectively* as well as individually.
2. *Cooperative action is needed* to address the problem. Speakers and listeners participate in deciding what to do.
3. *The decision requires subjective judgment.* What should be done is not obvious; there is more than one possible solution, and there is no way for anyone to gather all the information that conceivably might bear on the decision.
4. Nevertheless, *a decision is required.* People stand at a fork in the road, and a choice cannot be avoided.

Of course, the public forum does not come into being only at the moment of decision. When people seek information in order to understand the background of important issues, to recognize competing viewpoints, or to have a clear frame of reference, the public forum is present. Whether your main purpose is to inform or to persuade, or even to entertain, you will be addressing a public forum if these four conditions are present.

## Strategies for Speaking to Diverse Audiences

### Recognizing Diversity

The first step in recognizing diversity is to become aware of your own frameworks and assumptions, so that you might avoid unconsciously assuming that everyone “naturally” shares them. To help you do that, consider:

- What beliefs on your topic do you “take for granted”? How can you best anticipate these before addressing your audience? Can you account for all the assumptions on which your ideas depend?
- How might your assumptions and “taken for granted” beliefs be challenged by someone who did not share them? Does the way in which a challenge is made make a big difference in how you would respond to it? What types of challenges might be most productive?
- Assuming you receive constructive challenges, how might you reshape your message? Do you need to account for everything your respondent said? How much change do you need to make? What risks do you run by following the advice of one audience member over others?

Just as the public forum exists in many places, many subjects call for communication in the public forum. For example, consider how the topic of immigration policy reform reflects each of the four conditions for a public forum:

1. For many years, immigration was at the heart of American economic expansion. Early on, however, several ethnic and national groups were discriminated against, as with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In the following decades, strict quotas were placed on who could immigrate legally. Slowly, many realized that immigration policy was *not just an individual matter*, because all were harmed by acts of discrimination against individual ethnicities or nationalities.
2. When people came to see immigration as more than a private matter, *speakers and listeners together began to discuss* how and why to best reform immigration policy. Audiences heard descriptions of how various plans would work. They identified and evaluated speakers' claims, arguments, and evidence. They considered a variety of proposals, accepting some ideas and rejecting others. Speakers analyzed their audiences' beliefs and values and tried to adapt their ideas to what listeners regarded as most important.
3. *No one person can just impose a solution.* No one can be certain which proposal is best, and no one can ever get all the information that might help in making that decision. So there is a give-and-take process as speakers and listeners consider alternative ideas and proposals, trying their best to decide which are the most sensible or compelling.
4. *And yet a decision has to be made*, because doing nothing will make the problems of immigration worse—for individuals as well as for society as a whole.

Over time, the participants in the public forum come to an understanding about which approach should be tried. The understanding that they reach is always tentative and always subject to revision if better ideas emerge into the forum. Because no final answer has been found on the subject of immigration reform, for example, it returns to the public forum every few years. It has been in the public forum ever since the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 but was vigorously debated beginning early in the twentieth century. After World War II, immigration reform allowed many refugees from Eastern Europe to settle in the United States. A 1986 Act provided amnesty for many illegal aliens but imposed sanctions against employers hiring illegal aliens. The DREAM Act proposed in 2011 would allow illegal immigrants who have been in the United States since they were children and who have been educated in U.S. schools to become citizens.

The topic of immigration reform is typical of many subjects in the public forum. The specifics of the discussion change over time, decisions are subject to change as a result of new information or perspective, and the issue is not settled with finality. Also, although immigration reform is discussed in legislative halls, it is a topic for human rights activists, family organizations, workers and employers concerned about job security, legal immigrants, and those interested in the future demographic composition of the United States. In discussing the topic of immigration reform, all these people, wherever they are physically located, are participating in the public forum.

When you speak, you are joining an ongoing discussion in the public forum. The status of that discussion will tell you what people are thinking about and, therefore, what topics will be of interest and what positions are being considered. You may learn, for example, that just as terrorism eclipsed health care as a topic of public interest after September 11, 2001, so the financial crisis that began in 2008 eclipsed considerations of foreign policy. Closer to home, shortfalls in the college



## Rhetorical Workout

### Find the Public Forum in Your Neighborhood

You and several of your neighbors would like to plan a neighborhood rummage sale. You set up a meeting to talk about when to have the sale and how to work together to promote it. Let's look at what makes this meeting a public forum.

1. What are the issues or problems affecting the group collectively? What kinds of issues might affect you and each of your neighbors individually? Outside of your group, who might be affected by what you decide?
2. Why is cooperative action needed in your meeting? Is it important for every person to participate in the decision? Why or why not?
3. In the public forum, a decision requires subjective judgment, which means there is no one obvious solution and the participants may all have different opinions. How might this factor play out in your neighborhood meeting?
4. Why is a decision needed in your meeting?
5. Suppose you have recently moved in and don't know your neighbors very well yet. How can your speaking and communication skills help you contribute to the meeting and the group's decision?

budget may eclipse discussion of new academic programs in the public forum. This knowledge will help you to decide what to speak about and determine the specific questions you may want to address.

## The Health of the Public Forum

As you become skilled in public speaking, you become a more effective participant in the public forum. You are able to analyze important issues of public concern, to articulate your ideas and to relate them to others, to listen carefully and critically to other points of view, to weigh and evaluate arguments and evidence, and to bring your best judgment to issues that have no easy or automatic answer. As you exercise these skills, you strengthen the ties that unite participants in the public forum into a community or society. This is a benefit above and beyond the gains in personal self-esteem and performance on the job that come with competence in communication.

Traditionally, the public forum has been associated with political questions. But the boundary between public and private is always shifting, and any subject might easily find its way into the public forum. Styles in popular music, for example, become more than just private or individual choices in response to claims that the noise level is harmful to health or that the content leads children to violence. Personal choices of deodorants or clothing are no longer just private matters when they are alleged to cause destruction of the ozone layer or exploitation of Third-World labor markets. And speculating in the stock market becomes a public matter when one's investment choices



"Citizen comment" periods at city council meetings permit representatives of local groups to speak on their behalf. You might find yourself in this role.

affect so many others. Whatever subject you discuss—whether or not it is usually regarded as political—you are entering into the public forum.

Discussion of public issues is best advanced when the public forum is active and vibrant. Maintaining a healthy public forum, like maintaining our personal health, takes work. In the 2008 presidential election campaign, for example, after years of decline and apathy, many people, especially college students, developed an interest in public affairs. In formal discourse and informal conversation, public issues were discussed with vigor. But we should not assume that an engaged public is always the norm. More often, private citizens are put off by the difficulty of understanding important but complex issues. In the early months of the 2012 presidential campaign, for example, people were less inclined to participate, although more were aroused as Election Day approached. Even in informal conversation, according to recent research, many people are reluctant to talk about public issues.<sup>3</sup> Others are satisfied with sources of information that oversimplify issues and turn them into slogans. Or they may seek out and pay attention only to information that agrees with their point of view.

When large numbers of people become convinced that they have the power to effect change, the public forum becomes the centerpiece of democracy. But when citizens disengage from issues of public concern, a free society should sound the alarm.

## Public Speaking and the Public Forum

If the public forum is allowed to weaken, critical public decisions will be made unilaterally, whether by experts or by rulers, so those who are affected by the decisions really won't have any part in making them. Without a well-cultivated public forum, the two alternatives are autocratic rule and anarchy.

Remember that the public forum extends beyond the realm of traditional politics. Many who disdain traditional politics are involved actively in their own communities on issues that affect the general good. For these citizens, the public forum, rather than weakening, is becoming more localized and many new forums are emerging. What it means to be a citizen is changing but not necessarily eroding.<sup>4</sup> This is an encouraging development but one that requires that many more people be able to participate actively.

Nationwide, colleges and universities are stressing “civic engagement” in order to help students to become more competent citizens who will become involved with public affairs. Fortunately, studying public speaking equips you to do this by enabling you to understand issues and evaluate claims. The processes of discovering, assessing, arranging, and presenting ideas will be valuable as you read and think about public issues, discuss them with others, and speak out when the issue and the occasion move you. You'll be able to make decisions even about matters that do not directly affect you. And when an issue does affect you, your involvement and participation will count.



**Watch the Video**  
“Forum: Jail Reform and  
Drug Rehabilitation” at  
**MyCommunicationLab**

## Ethics: Respect for Audience, Topic, and Occasion

**OBJECTIVE**  
**1.5**

Even though we sometimes say that “talk is cheap” or that “words can never hurt me,” we know better. Speech has tremendous power, and the person who wields it bears great responsibility. Public speakers, in particular, can affect others by altering listeners’ knowledge, beliefs, values, or actions. Furthermore, the act of addressing an audience may alter the speaker’s own beliefs and values in response to listeners’ reactions. Given

this powerful interaction in public speaking, both speakers and listeners should seek high standards of ethical conduct, so that they do not risk manipulating the other.

As a listener, you owe speakers your care and attention. Recognize and acknowledge the effort that went into preparing the speech, and appreciate that the speaker may be disclosing something personal. Assume that the speaker is sincere, and listen intently to the speaker's message. Do not engage in other activities that will distract you from the speech. Above all, listeners have the responsibility to think critically about the speech. Do not reject or refuse to consider the speaker's message simply because it differs from what you already believe. Nor, however, should you blindly accept the message. Assess the speech carefully to decide whether it merits your support. Whatever you decide, do so thoughtfully. Your agreement is especially valuable to a speaker when it reflects critical thought and you give it freely.

As a speaker you should demonstrate high ethical standards in four areas:

- Respect for your listeners
- Respect for your topic
- Responsibility for your statements
- Concern for the consequences of your speech

## Respect for Your Listeners

Successful communication usually depends on evoking common bonds between the speaker and listeners. When a speech is effective, audience members feel both that the speaker cares about them and that they are not just passive spectators. Rather, they feel that they are actively involved in the speech.

Because a speech is presented to a specific audience in a specific situation, a high-quality speech is sensitive to listeners' perspectives. A speaker who carefully analyzes the audience at hand will select materials and strategies that are appropriate and effective. In particular, the following principles demonstrate a speaker's respect for listeners.

**Meet Listeners Where They Are.** One sign of respect is your willingness to acknowledge the audience's current position and to make it your point of departure—whether or not you agree with it. For example, in trying to convince opponents of capital punishment to rethink their position, student Mary O'Malley chose not to attack the audience's point of view right away but instead to begin by considering it:

I understand that you have some reservations about the death penalty because you are worried that an innocent person might mistakenly be executed. This is certainly an important consideration. Death is final, and no one wants to be responsible for such a horrible mistake. Today I want to examine the possibility that a mistake might occur in the criminal justice system and to explore the consequences of such a mistake.

Rather than ignoring her listeners' views, Mary incorporated them into the speech, showing respect by meeting listeners on their own ground.

**Don't Insult Listeners' Intelligence or Judgment.** Besides starting her speech by acknowledging listeners' views, Mary also respected their judgment and intelligence by saying that she would examine their position in her speech. Likewise, when you prepare and present a speech, avoid patronizing or "talking down to" the audience. Don't devote the entire speech to repeating what listeners already know or believe, making them wonder why they took the time to hear you.

Also avoid suggesting that anyone who does not agree with you is somehow deficient in judgment. Steer clear of phrases that a listener might interpret as put-downs.

### Make Sure Your Message Merits the Audience's Time.

In general, although listeners could do other things with their time, they choose to attend your speech in the belief that you have something valuable and original to say. Recognize that you are receiving a gift of their time, and prepare a speech that deserves their gift.

### Respect Listeners' Ability to Assess Your Message.

Because you respect listeners, you want them to understand your message thoroughly and to give their approval freely. Do not mislead listeners about your purpose or conceal what you want them to believe, feel, think, or do. If you are urging them to make a choice among alternatives, do not try to manipulate them by hiding options or by casting any particular option in unduly favorable or unfavorable light. If it is your goal to advocate one option over another, you will best defend your position by explaining how it is superior to the alternatives, not by distorting or ignoring the options that you dislike.

As a general rule, you should assume that your audience is made up of critical thinkers and listeners, and your speech should aim for the approval of such an audience. Going about it in this way will reduce the risk that you will play upon the quirks or prejudices of any particular audience.

**Respect the Cultural Diversity of Your Audience.** Not all listeners share your perspective. An audience often includes people with many diverse cultural backgrounds, and these affect their attitudes and experiences. As society becomes even more diverse, all public communicators must expect that some listeners will have assumptions different from their own. The tendency to imagine that one's own views are typical of everyone else's is called *ethnocentrism*. It not only demeans listeners who have different cultural backgrounds, it also reduces the likelihood of successful communication.<sup>10</sup>

Ethnocentrism is usually unconscious. When student speaker Mary Winthrop concluded her speech on religion in American life by saying, "So in this country, it clearly doesn't matter where you go to church on Sunday," she thought she was celebrating religious freedom. She didn't realize that she alienated Muslims and Jews in her audience, whose religions focus on other days of the week and who do not call their houses of worship "churches," or that she had offended those who do not practice a religion. Likewise, when Patrick Dungan mentioned that "by eighth grade, everyone begins thinking about where to go to college," he probably didn't realize that in his audience were students who couldn't afford to go to college at all until after several years in the workforce.

Respecting cultural diversity requires being aware of one's own assumptions and resisting the temptation to assume that everyone else will share them. Although we will focus on audience culture in Chapter 5, respect for cultural diversity should influence every aspect of preparing and presenting a speech.



Public speakers make claims on their listeners' attention and beliefs. Speakers therefore have a responsibility to say something worthwhile, to respect listeners' judgment, and to respect the diversity of viewpoints and cultural background that listeners represent.



## A Question of Ethics

### Ethnocentric Assumptions

It is important for speakers to avoid making ethnocentric assumptions about the audience. However, sometimes you will know quite a bit about your audience that could help you to target a message to your listeners. For instance, your audience may be people of the same age group, from the same community, or with the same religious beliefs. If you tailor your message to take advantage of this knowledge, is that ethnocentric? Is it pandering to the audience? Is it acceptable to be ethnocentric if your audience is in fact homogeneous? How do you maintain a balance between appealing to your audience and being careful not to pander to their prejudices?

## Respect for Your Topic

Presumably, you will be speaking about a topic that matters to you, and you will have something important to say. When you speak, you are putting yourself on the record; your words will outlast the actual speaking situation. You are also asking listeners to accept you as a credible source of ideas about the topic. To justify their confidence in you, and to meet your own high standards, you need to know what you are talking about in enough detail that you can present it clearly and fairly. You must demonstrate that you care enough about the topic to study it thoroughly. Otherwise, why should the audience take your ideas about the topic seriously?

## Responsibility for Your Statements

A public speaker makes claims on the audience, and so you must take responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of your statements. This is every bit as important in speaking as it is in writing, and similar guidelines apply.

Particularly in speaking (because listeners cannot see the printed word), you need to distinguish between fact and opinion, being careful not to misrepresent one as the other. Additionally, whether you are presenting fact or opinion, a statement is made in a particular context, and you must represent that correctly; if not, you will mislead or deceive the audience. The film critic who writes, “Nothing could be better than this film if you are looking for a cure for insomnia,” does not want to be quoted as saying, “Nothing could be better than this film.” Likewise, stating that military spending has declined as a percentage of the gross domestic product over the past five years is not fair to the context unless you tell listeners that the source also said that actual military spending has *increased* by several billion dollars but that the economy grew at an even faster rate.

As in writing, one of the most irresponsible things you can do as a speaker is to present another person’s words or ideas as though they were your own. Such **plagiarism** is nothing less than theft. Usually it results from carelessness rather than malice, but the problem is the same.

To avoid plagiarism:

1. Never present someone else’s unique ideas or words without acknowledging it.
2. Specify who developed the ideas or said the words that you present (“As discovered by Professor Jones,” “Socrates said,” and so forth).

### plagiarism

Using another person’s words as if they were your own.



3. Paraphrase statements in your own words rather than quoting them directly, unless the exact wording of a statement is crucial to your speech.
4. Draw on several sources rather than on a single source.

Remember that it is also a form of plagiarism to present another student's speech as your own or to use the same speech in two different classes. Every speech you present should be your own original work.

## Concern for the Consequences of Your Speech

Recognizing that your speech has consequences is another important ethical responsibility. You cannot be indifferent to how your speech may affect others, even though you may not know what all the effects will be. A listener might repeat an amusing anecdote you told, might feel more closely connected to someone whose life you celebrated, might get a psychological lift from your upbeat tone, or might change health insurance based on the reasoning in your speech. The fact that others may repeat what you said in the speech is all the more reason to be sure that what you have said is true! You cannot be held legally responsible for such effects, of course, but high ethical standards should lead you at least to think about how your speech might affect listeners.

Moreover, in any rhetorical situation, speakers and listeners together make up a community united by experience, interests, and values. Speech is the glue that holds a community together by making us aware of our common bonds and by giving us a vision to which we might aspire. Ethical public speakers take their membership in this community seriously, and they accept their responsibility to sustain the community by adhering to high ethical standards.<sup>11</sup>

It is easy to state general ethical standards such as these, but ethical issues present themselves in almost every aspect of the speech. Often these are matters involving choices between competing ethical standards, and they often have to be resolved in the context of the specific case rather than by invoking general principles. For this reason, each chapter includes the feature "A Question of Ethics" to help you recognize ethical issues throughout the speech process.

### CHECKLIST 1.1

#### Avoid Plagiarism

- ☐ Never present someone else's ideas or words without acknowledging it.
- ☐ Always give the source of the ideas or words that you present.
- ☐ Paraphrase statements in your own words instead of quoting someone directly, unless exact wording is crucial to your speech.
- ☐ Draw on several sources rather than only one source.
- ☐ Never present another person's speech as your own.
- ☐ Don't use the same speech for two different classes.



**Watch the Video**  
"Mark Knapp on the Ethics of Deception" at MyCommunicationLab

## What Have You Learned?

**Objective 1.1:** Identify the principal things you will learn in this course and how they will benefit you outside the classroom.

By studying public speaking, you will learn these essential skills:

- Reading, observing, and thinking critically
- Selecting what to say
- Using language effectively
- Presenting yourself skillfully
- Responding to others' reactions to you

Blending theory and practice will:

- Help you to be more articulate.
- Apply to a variety of everyday life and career situations.
- Enable you to participate more effectively as a citizen.

**Objective 1.2:** Describe public speaking as a communication process in which the speaker and listeners jointly create meaning and understanding.

Public speaking is communication:

- Communication is the joint creation of meaning by speakers and listeners.

- A speech is given in a specific rhetorical situation, determined by the audience, occasion, speaker, and speech.
- Listeners interpret a message and provide feedback.
- The speaker takes listeners into account both in developing the speech and in responding to feedback.
- Public speaking occurs in the public forum.

**Objective 1.3:** Name the elements of a rhetorical situation and explain the steps by which a speech affects the situation.

A rhetorical situation is constrained by:

- The audience
- The occasion
- The speaker
- The speech

Speakers can make choices regarding:

- Invention
- Arrangement
- Style
- Delivery
- Memory

**Objective 1.4:** Define the public forum and describe how studying public speaking will prepare you to participate effectively in it.

Characteristics of the public forum:

- An issue confronts people collectively as well as individually.
- Cooperative action is needed to address the issue.
- It is impossible to know for sure the best course of action to take.
- Nevertheless, a decision is required.

The health of the public forum:

- Depends on active participation.
- Is often weak, characterized by disengagement and apathy.
- May be changing in form and in location.
- Is aided by civic engagement.

**Objective 1.5:** Identify the principal ethical obligations of listeners and speakers.

High ethical standards reflect the mutual responsibilities of listeners and speakers:

- Listeners owe speakers their care and attention.
- Speakers owe respect for listeners, for the topic, for their statements, and for the consequences of their speech.



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## Discussion Questions

1. What is rhetoric? Why is it important to study rhetoric?
2. Watch a speech on television, and then identify the most important strategic choices made by the speaker. How would the speech be changed if these choices had been made differently?
3. Someone who is having trouble hearing a speaker usually leans forward to get closer to the sound. This is a cue to the speaker to increase the volume. What are some other common feedback cues that an audience might present? Discuss how a speaker might use each cue to modify either the message or the presentation. How much attention should you as a speaker pay to such nonverbal cues? When might paying attention to such cues become distracting or hinder your speech?
4. View a speech with your classmates, and then, as a group, evaluate the quality of that speech. Take into account its purpose; the degree to which the topic meets the requirements of the situation; sensitivity to cultural diversity; the meaningfulness and importance of the thesis; organization, support, and presentation; the way in which the speech builds community with the audience; and its ethical implications. Which of these characteristics are most helpful and most important to you in distinguishing a good speech from a bad one? Is this the same for all speeches, or do different speeches call for different evaluative emphases?
5. How do you define ethics? Discuss the ethical considerations that are most important to the class. What are the points on which the class as a whole agrees?

## Activities

1. Using the diagram in Figure 1.2, identify the components of the rhetorical situation you will face when you give your first speech in class.
2. Watch a television program where people discuss public issues among themselves. Compare it to a program in which someone speaks to a live audience and a

- television camera. How do these cases differ from each other? From the speeches you expect to deliver in class?
3. Watch a speech, and then write an evaluation of its quality. Consider both delivery and content of the speech.

4. Examine your reasons for taking this public speaking course. Beyond fulfilling requirements, what goals do you want to achieve? Based on your reading of this chapter, do you think this course will help you achieve your goals? Why or why not?

## Key Terms

arrangement **15**  
 ceremonial **10**  
 communication **6**  
 critical thinking **5**  
 deliberative **10**  
 delivery **15**  
 entertaining **12**  
 exigence **11**  
 extemporaneous presentation **15**  
 facts **5**

feedback **7**  
 forensic **11**  
 identification **10**  
 informing **12**  
 invention **14**  
 manuscript presentation **15**  
 memory **15**  
 opinions **5**  
 persuading **12**  
 plagiarism **22**

public **15**  
 public forum **15**  
 rhetoric **8**  
 rhetorical situation **8**  
 situation **8**  
 strategic planning **5**  
 strategy **13**  
 style **15**

 **Study and Review the Flashcards at MyCommunicationLab**

## Notes

- 1 These skills will help you to succeed in college. See Ann Bainbridge Frymier, "Students' Classroom Communication Effectiveness," *Communication Quarterly* 53 (May 2005): 197–212.
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- 3 An example of research demonstrating that people often tend to avoid the discussion of public issues is Nina Eliasoph, *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- 4 For an excellent analysis of how the concept of citizenship has changed over time along with changing norms about public communication, see Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen*, New York: Free Press, 1998. For more about how notions of citizenship are undergoing great change, see Russell J. Dalton, *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*, rev. ed., Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2009.
- 5 For a discussion of this difference between literature and oratory, see Herbert A. Wichelns, "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," first published in 1925, reprinted in *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective*, ed. Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock, New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
- 6 See Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (Winter 1968): 1–14.
- 7 *Identification* is a rhetorical concept treated by Kenneth Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
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- 9 These three categories are described in Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- 10 One way to begin breaking down ethnocentric views is to examine communication across cultures. See George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. The growth of the Internet makes such intercultural communication even more important. See Damien Smith Pfister and Jordan Soliz, "(Re)Conceptualizing Intercultural Communication in a Networked Society," *Journal of International & Intercultural Communication*, 4 (November, 2011): 246–51.
- 11 For more on ethical considerations in the public speaking class, see George Cheney, Steve May, and Debashish Munshi, ed., *The Handbook of Communication Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 2011; Richard L. Johannesen, Kathleen S. Valde, and Karen E. Whedbee, *Ethics in Human Communication*, 6th ed., Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2008; and Ronald C. Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and Leeanne M. Bell, *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference*, Los Angeles: Sage, 1999.