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# *public speaking* *and presentations*

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# ***public speaking and presentations*** **DeMYSTiFieD**

***Melody Templeton***



New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City  
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*To Frank, my love, my rock, and my Spud Boy. You help me believe everything is possible. Thank you for being you. 1-4-3*

*To Bob, the cat, who made writing so difficult by walking on the keyboard, lying on my arms, nudging the laptop off my lap, and generally providing as many distractions as possible. I love you anyway.*

*To all my friends at the Paoli CSL. You supported me while I whined, whimpered, procrastinated, and complained about writing a book. I thank you for the joy you bring to my life.*

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# INTRODUCTION



Welcome to *Public Speaking and Presentations Demystified*. This book is intended for readers at all levels of speaking experience. Beginners, in these pages you have all you need to put together and present a great talk for a corporate client, conference, class, or special occasion. Experienced speakers, this book is for you too. You will learn any number of tips that you can apply immediately to polish your speaking style and your approach to preparation. Instructors can choose this book as a supplement or simple text for classes.

## How to Use This Book

*Public Speaking and Presentations Demystified* is divided into three sections: “Getting Started,” “Putting the Pieces Together,” and “Stand and Deliver.” If one of these phases is most interesting or challenging for you, start your reading there. At the end of each chapter you’ll find five multiple choice questions to test your learning. The chapters within each section stand alone, so feel free to open to any topic for a quick tip or suggestion.

## Extras

These chapters contain three types of additional information to add to your speaking toolbox. These extras are offered as text boxes and article formats. They are:



## **“TIPS FROM THE PROS”**

Within these chapters are brief segments titled “Tips from the Pros.” These articles have been submitted by a guest author who will offer insight into a particular issue that speakers find challenging.

I asked each of these “pros” to contribute to this book because he or she excels at the topic being discussed. I’ve seen them, heard them, and know their reputations. I’m proud to call many of them friends. Enjoy the “Tips from the Pros” segments—I know you’ll get some good suggestions from them, and make sure to read the biographies at the end of the book. Each includes contact information if you would like to follow up with any of the contributors.

## **“BONUS POINTS”**

You’ll find small text boxes titled “Bonus Points” in each chapter. Each one gives a quick suggestion to handle speaking situations faced by professionals and beginners alike. Some of these points are discussed elsewhere in the chapter and some stand alone as a great reminder for you as a speaker.

## **“SPEAKING OF . . .”**

The boxes titled “Speaking of . . .” give you definitions or describe topics that might give you added credibility when you take the stage. You’ll find everything from ways to avoid procrastination and quotes that will make you think to memory techniques and safety tips in these boxes.

## **Now What?**

Take a deep breath and have some fun with public speaking. As an executive speech coach and public speaking professor, I promise you that speaking really can be fun and I know you’ll find lots of suggestions and ideas within these pages. Enjoy the journey.

## PART ONE



# GETTING STARTED

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## CHAPTER 1



# What Do I Do First?

### Speaking of . . . Great Quotes

*All the great speakers were bad speakers once.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## A Jump Start

It's official. You have to give a big, high-stakes presentation. Does that excite you? Send you running for shelter? Make you feel a sick day coming on? Regardless of your reaction, I've found one tip for getting started that helps almost everyone: As soon as you know your topic, take fifteen minutes of quiet time, and start listing everything you might talk about. Create a straight-line list of any information, activities, facts, or examples you might include. Don't edit or arrange your ideas yet; just keep listing possibilities. At this point you're creating a simple brainstorming



event just for yourself. When you've emptied your mind of possibilities, put the list away, and move on with your normal activities. Whether your presentation is two days or two months away, your mind will keep generating ideas. You've just given yourself the gift of getting started!

## Speaking of . . . Procrastination

### Seven Ways to Stop Procrastination

1. Set a timer for fifteen to twenty minutes, and commit to work on your presentation for only that amount of time. Sometimes the momentum makes you want to keep working. If not, you've still gained twenty minutes of productive work toward your final product.
2. Break your large project into small segments, and tackle just one. Presentation tasks can include learning about your audience, researching a competitor, or finding graphics to support your message. Completing even a little piece of the project can feel great. The tasks all add up.
3. Stop waiting to start until you know how to do it "right." Just start on a piece of the project now, and polishing it up later is usually easy. Perfectionism only increases anxiety. The first stab at anything is often the most challenging—just start!
4. Keep a journal for all of the tasks you've accomplished so far. Simply seeing everything written down can be very motivating.
5. Find an accountability partner. Create a pact with a friend or colleague who also has a project to work on. Set a regular time to report your progress to each other. Motivation can come from holding each other accountable.
6. Change the way you think about the project. Excessive optimism about your ability to "work best under pressure" is as detrimental as the feelings of fear and anxiety that keep you stuck in inertia. Dieting is a good analogy. For many of us who want to lose weight, the excuses for starting tomorrow are innumerable. Then suddenly an event like a wedding or class reunion is on the horizon, and we try a crash diet. The diet usually fails.
7. Reward yourself for accomplishing tasks. Choose something simple like taking a walk, watching your favorite TV show, or eating ice cream as reinforcement for a job well done. Thinking of a motivating reward can be tough for those of us who tend to reward ourselves all the time. If that's the case, choose one thing—a food, a TV show, or an activity that you can tie directly to your reward system, and use it exclusively as a reward. No cheating!



This activity sounds so basic, you might be tempted to skip it. But don't! From executives to high school students, from the best man to the project manager, people I've coached have found this idea to be the best jump start for creating a presentation. I use it to teach my online classes—and I used it to create this book!

## Why Are You Speaking?

Now that your creative juices are flowing, it's time to focus on why you're speaking. Keep these three questions in mind during the entire preparation process:

1. What do I want my audience to **know**?
2. What do I want my audience to **do**?
3. What do I want my audience to **feel**?

You may doubt that the way your listeners feel really matters to your presentation, but remember that humans are emotional beings, so every decision we make has an emotional component. If you can create a feeling of anxiety around a problem and then turn that feeling to relief and anticipation as a result of your solution, you're on your way to having the audience hooked. The mood generated by your presentation has a strong effect on you and your listeners.

Next, create a purpose or goal statement. The statement should be specific and geared toward what the audience will gain from listening. Here are some examples:

At the end of my presentation . . .

- My audience will understand the value of my product and agree to include it in their next catalog.
- My audience will understand and accept the reasons why this project is necessary for their organization to undertake as soon as possible.
- The audience will learn at least three value-added ideas they can incorporate into their next sales meeting.

As you work on the presentation, keep this goal statement in mind to maintain your focus. Like a map, it shows you how to keep heading in the right direction.



## Why Are *You* Speaking?

“Why me?” You might be asking yourself why you are the one who is expected to stand in front of an audience. Most commonly, a speaker is selected because he or she fits into at least one of the following categories:

- **A subject matter expert (SME), that is, someone who knows a subject in depth.** Television news shows will often interview a doctor about a health-related issue, an attorney about a legal case, or a retired general about a military initiative. Hint: Just because someone is an SME, don’t assume that person is the most skilled communicator!
- **The most senior person on the team or within the organization.** The person with seniority is often selected to speak because that person has influence, credibility, or the perspective to offer the big picture. The senior person will often give an overview and will be the first of several speakers.
- **A person with political connections to the audience.** The “connected” person serves as the connecting bridge between the audience and the other speakers.
- **A high-potential employee who is being “groomed” for another position or opportunity.** The public exposure of a high-stakes presentation is invaluable for career development.
- **Someone who volunteered to speak.** This person may be an excellent speaker, the one most comfortable with the audience or the topic, the one most willing to support a reluctant team, or just egotistical. As an audience member, you might not know which until you hear what the speaker has to offer.
- **Someone who couldn’t get out of doing it.** Anything is possible with this person. Give her a break; a reluctant speaker may surprise everyone. This is the way I got started as a professional speaker.
- **A great speaker!** This category may or may not be combined with any of the others.

Chances are, when you ask, “Why me?” the answer is found at least partially in this list. Regardless of the reason, it’s up to you to step up and craft the best speech possible. Every presentation is an opportunity to present yourself in the best possible light. *Carpe diem!*



### Bonus Point

Prioritize the things you'd like to accomplish in your presentation. As you prepare, focus on your top three goals.

### Speaking of . . . Great Quotes

*A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.*

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

## Mental Preparation

It's up to you to decide how you think about the presentation. Is it a threat or an opportunity? Your attitude plays a key part in your success—guaranteed. Here's the way I made this point in a recent presentation seminar. (I've seen this done in a number of situations by a number of presenters. I don't know the originator, but if I did, I'd give that person full credit.) I asked for a physically strong volunteer, and a man named Brian came to the front of the room. Brian's first job was to hold his arm out to the side and to resist as I tried to push his arm down. He was very strong, and the audience could see how much of my strength it took to bring his arm to his side. We repeated the exercise, but this time I asked Brian to think of something very sad—something that would affect his life in a negative way. I asked him to repeat the negative thought out loud to the audience twelve times. Brian thought of his father, and he repeated, "My father just had a car accident" a dozen times. Then I tried to push down his arm again. Whoosh—it went right down!

Once I assured Brian that his dad was safe and he could use my cell phone to call him right after the workshop, I changed the atmosphere and asked him to think of and repeat something very positive, something that would change his life for the better. This time Brian said, "I've just gotten a promotion and a raise!" At the end of twelve repetitions, he held out his arm, and he was so strong that I could almost do a chin-up!

So what's the point of the exercise? It demonstrates how our thoughts and words affect the way our bodies respond. When we say negative things to ourselves, we



decrease our own ability to perform well. No basketball coach has ever said to the team, “Well, this is the big game, and you’re probably going to lose, so I don’t really care if you hit the basket or not.” The coach has to know the team can surprise everyone. Even if the players are the underdogs, they can still win the game, and their mental attitude will make a difference in the outcome. A great coach will pump up the team, especially if the odds aren’t good. You can do that for yourself by focusing on your desired outcome. Think success!

### Bonus Point

Change your thoughts, change your outcome! Simply thinking about giving a successful presentation will increase the chances of success and give you confidence.

### Tips from the Pros

#### The “Goal” and How to Prepare for the Big Day by *Chuck Petras*

As I look back at all the many different presentations I have done over the years, one thing they have in common is the goal. The goal is what you are trying to accomplish with the presentation. It is what you are trying to convey or sell or get buy-in on. It could be as simple as a product or status update, or as complex as getting board approval for a \$500 million new-product concept. Whatever it is, start with the goal in mind. This is where preparation is the key.

The first step is to have a very clear mission/goal stating what you are trying to accomplish and with whom. For example: *After this presentation, I would like my team to have a very clear and thorough understanding of the new product we are about to deploy. They should be able to address most, if not all, questions asked by the customer.* To do this, you need to meet these requirements:

1. Have a complete understanding of the product on all levels.
2. Be extremely energetic and confident of the quality of this product.
3. Anticipate your audience’s questions.
4. Be committed to the success of the product.

Next, you need to establish how long it will take you to successfully accomplish your goal with the audience. If, for example, you are trying to sell a board of directors on a new



product worth millions of dollars to the organization, you may need to make several different presentations before your final presentation to the board. Ultimately, accomplishing this task may take several presentations given at different times, to different people. With this type of goal, the following steps should be considered:

1. Develop a very detailed communications plan that lays out all the key stakeholders involved, their areas of expertise, their circle of influence, and your understanding of what is in it for them.
2. Investigate to understand the learning style, available time, and environment that best delivers your message to that individual. Everyone prefers a certain learning style such as visual, auditory, or tactile. Build your presentation with these learning styles in mind. Remember, you have to bring your audience over to your side to endorse and support this new idea or concept.
3. Attack your communications plan in sequence. Know whom you must present to first, then whom they can influence and when. You are trying to build a team of allies in the boardroom before you finally present on the big day.

Third, you need to prepare the environment where you will convey your message. If it is going to be part of an overall board meeting, several items need to be considered:

1. When are you scheduled to present? Hopefully, you are scheduled at a good hour of the day when the audience is fresh, attentive, and in a state of overall agreement. I would strongly recommend that you build a good relationship with the facilitator before the meeting to help ensure a premium spot to present.
2. The environment of the room needs to be comfortable. The lighting needs to be right. The slides need to be legible, and your voice needs to be clear from every area of the room. Check the volume of your microphone and the clarity of your slides.
3. Before you present, you need to work the room to establish an understanding of the current mind-set of the individuals. I always get there early, shake hands, introduce myself, and offer a subtle, complimentary greeting. This gives me a clue to the demeanor of the recipients.
4. As you step onto the floor to present, use an attention grabber in your overhead presentation that will bring everyone together. Make sure it relates to the topic that will be delivered.
5. Present at the level of the audience. Be crisp, concise, and polished.



## Now What?

You've come pretty far in just the first chapter. If you've followed the suggestions, you have a list of potential things to include in your presentation, you've gotten over any temptation to procrastinate, you've created a purpose statement, and you're get-

### Tips from the Pros

#### **Coach Yourself to Presentation Success** *by Dianne M. Kipp, B.S.N., PCC*

Confidence to stand in front of an audience does not arrive with us at birth. Most of us have to read a book such as this one or take a course in public speaking to improve our comfort level and hone our speaking prowess. Organizations like Toastmasters exist purely in response to the great demand resulting from most people's discomfort with presenting to an audience of any size.

It takes courage to become the center of attention and to step outside our comfort zone. Take heart! Here are a few steps that will decrease the stress and increase the fun you might have as a presenter.

#### **Mental Preparation: Demystify the Fear Factor**

1. F E A R—isn't FEAR the main cause of our discomfort? Think about this. Our mind creates the worst-case story, in the absence of facts: False Evidence Appearing Real. How to demystify the fear factor? Simple: Find the facts that are present in the moment, and shift your attention to what you know is true. As you do, notice how your heart slows, your breathing relaxes, and you have a sense that all is well.
  - a. Know the people who make up your audience—who they are, what they do, what they came to learn, and how many will attend.
  - b. Arrive at least two hours early to test equipment, conduct a dry run, and most importantly, interact with people as they arrive.
  - c. Visit the room *prior* to your engagement. Practice in the room if possible.
  - d. Have a friend videotape your presentation. It's *very* scary but very effective in giving you the facts about what the audience will experience, rather than what you imagine the audience will experience. It is always so much better than we feel it is.



- e. Watch the video three times: once with no sound, once with your eyes closed, and once with full sight and sound.
  - f. Visualize yourself actually giving the presentation, complete with hearing the words, seeing the audience, and noticing how great you are feeling.
  - g. Get clear about why you are giving the talk and what you want the audience to know or achieve as a result of your presentation.
  - h. Write down the facts about why you are the presenter. Remind yourself frequently that you are the expert today.
  - i. Finally, leave nothing unknown. The unknown becomes the petri dish on which our fears can grow.
2. Perfect practice makes perfect presentations.
- a. Practice, practice, practice, and then practice again. Being completely comfortable with the material eliminates the possibility of surprises.
  - b. Prepare a practice schedule, and stick to it. Be reasonable, but plan plenty of time for practice.
  - c. Practice in front of a mirror, in front of your dog, and in front of friends. As your comfort with what you are going to say rises, so will your confidence.
  - d. Relax. Practice deep abdominal breathing before you practice your presentation, as part of your practice, and immediately before the presentation.
  - e. Relax. Practice isometric muscle tensing, starting at your head and ending with your toes. Contract and squeeze the muscles, and then release.
  - f. Take the day before the presentation off. That's correct: no practice the day prior to the presentation. Sleep well, and eat a light meal several hours before the presentation.
3. Make it memorable.
- a. Think about a presenter who captured your attention. What was it about this person that engaged you? Think of what you are passionate about, and utilize it in your presentation content, in your delivery style, or in your personal stories and facts.
  - b. Remember, people may not remember what you say, but they will remember how you make them feel. Decide how you want your audience to feel about your message and how you will need to act to make the audience understand your message.

*(continued)*



- c. Use quotations, facts, and stories that support the content or pertinent details you want the audience to absorb.
- d. If possible, find a way to check back with audience members after the presentation to see if they took the action you wanted them to take as a result of your material, to learn how you can improve your presentation, and to gather more information on how your performance was received.
- e. Have fun, and your audience will have fun, too!

ting mentally prepared for the big presentation. Congratulations! Now let's get down to the details.

Finally, after you have delivered the perfect presentation, follow up with members of the audience individually to be sure you conveyed the message that you intended.

Hopefully, keeping the goal in mind and following these tips will help you deliver successful and powerful presentations.

## QUIZ

1. Which of the following ideas is a good first step for preparing your presentation?
  - (a) Read as much as possible on the topic.
  - (b) Immediately brainstorm lots of ideas.
  - (c) Identify any fear you may be feeling.
  - (d) Decide on a powerful introduction.
2. Which method is *not* a way to avoid procrastination?
  - (a) Keep a journal.
  - (b) Report your progress to a colleague.
  - (c) Take advantage of small segments of time to work on your presentation.
  - (d) Have confidence in your ability to work under pressure.



3. What lesson does the “arm exercise” show?
  - (a) How strong a speaker is
  - (b) How your body responds to your thoughts
  - (c) How men think differently from women
  - (d) How much strength it takes a speaker to give a presentation
4. What does your purpose statement do?
  - (a) Focuses on what the audience will gain from listening to you
  - (b) Focuses on how you will prepare your talk
  - (c) Lists the three main points of your presentation
  - (d) Becomes your opening line when you speak
5. Which are the three most important questions to ask yourself when preparing your material?
  - (a) What do I want my audience to do, to think, and to feel?
  - (b) What do I want my audience to feel, to know, and to care about?
  - (c) What do I want my audience to do, to know, and to buy?
  - (d) What do I want my audience to know, to do, and to feel?

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## CHAPTER 2



# Audience Analysis

Have you ever wondered why there are so many channels on TV yet it seems there's seldom anything *you* want to watch? The simple answer is that there is an audience for everything, but not every program is interesting to every audience. The same idea applies to speaking situations. The trip to the land of Speech Disaster usually starts with failure to know important facts about your audience. It's up to you, the speaker, to choose the right message and delivery style for each group and each situation.

We get information at incredible speed, and almost all of us are conditioned to use a remote control to surf through any message that doesn't matter to us. Multi-tasking is the norm, so for your presentation to have meaning, you have to *connect* with your audience.

Although you'll often have to take an educated guess about some information, you must remember that assumptions can get you in big trouble. Do the best, most thorough research you can every time you speak. You can almost always find information about an audience—even a virtual one. Here are a few categories you'll want to learn about:



## Demographics: Statistical Characteristics

Demographics are statistical characteristics, usually considered “hard data.” Common demographic data include age, gender, race, income, education, and so on. When preparing for your presentation, it’s important to learn as much as you can about these demographics.

### GENERATION

Whether your audience is made up of boomers; Generation X, Y, or Z; or some other group, knowing the age range of your listeners is important. Our shared life experiences help us determine what’s “normal,” motivating, and desirable. Our heroes and villains vary considerably based on our age. Each generation has been conditioned to communicate in ways that work for it. The younger the people in your audience, the more likely they are to communicate by text, instant message, and blog and the less likely they are to be interested in a long presentation from a talking head. Great communicators know how to make a common connection that speaks to everyone. You’ll need to choose stories, references, examples, and terminology that will have meaning for your audience.

### Example

My husband, Frank, adjusts to different audiences when he gives presentations on climbing Mount Rainier. His typical audience is over twenty-one and has an interest in serious outdoor sports. He includes maps, slides, books, and an ice axe as props. However, when he gives a presentation for the Cub Scouts, he adapts by shortening

### Speaking of . . . Generations

For the first time in history, there are four generations in the workforce. Now that people are working longer, some organizations may soon employ five generations of workers.

Matures	Born before 1945
Baby boomers	Born between 1945 and 1964
Generation X	Born between 1965 and 1980
New millennials	Born after 1980
Generation Z	Born after 2000



the presentation, making it more interactive and dramatic, and spending more time with the ice axe, ropes, crampons, and glacier glasses.

## **GENDER**

Is your audience predominately one gender or evenly mixed? Choose examples and language appropriate for everyone. If you're using an example character, don't call every manager "him" or every programmer "her." Choose terms that refer to one gender when you know the facts.

### **Example**

If you choose to support a point by using a gender-specific example, acknowledge that it may not apply to everyone present. Don't assume that all men or all women have the same interests or preferences. If your audience is predominately male, avoid using only sports references. For a female audience, constant references to children or fashion may be inappropriate unless those are the topics of your presentation. It's easy to unknowingly insult an audience by making gender-based (or any) assumptions.

## **CULTURE**

We live in a global society, and cultural sensitivity is absolutely necessary for speakers. You can prevent a serious misinterpretation of your message by developing awareness of differences in culture without assigning value (good or bad). Learn as much as you can about the specific culture of your audience.

### **Example**

An American project manager was leading a multinational virtual team. As she was discussing her pilot program, she said the team members were all "guinea pigs" in the venture. The next day one of the female team members from Asia resigned from her job because she was offended by being called a "pig." Fortunately, the company's human resources department came to the rescue; an HR staffer explained the American slang to the team member and saved the relationship.

## **OCCUPATION OR EXPERTISE**

The occupations and work experiences of audience members give you clues to the language, terminology, and examples that matter to them. Audiences comprising



insurance underwriters, project managers, or firefighters understand the concept of “risk.” Dentists, architects, and Web designers will relate to the balance of art and science. Each occupation has its own language and slang, also known as jargon. You’ll also want to know about the security or volatility of the audience’s industry. Talking about career paths can alienate audience members who feel vulnerable to job loss.

One of the most important subjects for a speaker to learn is the acronyms and language of a business audience. Know what the people actually do and some of the issues they may be facing. A speaker who doesn’t can lose credibility in mere moments.

### Example

A marketing executive was giving a powerful presentation to a group of college bookstore managers. Things were going very well until he referred to them as librarians. Yes, they work with books, but no, they are not librarians. By the time he used the library reference for the third time, he had lost everyone’s attention and interest.

## GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Match your message to your locale. Think of any concert or live performance you’ve attended. Most presenters acknowledge their location to the audience. Most people like to hear their town’s name, and they appreciate hearing that the person onstage knows something special about the location. It’s important to get the pronunciation right and to learn some local facts.

### Example

Phrases or examples that a dressmaker from Dusseldorf might use may be incomprehensible to a dressmaker from Dayton. Regional differences can be as extreme as national distinctions. When someone in the Midwest buys a box of Cheerios, it goes home in a sack. In Philadelphia, the same cereal is put into a bag.

Caution! Don’t assume too much on the basis of demographics. When you’re speaking to a group of teens, don’t assume that they all see the world in the same way, listen to the same music, or wear the same fashions. If you’re speaking to a group of sixty-five-year-olds, don’t assume that they’re all retired or even want to retire. Assuming too much is a primary cause of “foot in mouth” disease. Use demographic information only as a guideline when preparing and addressing your audience.



## SPECIAL NEEDS

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that everyone have access to most public and private facilities. They must also have access to information. Even if you are not in the United States, you'll still want to accommodate everyone who would like to hear your talk.

That means you need to consider providing such resources as large-print signage and handouts, sign language translators, special seating, or space for assist animals. Check with the meeting planner, program coordinator, or manager to get information on special needs.

### Example

When I spoke for a conference of landscape professionals, one of my audience members was deaf and surprised me by bringing two sign language specialists to interpret my presentation. We met briefly before the program began, and I adjusted by treating the signers as part of my team. We found seats for them in the front row, provided them with adequate lighting, and I frequently checked in with them to ensure that my message was clear.

## Psychographics: Attitudes, Values, and Interests

Psychographic information is often considered to be softer data. Political opinions, attitudes, values, and lifestyles are common psychographic data. When preparing for your presentation, it's important to learn as much as you can about psychographic information.

## KNOWLEDGE

As you prepare your material, determine what information the audience members share in common. It's a good idea to start talking at a level they all understand and quickly bring the less knowledgeable members of the group up to speed. It may be necessary to define any acronyms you use.

### Example

The president of a midsize sales organization was discussing his company's products to a group of his son's friends. He explained the way the company sells to third-



party vendors and how third-party vendors find his products. He spoke for about ten minutes before someone finally asked, “What’s a third-party vendor?” Because he didn’t check for understanding before or during his talk, he lost his opportunity to connect with his listeners.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Will the people in your audience understand the need for your presentation?
- Will they know your language?
- Is their knowledge general or technical?
- Do they share a common knowledge base, or are some more informed than others?

## Speaking of . . . Acronyms

### Acronym Angst

Most industries use innumerable acronyms in their day-to-day operations. A simple way to avoid embarrassing anyone in your audience when you use an acronym is to define it the first time you use it, and then use the acronym in an understandable context from then on. If your audience does not have the same knowledge base and if acronyms make up a large portion of your presentation, you might want to offer a handout with definitions. When a handout is distributed with humor and tact, it can help participants save face if they don’t know every definition.

## INTERESTS, EXPECTATIONS, AND MOTIVATIONS

Each person in your audience is attending for his or her own reasons. Those who want to be there are already motivated to listen, and those who would rather be anywhere else need to be encouraged to tune in to you. Listeners in the latter group need to know the WIIFM factor (What’s In It For Me?). Engage them as soon as possible. Let them know that you have something to offer them right up front. Similarly, hostile audiences should feel that you understand their position, even though it might differ from your own.



### Example

The principal of a high school was speaking for an assembly. The students knew the township had approved some budget cuts and decided whether their school would be closed for the next year. The principal began his talk with a story from his own high school years. He talked on and on about himself, focusing on the need to study in hard economic times. The teens grew restless and agitated. Finally the principal said, “And I’m pleased to announce that our school will be open next year!” By the time he told them the good news, it no longer sounded good!

Ask yourself these questions:

- Why are the people in your audience listening to the presentation? Are they truly interested?
- What is their point of view regarding your topic?
- Are they required to attend, or did they choose to be there?
- Do they want to help you get your message out, or do they oppose your ideas?
- Are they friendly or hostile to you? To each other? To a third party?

### Bonus Point

Customize your talk every time you give it. Each audience is different and has different needs and expectations.

## LANGUAGE

If your audience is multilingual, learn as much as you can about the languages represented in the group. If possible, enlist a trusted confidant who understands the languages. Ask your colleague to go over your material for any words or concepts that won’t translate well.

### Example

David owns a midsize manufacturing company based in the United States. One of the company’s joint ventures involves a German company and a French company. When it came time to enter into some delicate negotiations, David suggested that the three organizations hire a neutral translator to assist in the discussions. For bud-



getary reasons, the group decided to go it alone without a translator, since each party had a rudimentary knowledge of the three languages. Ultimately, the negotiations broke down into a shouting match as the representatives of each party translated what was said through their own filters and biases. The negotiation was tabled permanently, and all three organizations missed a good business opportunity.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do all members of your audience share the same language? The same corporate language?
- Do they share your language? Do they need time to mentally translate your words?
- Do they all know the acronyms and jargon that you'll be using?
- Will you need an interpreter? A negotiator?

### Bonus Point

If you're talking with a multicultural audience, handouts with graphs and brief definitions can clarify any terms that might be misunderstood.

## INFLUENCE

Make every effort to know the key players in your audience. Those who hold the highest titles may not be the most influential decision makers. When you know the hierarchy of influence in your audience, you may be able to gear your persuasive skills toward the key stakeholders. Referring to some key people in the organization can influence the receptivity of your audience.

### Example

Laura and Steve own a construction company. When they interviewed Greg for a project manager position, Laura asked most of the questions. As Greg answered the questions, he consistently looked at Steve, assuming that Steve was the president of the company. Predictably, Greg was not the person that Laura (president of LS Construction), hired for the job.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Are the group's decisions made by consensus, or does the group defer to one person?
- Who is the decision maker in this group?



- Who are the formal and informal leaders?
- Is your message threatening to anyone? Might jobs be lost or contracts cut as a result of your message?
- Does anyone in the audience need to save face? Could your message embarrass someone?

## RELATIONSHIP

Audience members who like and know each other well will usually be more interactive than a group whose members haven't met. A group that meets regularly for social reasons usually wants a speaker to deliver an entertaining, short message. Highly social groups have been known to start mingling before the presentation has finished. If you find yourself in this situation, you will need to adjust your style to be more casual and keep it concise.

If the speaker is well known to the audience, a personal approach might be very effective. If people in the audience know each other but do not know the speaker, a more formal approach is best. A formal, direct style usually works best when you are delivering bad news to any group, even if the listeners know each other well. In delivering important news, both bad and good, it's essential to send the same message to all stakeholders. If possible, tell everyone the same message at the same time and in the same manner, so you can avoid rumors and misinformation.

## Example

While Tonya Azir was speaking for the Lions Club of Peoria, she was aware that four people seated at a table in the back were chatting. They continued to talk as she was reiterating her main points. Luckily, Tonya had talked with the meeting planner before she started, so she was aware that this group of elderly men came to the meetings to socialize, and the group respected and accepted their quirks. The presentation ended on time, the audience applauded, and the group rated Tonya as one of its best speakers ever.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do the group members know each other?
- What is their history with each other? With you?
- Is there tension in the group?
- What underlying political issues might affect your presentation?



## CONCERNS

Do some research to find out what's on the minds of your audience. What are they particularly interested in right now, and what is their point of view? Always tell an audience what it *needs* to know. When possible, that message should be wrapped in a coating of what it *wants* to know.

## Example

Suzanne began her monthly sales meeting with this question: "What would increasing your sales by \$1,000 a week do for you?" She followed up with this answer: "Picking up the phone to speak with your customers will make that happen!" In that two-sentence opening, she told the audience what it wanted to know as well as what it needed to know. Ultimately, each member of the sales force increased his or her income, thanks to Suzanne's suggestions!

Remember to focus on your purpose statement to keep yourself on track.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Why do the members of the audience want to know about your topic?
- What do they *want* to know, and what do they *need* to know?
- Do you have credibility with this group?
- Why should the people in your audience listen to you?

## Speaking of . . . Information Sources

Sometimes it can be difficult to find information about your audience. Here's a list of possible sources:

- Previous speakers
- Internet
- Newspaper
- Corporate publications
- Company employees
- Faculty members
- Class roster
- Program coordinator
- Target audience members



## Situation

The circumstances surrounding the presentation can drastically affect the outcome. Learn as much as you can about the conditions and reasons for your presentation.

### WHY ARE THEY GATHERED?

You need to know why the group is meeting, so you can create an appropriate format for your talk. Are you giving your talk to a group of scientists at a scientific symposium? Be formal. Are you assembled for a quick stand-up meeting before work? Be quick and to the point. Is the presentation at a client's office or at a conference center? Be well prepared and willing to adjust your style to the client's needs.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Is this a regularly scheduled meeting?
- Is there a critical reason for a special meeting?
- Is this a training session to teach new skills?
- Is this a conference or trade show?

### EXPECTATIONS

What audience members expect from you will influence how they react to whatever you say. Try to match their expectations with your style, or boldly use a style change to help make your point.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do the people in your audience expect you to be formal or funny?
- Are they dreading a sales pitch?
- Is the meeting typically conversational?
- Were previous speakers dynamic or boring?

### Bonus Point

If you expect your audience to be hesitant to ask questions, you may want to have someone “planted” to make the first query. The rest of the audience will then feel more comfortable speaking up.



## THE GROUP HISTORY

If your meeting is a regularly scheduled event and the group follows a normal routine or agenda, expect to follow the group's style. If this is an emergency session or if you're delivering particularly bad news, be direct and dispel any fears as soon as possible. The situation will affect your content and style.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do participants know each other socially?
- Have they ever met before?
- Who were their previous speakers?
- Are there political tensions in the group?
- Have they just survived layoffs, budget cuts, or another traumatic experience?

All of these items are great to know, but how can you possibly learn so many things in a short time? You'll know a lot about audiences that you work with regularly, but with new groups, a good place to start gathering information is with the person who invited you to speak. From the coordinator you can get names and contact information of some of the key people in the group. Others who have spoken to that audience previously also can provide good information. Don't hesitate to make calls or send e-mails to ask questions. But remember that what you're hearing might just be one person's opinion, so do all you can to verify the information you receive, and adapt your message accordingly. If you give the same presentation to several diverse groups, study each audience, and customize, customize, customize for every situation.

## SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Is this group facing any unusual circumstances? Special situations could be almost anything that could affect the group's atmosphere. Here are some examples:

- Declining membership
- Executive turnover
- A new competitor
- Eroding customer base
- Exceptional accomplishments
- Layoffs
- Budget cuts



- Disaster recovery
- And who knows what else!

Any of these factors can significantly affect the outcome of your presentation. The more you know, the more you can prepare. The more you prepare, the better your chances of success. Knowledge is power!

## Tips from the Pros

### Podium Power: Lessons Learned from Successful Speakers by Lois Phillips, Ph.D.

Women in all walks of life have great ideas, but they can be reticent about speaking up to pitch, discuss, and debate them. Given the demographic changes in our modern society, however, women of diverse backgrounds and cultures need to speak for themselves about policy issues, such as employment, housing, education, health care, child care, and safety, that are important to them. In the business world, women need to be persuasive presenters if they are to be seen as credible leaders when they address corporate boards, venture capitalists, and customers in order to advance their careers and ensure that their companies remain competitive.

### Women's Place Is at the Podium

There's really no choice: selling changes in providing services, manufacturing products, or raising capital at work; raising money for candidates; joining coalitions; and mobilizing parents, coworkers, and neighbors require public-speaking skills. More women leaders will change the world—but only if they can speak effectively.

Here are some tips:

- **Effective women speakers combine the best of feminine and masculine speech styles.** Speaking with passionate conviction involves blending self-disclosure, personal narrative, and a conversational style while presenting a logical argument that relates to the listeners' interests, needs, and values.
- **Contemporary role models demonstrate courage and self-confidence.** They avoid the minefields that are unique to women speakers. Some of those minefields include using a soft, conversational voice rather than a confident, bold tone, choosing an indirect style rather than making a direct request of an audience, or using subjective information over hard data when supporting their recommendations.

*(continued)*



- **Some feminine traits are assets to a speaker:**
  - Women read nonverbal body language well and can adapt their presentation as needed.
  - Women enjoy relating to other people, not dominating them.
  - Women readily share what they know.
  - Women make their points through stories and anecdotes that give a human face to dull, dry statistics.
  - Women express their feelings and share who they are with others, rather than remaining aloof.
  - Women tend to use good grammar and colloquial language, rather than relying on only technical or abstract terms or acronyms that can be off-putting to lay listeners.
- **Authenticity is the key to speaker success: know yourself, be yourself.** Write your own speeches, tell your own stories, and use your own language, dialect, and idioms. Also know your hot buttons.
- **Relate to the audience through storytelling skills.** Find common ground through fables, fairy tales, myths, popular films, and novels, as well as anecdotes from your personal life, work, and community.
- **Prepare yourself.** Cultivate relationships with audience members or conference planners beforehand; find out what's hot, and then get organized.
- **Effective women speakers are credible as the voice of authority.** Convincing your audience that you have a sphere of influence supersedes the importance of organizing your ideas or thinking strategically. Standing at the podium is not the time or place for modesty: demonstrate how you can deliver on the promises you've made.
- **Be strategic, not subjective.** Leaders masterfully tell stories and select hard data to focus on their vision of the future and the strategies necessary to get there.
- **Dynamic women speakers must quickly gain credibility as the voice of authority.** The voice of authority has traditionally been a male voice; women speakers must quickly capture the audience's imagination as a new kind of leader.
- **Dynamic women can develop careers as paid professional speakers.** Gain a reputation for eloquence with an edge. Use a range of methods to promote yourself to potential audiences by expanding your real and virtual networks, leading to new speaking engagements and keynotes.



## Tips from the Pros

### Presenting to a Global Audience by Ann Craig

Presenting to a group where there are multiple cultures and varying English proficiencies can be challenging. The most important consideration is knowing beforehand who will be in the audience and how best to communicate information that will meet audience members' needs.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when presenting to a global audience:

#### Content and Presentation Design

- Include seven or fewer topics/points that are clearly stated.
- Structure the presentation so that the audience can easily follow the topics.
- Build group activities into the presentation format.
- Give each group a flip chart and a separate discussion topic, providing extra time for processing this information.
- Walk around and assess the progress of the group, taking particular note of individuals who may need additional help.
- Ask each group to select someone to present the group's findings, thereby allowing the group to designate someone who is comfortable with speaking English.
- Include memorable stories and statistics that have universal appeal.
- Design your closing with a brief, enthusiastic take-away message.

#### Visuals

- Be prepared to spend twice as much time on the presentation visuals, as the audience will often take copious notes, depending on participants' need for applying the information.
- Provide more rather than fewer visuals when you know that your audience has difficulty with English fluency.
- Use bullet points free of jargon and slang expressions.
- Whenever possible, use a whiteboard or flip chart in addition to PowerPoint slides for varied interest.

*(continued)*

**Delivery**

- If your audience is not fluent in English, allow one and a half times more time than you would normally schedule for presenting information.
- Pause often to allow the audience to assimilate what you have just discussed.
- Monitor your participants' understanding by asking questions and assessing their nonverbal behaviors.

**Presenting to an Online Audience**

- Your goal is to create an interactive online-learning experience.
- Follow up each major objective with an exercise that allows practice and reinforcement. For example, provide information on how to create effective visuals, and then have learners design visuals and critique assignments with specific suggestions.
- Include case studies where learners can apply acquired knowledge.
- Provide information on creating effective visuals.
- Above all, provide learners with frequent feedback and coaching.

**QUIZ**

1. Why does knowing your audience's age and generation matter?
  - (a) You'll need to increase your volume for very old and very young audiences.
  - (b) Older audiences are more conservative, and you need to temper your language.
  - (c) You can choose terms and examples that allow your audience to relate to your material regardless of age.
  - (d) Younger audiences are accustomed to short, fast-paced messages.



2. If you are giving a stand-up meeting before a work shift starts, what style should you use?
  - (a) Formal
  - (b) Detailed
  - (c) To the point
  - (d) Funny
3. What should you do when using an acronym?
  - (a) Ask the group if everyone knows the meaning of each term.
  - (b) Never pronounce the acronym as a readable word.
  - (c) Use each word of the acronym every time you use it.
  - (d) Use each word of the acronym the first time you use it, and use the abbreviation most consecutive times.
4. What should you do if you're speaking for a social group that meets regularly?
  - (a) Keep your message formal, since the group members don't know you.
  - (b) Don't be distracted by the group's socializing. Stick to your planned message.
  - (c) Gear your talk to the group's most attentive members, and ignore the others.
  - (d) Keep your presentation short, to the point, and entertaining.
5. Which statement is *not* true of an online audience?
  - (a) It cannot be analyzed, because audience members are remotely located.
  - (b) The people in your audience may be multitasking during the meeting.
  - (c) The audience may have a history of previous remote meetings.
  - (d) This audience requires as much research as a face-to-face audience.

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## CHAPTER 3



# Finding Information to Support Your Ideas

Kate Washington was so excited about the possibilities of her project. She stood in front of the community and explained the role of the stakeholders, the costs of the materials, and the potential income produced by the project. She was particularly enthusiastic when she spoke about the new day care center. Still, for some reason, the audience seemed restless and uninterested.

Having no idea what was making them uncomfortable, she hurried to reach her conclusion and ended her speech. A few members of the audience left grumbling, and one of her listeners came up to the podium to ask a question. As soon as Kate answered the question, she realized, to her embarrassment, what had happened.



Kate had made the humiliating error of quoting inaccurate information. A coworker had given her data that Kate didn't check. The only thing that the data was missing was a zero, but that little zero made a huge difference in her findings. All of the conclusions she had drawn were based on the number with the missing zero. She was so embarrassed.

The data you use to support ideas is critical to your success. Its accuracy, the credibility of your source, its relevance, and the way you present the data all contribute to your credibility. Think of the politician who makes a compelling campaign speech that leaves you wondering where she got her facts. They just don't ring true to you. When we question the accuracy of a politician's talk, a CEO's report, or a teacher's lecture, we start to question their credibility. You have an ethical obligation to yourself and the audience to be accurate and fair in your presentation.

### Speaking of . . . Credibility

The path to losing your credibility is paved with giving bad information.

## What Information Do I Include?

Information. Data. Opinions. Facts. The amount of information available today is overwhelming. How do you choose what to include and what to ignore? When you find something you're not sure you want to mention, ask yourself these questions:

- How does this support my purpose?
- Is it from a credible source?
- Will including this material help lead logically to my conclusion?

Two hints help you begin to gather information from various sources:

1. Start with the most current sources, and work back in time. This shows you the current thinking on the ideas you're researching and prevents you from pursuing dead ends.
2. Research general information on your topic, and work to the specific. The general information gives you good background to prepare your specific points.



### Bonus Point

Keep a folder of clippings and Web links that you may someday use to support a talk. Label the folders by topic so they will be easy to retrieve.

## Sources of Information

Finding lots of data is not as difficult as finding valid data. The worlds of information and opinion merge on the Internet. In general, academic sources as well as wikis and medical journals are valid sources. You'll need to vet the sources before quoting them as fact.

You can find data in many sources, including personal experience, the Internet, library, newspapers, magazines, databases, members of an organization, corporate publications, blogs, and many more. The key is to not to find the *most* information available, but to find the *best* information available.

### Speaking of . . . Primary and Secondary Resources

A primary source is firsthand, unedited information. This can appear in the form of words, images, or objects generated at or near the time of the event being studied.

A secondary source is interpreted, edited, or summarized information from the primary source.

## INTERNET

Where would we be without Google? The search engine has become so popular that it's now treated as a verb: "I googled it" is how most people say they find much of their information. If you have never looked at the instructions for using Google, check out <http://www.googleguide.com> for great tips on getting the results you want. There are other good search engines as well, and I recommend that you use more than one when gathering information, since they return results in slightly different ways.

Warning! You must verify the information you get online. Just because something is posted online does not mean that it's accurate!



## LIBRARY

When you visit the library, your best resources are the research librarians. They don't know the answer to every question. They do, however, know how to help you find almost any answer. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and be open to ideas. Do not expect librarians to do your work for you. Let them be your guides.

## CORPORATE PUBLICATIONS

Materials provided by organizations may include annual reports, marketing materials, and internal communication. You can surf or call, asking to have information sent, or you might ask someone who works for a company to share information. Don't expect employees to share confidential information, but most company data is available to the public. Remember that materials published by an organization may be designed to portray a positive image of that organization.

### Bonus Point

Keep track of the sources you used in your content and reference them as you speak. Check the credibility of all the information you use.

## INTERVIEWS

Asking questions is a skill that attorneys and talk show hosts master as part of their jobs. You may not have your own show, but your ability to ask well-prepared questions can benefit you throughout your career. Informational interviewing is an excellent way to get firsthand information, but some hazards are associated with interviews: The person may not tell you the truth or might not show up. Or you may think the information the person tells you applies to a larger population when, in reality, it is simply the opinion of one person. As long as you keep these limitations in mind, interviewing can be fun and very rewarding.

If you are a college student, you will find that, in general, people are more willing to talk with you now than at any other time in your life—unless you become rich and famous.

If you choose to interview someone in person, online, or by phone, follow these simple rules:



- Start scheduling *early*. People are busy, and most of them schedule appointments well in advance. Don't expect to be the interviewee's main priority.
- Be clear about your purpose for the interview.
- Prepare your questions in advance. Know what you want to ask and how you will phrase your questions. At the same time, allow for plenty of flexibility in your interview. What the person wants to tell you may be much more interesting than what you thought you would discuss!
- Take no more than ten to fifteen minutes for your interview. When you call for your appointment, tell the person that is all you expect.
- Most people don't like to be recorded. Try to take notes on the essence of your conversation immediately after the interview. If you choose to make an audio or video recording, ask permission first.
- Send an appropriate thank-you note after the interview. Many people forget this courtesy. Make yourself stand out by remembering. Snail mail is more memorable than e-mail.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Some of the most dynamic presentations are based on personal experience. Real-life illustrations are compelling when audience members identify with them and can envision themselves in a similar situation. Be careful if you repeat a story that you have heard someone tell. The material may be associated with the original speaker, or it could be grossly inaccurate.

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

When Kate Washington repeated the figures she heard from her coworker, not only was she embarrassed, but she made her whole organization look bad. This situation illustrates a category of information called “general knowledge”—information we trust others to provide or that we've learned over time. This category has the most propensity for gross inaccuracy, yet it can be the most current and predictive of all the categories.

General information includes common knowledge in your organization and lessons you have learned from your life experience. It even refers to ideas that we just “know” are valid, as long as they are accurate! Ask your kids, your spouse, or the friends in your network for ideas that can lead you to some new sources.



The bottom line for gathering information is to consider the source. Double-check the accuracy of material you include when you are speaking in public.

### Bonus Point

Always check your facts! Inaccuracy is very embarrassing. This seems obvious, but it bears repeating.

## Types of Data

Information comes in many forms and can be either “hard” and measurable or “soft” and anecdotal.

### STORIES

Sharing a personal experience—whether it’s yours or someone else’s—is a powerful way to connect with other people. Use an example or story to explain or clarify a point. Remember that an example is *not proof* of something. Rather, examples and stories add human interest to your presentation. Effective stories are easy to visualize. They evoke emotion.

*Birds and Blooms* magazine recently published a letter from a reader who told the story of a woman who prepared red sugar water to feed her hummingbirds. She stored the sugar water in the refrigerator until one day her husband complained that the Kool-Aid sure didn’t have much flavor. This story could be used to illustrate communication issues in the household or to introduce a presentation on the country’s most popular hobby, bird-watching.

### QUOTES

Quotes also add human interest and drama to your presentation. Quoting someone well known or considered a credible source can give you credibility. Quoting someone who is not well respected or whose character is questionable is a bad idea unless the person’s lack of credibility makes your point!



## STATISTICS

It seems that there's a statistic for everything. You name the topic, and you can find (or create) a statistic. There's probably a statistic on this somewhere.

But just what are statistics? *Statistics* are numerical data compiled in a way that makes the data meaningful. Effective use of statistics can clarify, support, and add powerful impact to your points. Improper use can make your presentation boring and unbelievable. Most of us know that statistics can be construed to “prove” almost any point, valid or not.

For example, I can prove that “low-carb” is the most effective diet plan for losing weight and overall health. I can also prove that “low-fat” is the most effective plan for losing weight and overall health. In addition, I can prove that simply counting calories while eating a balanced diet is the most effective plan for losing weight and overall health. Yes, there are statistics to prove it! All of it.

Be careful of how you use statistics and data. Check for validity, and make sure to cite the source of any statistics you mention in your presentation.

### Speaking of . . . Great Quotes

Here's a famous saying attributed to Benjamin Disraeli: “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

## FACTS

Facts are also an important source of data. A *fact* is something that is true and can be objectively proven. Here are samples of facts:

- American painter Andrew Wyeth was born on July 12, 1917, and died on January 16, 2009.
- Key West, Florida, is the southernmost city in the forty-eight contiguous states in the United States.
- Bill Clinton served as president of the United States from 1993 to 2001.

Remember that facts can change over time. For instance, companies that lead their industry today may be overtaken by a competitor tomorrow. You can deal with this by qualifying your statement. For example, you might say, “According to *Fortune* magazine's 2009 list of ‘World's Most Admired Companies,’ ARAMARK ranked number one in its industry as evaluated by peers and analysts.” Attaching a



date and source to your information tells the audience at what point in time the information was true according to the quoted source. Obviously, you need to present accurate facts. If they aren't accurate, you will have no credibility with your audience.

## Speaking of . . . Facts

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.” So said John Adams, second president of the United States.

Every presentation demands accurate information. You may have the best speaking style, but without great content, you're in trouble. Make sure to double-check the reliability of your information to avoid being embarrassed the way Kate Washington was.

## Tips from the Pros

### The Road to Research by Lisa Panzer

Over the course of seventeen years as a professional reference librarian, I have guided people to information and resources and helped them to stay on the path toward their final knowledge goal. The “Research Road” can be long and winding and filled with roadblocks. Here are some tips to help you determine the best path to your final destination:

- **Choose search terms and keywords.** Decide what your paper or presentation is really about. Jot down some words related to your topic, including several synonyms. Free association is also a viable method to create new ideas. An unusual or unexpected search term can sometimes lead to interesting insights.
- **Revise and complement words as needed.** If you are searching for material on change management within organizations, you may choose to use the search phrases “organizational change management” and “organizational change.” “Change management” and (+) “organization” or “organizational” also may get good results. If you are interested in the implementation factor of organizational change management, incorporate that term as well to narrow your results. Depending on the search engine you are using, you may be able to use word truncation or word stems to allow for plurals



and other word endings. For example, using the stem “implement” will also retrieve *implementation*, *implemented*, *implements*, *implementing*, *implementers*, and so forth. If you are looking for all of these but not in the health care industry, you may be able, depending on the search engine used, to state “not health care” at the *end* of your search.

- **Focus on your audience.** Define your audience and your purpose for talking with that group. Keep your purpose statement in mind to help you focus your research efforts. A clear focus will make the research process less overwhelming.
- **Look for opposing views.** Including at least one conflicting or competing view will lend credibility to your point, or argument.
- **Choose the right sources for information.** Ask yourself what resources your audience will consider most credible. Decide if you will need to reference an e-mail, show a patent, use quotes from proceedings, or utilize encyclopedic information. Information comes from many sources and varies according to the context or discipline in which it is used. Information sources are categorized as primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Primary sources are unaltered, undistilled, unfiltered original materials or documents. Some examples are original documents, patents, maps, government documents or treaties, survey results, proceedings, interviews, expert testimonies, letters, diaries, journals, e-mails, artifacts, meetings, speeches, annual reports, works of art, photographs, videos, television programs, and websites. Primary sources provide evidence and perhaps emotional import.

Secondary sources provide evaluation, commentary, discussion, and opinion about primary sources. Some examples include journal, newspaper, or magazine articles; monographs; textbooks; critical works; histories; and biographies.

Tertiary sources contain collected information, or further distillation of the primary and secondary sources. Encyclopedias, bibliographies, almanacs, fact books, directories, indexes, abstracts, bibliographies used in locating sources, reference works, and textbooks are typical tertiary sources.

These categories may overlap depending on the way in which they are used. For example, a newspaper article may be used as either evidence or commentary.

- **Verify your resources.** When in doubt, ask questions such as, “Is the information from a credible, trusted source?” “What are the source’s affiliations?” “What is the level of editorial review, or who are the gatekeepers?” On the Web, domain addresses such as .gov, .edu, and .mil give clues as to credibility, as well as site ownership.
- **Talk to your librarian.** A professional librarian can point you toward viable resources and help you find materials you might not be familiar with. A librarian can

(continued)



definitely save you time in your information search. Many colleges and universities have “subject specialist librarians” who assist students and faculty in specific topic areas. Most communities have libraries, and many are associated with a large system of libraries. Even some professional organizations include library research support. These professionals can save you many steps along your path to knowledge and information.

These tips should help you along the road to research . . . and hopefully will help you avoid a few dead ends.

Bon voyage!

## QUIZ

1. Which resources would provide the most accurate information on the beaches of Florida’s gulf coast?
  - (a) Internet and library
  - (b) Personal story and Internet
  - (c) Library and interviews
  - (d) Any of the above
2. Which step is not necessary when conducting an interview?
  - (a) Schedule in advance.
  - (b) Thank the person you interview.
  - (c) Record the interview, rather than taking notes.
  - (d) Send an appropriate written thank-you note.
3. What are facts?
  - (a) Objective information that does not change
  - (b) True information that can be proven by an objective source
  - (c) The source of rumors
  - (d) Statements that are easy to verify



4. To gather information, how should you start your research?
  - (a) On the Internet
  - (b) With historical data
  - (c) With the most current information
  - (d) From specific information to more general
5. Which description is true of statistics?
  - (a) Numerical data compiled in a way that makes the data meaningful
  - (b) Always accurate
  - (c) Easy to verify
  - (d) Difficult to manipulate

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## PART TWO



# PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

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## CHAPTER 4



# Putting the Pieces in Order

“What an interesting surgery! We found this little cyst on your daughter’s hip. I’ve read about them, but I’ve never seen one before. It was tiny, and it looked just like I had thought this unusual cyst would look. It’s perfectly harmless, but we removed it, and everything went great with the procedure. She’s fine, and the prognosis is very good.”

If you were this toddler’s parents, how would you be feeling after getting the doctor’s news? These parents were really shaken by the discovery of the cyst. They barely heard that it was harmless and the scheduled surgery went well.

The doctor made a major blunder when he didn’t start his report by saying, “Everything went very well, and she’s going to be just fine.” This example demonstrates just how important it is to sequence your information thoughtfully so that you leave your listeners with the message you intended to convey.

In the first chapter, I gave you the tip to get started by brainstorming a list of ideas as soon as you find out that you have to give a talk. Once you’ve created that



list, you'll see how some natural groupings will come together. As you look at the different groups of ideas, you can organize your points into patterns and then create an outline. Your goal in choosing an organizational pattern is to help the audience make the most sense out of your material. These are the most widely used organizational patterns:

- Chronological
- Spatial
- Topical
- Cause and effect
- Problem-solution
- Value
- Bottom line up front (BLUF)
- Symposium

## Chronological Pattern

A chronological pattern organizes information in time sequence. Children's fairy tales begin with "Once upon a time . . ." and progress to ". . . and they lived happily ever after." Those stories were almost always written in a chronological pattern. So are demonstrations, which are given in step-by-step order, and presentations that ask us to look at the past, present, and future. Directions, assembly instructions, and biographies are presented chronologically.

Sometimes a movie or storyteller will use the flashback technique, in which a story bounces through different points in time. In a verbal presentation, this can be confusing to the listeners, so use flashbacks with care.

### **Examples: Topics You Might Organize Chronologically**

How to develop a work breakdown structure for your project

History of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act

Biography of Barack Obama

Best method to roast a Thanksgiving turkey

Origins of the iPod



## Spatial Pattern

Use the spatial pattern of ordering to describe things according to their physical positioning. This can be from left to right, from top to bottom, from east to west, or from north to south. Many informative speeches are structured in this design. The spatial pattern helps the listeners visualize the setting.

### Examples: Topics You Can Organize Spatially

Table settings for business etiquette

Directions for driving to the Waikaloa Hilton

Floor plan for new office space

The back nine at Pebble Beach Golf Course

The spread of a new flu virus

## Topical Pattern

Probably the most frequently used pattern for organizing presentations is the topical pattern, which is often the easiest to create. The points you make are organized into categories you create yourself, and the categories are based on each item's relationship to the topic. When you're speaking about topics that may not have a natural relationship to each other, topical ordering is a logical choice for your structure.

Here's a word of caution when using the topical pattern: Make sure that the categories you choose are balanced and have a logical connection. Avoid the temptation to lump unrelated material together just to get it in. If something doesn't fit in, you can offer to discuss it in a question-and-answer session.

### Examples: Subjects You Can Organize Topically (and Sample Categories)

Manage your stress, or let it manage you

I. Stress symptoms

II. Stress management techniques

III. Avoidance of stress

New Thought churches in America

I. Unity

II. Religious Science

III. Christian Science



Reasons to join a professional business association

- I. Access to the latest information
- II. Networking and relationship building
- III. Member discounts and job listings

## Cause-and-Effect Pattern

A cause-and-effect pattern develops a relationship that shows how the occurrence of one thing is a direct result of another thing. Knowing the causes and effects of one situation can help listeners understand the potential causes and effects of a new situation. Many persuasive speeches use the causal pattern of organization.

### **Examples: Topics You Can Organize Causally**

Why good dental hygiene matters

- Thesis: Tooth decay is influenced by not brushing or flossing properly, eating sugar, and heredity. (This establishes what effect has resulted from the causes.)
- Purpose: I want the audience to understand how tooth decay occurs.
- Main points:
  - I. Not brushing and flossing leads to cavities.
  - II. Eating sugar leads to cavities.
  - III. Heredity can affect tooth decay, regardless of good hygiene.

These main points and appropriate supporting data establish the causes.

Health risks of smoking

- Purpose: I want my audience to understand the relationship between smoking and physical illness.
- Main points:
  - I. Smoking is directly related to several kinds of cancer.
  - II. Smoking leads to the onset of heart disease.
  - III. Smoking is related to diseases of the skin.

When these main points are supported by accurate data, they show that smoking causes illnesses.



## Problem-Solution Pattern

Persuasive speeches and some technical briefings typically use the problem-solution pattern. This structure describes an existing problem, gives reasons for the situation, states potential solutions, and points out your recommended action. Many commercials are designed using this pattern. A very popular problem-solution technique was developed in the 1930s by Alan Monroe, a professor at Purdue University. It's called Monroe's motivated sequence and is still used to sell ideas today.

### Speaking of . . . Monroe's Motivated Sequence

Here are the steps in the best-known problem-solution pattern:

1. **Attention.** “Hook” the audience by getting their attention.
2. **Need.** Identify a problem that needs attention.
3. **Satisfaction.** Offer solutions, and recommend the “best” one.
4. **Visualization.** Lead the audience to picture the outcome of implementing or rejecting your solution.
5. **Action.** Inform the audience exactly what they need to do to implement your solution.

The problem-solution format is particularly effective and engaging with adult learners who can easily process the sequence of your reasoning. If your reasoning is not solid, this approach risks misleading your audience. Before drawing a correlation between two things, make sure to have your facts right. Once you have chosen the problem-solution pattern, test out your reasoning by trying to anticipate the questions your audience will generate.

### Examples: Topics You Can Organize with the Problem-Solution Format

Corral scope creep before it corrals your project.

Recycling office supplies makes a difference.

Adopting an older child can change many lives.

Computer security programs pay for themselves in peace of mind.

Reducing your belly fat can save your life.

**Bonus Point**

To help your audience retain your messages, use various methods to get the point across. Tell them, show them, and let them do something. Using all of these methods will accommodate most of the audience members' learning styles.

## Value or Importance Pattern

The value pattern is most often used in presenting information from a report. The information is reported either from most to least valuable or from least to most valuable. A financial presentation that calls for simply reporting data without interpreting the meaning of the numbers might use this simple value technique. The Letterman Top Ten list is a fun example of a value-ordered presentation.

**Examples: Topics You Can Organize by Value**

A monthly financial report for a small nonprofit

A month-by-month summary of donations to the cash register donation box at a convenience store

## BLUF or Inverted-Pyramid Pattern

The BLUF pattern has nothing to do with bluffing! It stands for "Bottom Line Up Front" and is the technique the doctor should have used in the example at the beginning of this chapter. The BLUF technique is appropriate for executive summaries, military briefings, emergency situations, and any time it's essential to get to the point. Not every presentation provides you with a teachable moment where you have the luxury of explaining the history and implications, the long- and short-term effects, and the interpersonal ramifications of your decisions. To sum it up, the crowd doesn't care about the windup; the crowd wants to see the pitch.



## Speaking of . . . BLUF

If people keep telling you to get to the point, you may be rambling too much for the situation. Try using the BLUF (Bottom Line Up Front) technique to design your next presentation. The format looks like this:

1. **Punch line.** Give one quick statement that sums up your message. What's the bottom line?
2. **Current situation.** How does the punch line affect the current status?
3. **Next steps.** Where do we go from here?
4. **Explanation.** How did we get to the punch line?

### Examples: Situations Where BLUF Is the Appropriate Organization Style

Report of a military initiative in a war

Teenager's call to parents to report that he was in an accident

Answer from a help desk representative

Announcement of a corporate budget cut

## Symposium Style

The standard style for most scientific presentations is the symposium style. This pattern is most often used to report all kinds of research findings. Here are the elements and the order in which they are addressed:

- Title
- Introduction
- Background
- Apparatus
- Results
- Conclusions and recommendations



### Bonus Point

Make sure to give the reason behind your ideas. Add a *because* when you support your suggestions.

## QUIZ

Choose the appropriate organizational technique for a presentation on each of the following topics:

1. Giving driving directions from Grand Junction, Colorado, to Moab, Utah
  - (a) Spatial
  - (b) Problem-solution
  - (c) Chronological
  - (d) BLUF
2. Giving a detailed briefing for upper management in your company on the environmental and financial costs of not implementing a new robotic painting process on an assembly line
  - (a) Value
  - (b) Problem-solution
  - (c) Chronological
  - (d) BLUF
3. Making an announcement to employees regarding a surprise layoff at your company
  - (a) Cause and effect
  - (b) Problem-solution
  - (c) Topical
  - (d) BLUF



4. Teaching college students how to paint a house for profit
  - (a) Cause and effect
  - (b) Problem-solution
  - (c) Chronological
  - (d) Topical
5. Presenting tips for tackling the hidden costs of ongoing stress for an audience of retail managers
  - (a) Cause and effect
  - (b) Problem-solution
  - (c) Topical
  - (d) Spatial

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## CHAPTER 5



# Creating an Outline

Now that you have gathered and organized the ideas for your speech, it's time to refine the list into an outline. Even if you think you'll skip this step and work from your groupings, *don't*. An outline is essential to the success of your speech.

Outline styles can run the gamut from a formal typewritten document to a handwritten note jotted on a napkin. Putting some thought and time into your outline will pay off in the end. In fact, the better developed your outline, the more likely you are to build up a logical compelling argument to support your point of view. The outline helps you focus on structure before you choose your exact words.

Think of your outline as a road map. Yes, you can get from point A to point B without using a map. You may have to visit a few other points and stop to ask for directions once or twice, but you'll eventually get there. When you give a speech, you can't afford to wander from place to place. Your audience will not continue to listen if you frequently digress. You must move efficiently, effectively, and logically from point A to point B. Your outline helps you to do that. The longer your presentation, the more essential a good outline becomes.



The outline also can provide a good psychological boost. Knowing the exact points in the precise order you'll give them can make you feel more comfortable and better prepared.

### **Bonus Point**

People remember things in groups of three. Use three main points, talk about the three most important conclusions, or share three things the audience can do to make a difference.

## **Outline Format Rules**

Formal outlines must follow specific guidelines. If you must submit an outline to a professor or teacher, use these tips.

### **BE CONSISTENT**

Formal outlines follow a specific set of rules.

#### **Example: Basic Format**

- I. First main point. This is usually indicated by Roman numerals.
  - A. First major subdivision. Major divisions of the main point are indented and indicated by capital letters.
    - 1. Minor subdivisions are indicated by Arabic numerals and are further indented.
    - 2. Continue until you've listed all your minor subdivisions.
  - B. Second major subdivision
- II. Second main point
  - A. Second major division
    - 1. Subdivision 1
    - 2. Subdivision 2



Because it's a universal practice to use this format, it's good to be familiar with it and use it consistently.

## **MATCH As WITH Bs, 1s WITH 2s**

For each supporting point, you need at least one other supporting point. It seems silly to point out, but you can't divide a point into parts if there is only one part. The reason for subordinating points is to separate ideas.

### **Example: Argument with One Supporting Point**

- I. Voting processes should be standardized across the United States.
  - A. Standardized voting processes would eliminate confusion on the part of voters.
- II. . . .

In this example, having only one point does not support the premise sufficiently for you to make your argument. At least two subpoints should be listed:

### **Example: Argument with Two Supporting Points**

- I. Voting processes should be standardized across the United States.
  - A. Standardized voting processes would eliminate confusion on the part of voters.
  - B. Standardized computer equipment would eliminate problems with spoiled ballots and hanging chads.
- II. . . .

This example supports your premise in two categories.

## **USE COMPLETE SENTENCES**

As tempting as it may be to use short phrases for your outline, you'll find it beneficial to use full sentences during the road map phase. A full sentence lets you see if you truly meet your goals of clearly stating and supporting your main points.



### Example

Compare these two statements of a specific point. Which would you find more effective?

- I. The history of our company.
- II. Our company grew in three distinct stages.

The second is more effective, because it clearly signals exactly what you will say in this section.

**Reminder:** Your outline is not a script or your speaker notes. It is the road map you'll use to navigate. A good outline might contain about one-fourth as many words as you use in your script. You build your notes or script from your outline.

### LIST ONLY ONE POINT WITH EACH SYMBOL

Don't combine ideas within a point. List ideas separately to keep them clear in your own mind and to develop each individually.

### Example

Compare the following two subpoint strategies, A and B:

- A. Dancing offers physical, psychological, and emotional benefits.
- B. Partner dancing offers three main benefits:
  1. The physical benefits of dancing include a good cardiovascular workout.
  2. The social outlet provided by being able to dance provides a strong psychological benefit.
  3. Partner dancing is an excellent opportunity to spend time with the special person in your life, which offers excellent emotional benefits.

Option B is clearer and more specific.



## **USE TWO TO FIVE MAIN POINTS**

Your audience will find more than five main points confusing and hard to remember, and referencing only one point doesn't provide sufficient support for most messages. Speakers often choose three main points because groupings of three are easy to remember. Make sure your main points are mutually exclusive.

## **INCLUDE ALL SECTIONS**

List the specific purpose, thesis statement, and resources on the outline. Even though these things aren't included in the actual speech presentation, listing them on the outline will help you identify any structural problems.

## **WRITE OUT TRANSITIONAL PHRASES**

The wording used to move the listener from one point into the next is important to the flow of the presentation. Write out the full sentence you will use between main points.

## **WRITE OUT THE INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION**

Insert the introduction and conclusion where they will appear in the formal speech. Use the format options listed in Chapter 6 ("Creating an Introduction") and Chapter 7 ("Building a Powerful Conclusion").

## **Scrambled-Message Exercise**

The best way to understand how an outline really works is to develop one on your own. The following outline is for a presentation on how to prepare an informative speech, but its parts are scrambled. Read each line carefully, and rearrange the statements to form a logical outline. Each line is numbered for your reference in rearranging the lines. (Thanks to Cecile Blanche of Villanova University for providing this example.)



### Sample Outline for Informative Speech: Scrambled

1. I. Introduction
2. II. Body/discussion
3. III. Conclusion
4. Thesis: Careful preparation and successful public speaking go hand in hand.
5. References
6. Professional publications and manuals may be helpful.
7. Use your textbook for reference.
8. After you finish the outline for your speech, you will need to put your speaker's notes on index cards.
9. Let us now review what we have said in this brief space.
10. Interview: C. S. Blanche, Professor of Public Speaking.
11. Research can begin in the library, but this campus is rich in other resources.
12. Pick one that is familiar to you and that you find interesting.
13. Check to see if what you already know can suggest two or three main points that you want to expand.
14. Consult handout papers for advice.
15. Would you take the time to prepare carefully?
16. Write down all you know about the topic.
17. All great speakers practice aloud.
18. Campus experts are easily accessible.
19. Try to determine what kind of material you need to find.
20. Now that you have laid the groundwork, you are ready to begin your research.
21. Try practicing while looking into a mirror or before a video camera.
22. Don't overlook the Internet as a possible source.
23. How would you like to get an A on your speech?
24. Interviewing experts may be a rewarding experience as well as a rich source of information.



25. Careful preparation and successful public speaking go hand in hand.
26. Community experts (politicians, police, etc.) can be helpful.
27. Up to now, we have been talking about finding material; now let us move on to arranging this material into a logical sequence.
28. Osborne and Osborne, *Public Speaking* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
29. Begin to work on the body of your speech, and move on to the conclusion and then the introduction.
30. Practice is essential to smooth delivery style.
31. Choose a pattern of organization, and select the main points.
32. You will then need to use supporting material to develop these points.
33. The first order of business is to choose a topic.
34. S. Brydon and M. Scott, *Between One and Many* (CA: Mayfield, 1994).
35. Consult the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for current sources on your topic.
36. Let us turn now to the steps involved in careful preparation.

**Hint:** Transitional phrases are indented.

The following outline shows the same elements of the sample outline after they have been rearranged into the correct order for a clear, logical presentation.

### **Sample Outline for Informative Speech: Correct Order**

1. I. Introduction
23. A. How would you like to get an A on your speech?
15. B. Would you take the time to prepare carefully?
  7. 1. Use your textbook for reference.
  14. 2. Consult handout papers for advice.
4. Thesis: Careful preparation and successful public speaking go hand in hand.
36. Let us turn now to the steps involved in careful preparation.
2. II. Body/Discussion



33. A. The first order of business is to choose a topic.
  12. 1. Pick one that is familiar to you and that you find interesting.
  16. 2. Write down all you know about the topic.
  13. a. Check to see if what you already know can suggest two or three main points that you want to expand.
  19. b. Try to determine what kind of material you need to find.
  20. Now that you have laid the groundwork, you are ready to begin your research.
11. B. Research can begin in the library, but this campus is rich in other resources.
  35. 1. Consult the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for current sources on your topic.
  22. a. Don't overlook the Internet as a possible source.
    6. b. Professional publications and manuals may be helpful.
  24. 2. Interviewing experts may be a rewarding experience as well as a rich source of information.
    18. a. Campus experts are easily accessible.
    26. b. Community experts (politicians, police, etc.) can be helpful.
  27. Up to now, we have been talking about finding material; now let us move on to arranging this material into a logical sequence.
  29. C. Begin to work on the body of your speech, and move on to the conclusion and then the introduction.
    31. 1. Choose a pattern of organization, and select the main points.
    32. 2. You will then need to use supporting material to develop these points.
      8. 3. After you finish the outline for your speech, you will need to put your speaker's notes on index cards.
    17. a. All great speakers practice aloud.
    21. b. Try practicing while looking into a mirror or before a video camera.
      9. Let us now review what we have said in this brief space.
    3. III. Conclusion
  25. A. Careful preparation and successful public speaking go hand in hand.



30. B. Practice is essential to smooth delivery style.
5. References
28. Osborne and Osborne, *Public Speaking* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
34. S. Brydon and M. Scott, *Between One and Many* (CA: Mayfield, 1994).
10. Interview: C. S. Blanche, Professor of Public Speaking.

## Tips from the Pros

### Effective Talk Notes by Rev. Robert A. Deen III

One of the great joys of my life is that each week I get to deliver a thirty-minute talk on something I care about deeply. The audience contains many of the same people from week to week, as well as new people visiting for the first time. Therefore, both the content and delivery must be fresh, alive, and not too repetitious.

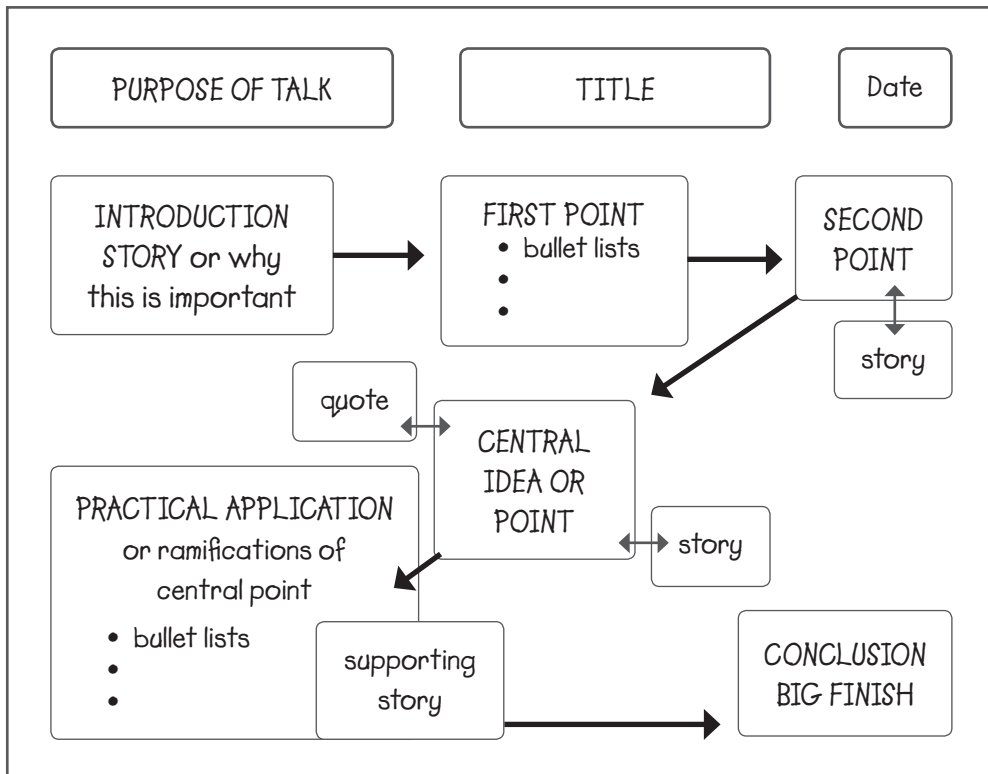
For a long time, I struggled with the issue of lectern notes. I looked for a system that would allow me to have all of the information available at a glance. I needed clear direction as to what is next and key words that cue my thoughts. The system I developed reminds me of what I want to say, where I am in the talk, and what comes next—all with a quick glance. Placing everything on one page in a kind of Talk Map also supports last-minute changes of order, emphasis, and direction easily and without fear of losing your place in shuffled pages or overlooking important talking points.

Here how it works:

- Prepare the talk in whatever manner you choose.
- Draw the Talk Map by hand on a single sheet of paper in blocks, circles, and bullets—all of which can easily be read at a glance. (See Figure 5.1.)
- Include only as many words as required to jog your memory of that section or story.
- Review the talk as close to delivery time as possible, and draw the directional arrows at that time.



Figure 5.1



## QUIZ

1. Which statement is true of outline structure?
  - (a) Match 1s and 2s, As and Bs.
  - (b) Outlines must have at least three main points.
  - (c) Use short phrases for every A and B.
  - (d) Match 1s with an A and B and 2s with another A and B.



2. Which speech component is developed first?
  - (a) Outline
  - (b) Notes
  - (c) Script
  - (d) Research
3. Which speech component is developed last?
  - (a) Outline
  - (b) Notes
  - (c) Script
  - (d) Research
4. Which element of a presentation is *not* part of an outline?
  - (a) Conclusion
  - (b) Transition
  - (c) Notes
  - (d) Thesis
5. Which purpose is *not* served by creating an outline?
  - (a) Helps your thoughts move from one point to another
  - (b) Allows you to keep a logical flow of ideas
  - (c) Is the script you'll use when onstage
  - (d) Helps you feel more comfortable and prepared

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## CHAPTER 6



# Creating an Introduction

“My name is Amir, and I’m going to talk about the history of the Internet. Thank you for listening to me.” I’ll bet you can’t wait to hear him talk, right? Actually, I’d be surprised if you were very interested. But that’s the way one of my corporate clients insisted on starting every presentation. No matter how many suggestions I made and how many comments the audience offered, he would not change the introduction. Even watching his video didn’t sway him from the habit of starting with “My name is Amir, and I’m going to talk about . . .” Ugh!

Whether you’re speaking to a room of seven hundred people, leading a training program for ten friends, or kicking off your online course, the introduction is your opportunity to hook the interest of your listeners. You have the most power to make an impact on your audience at the beginning and the end of your presentation, and it’s up to you to take advantage of that power.

Most audiences make up their minds about your credibility within the first three minutes of hearing your introduction. In that short time, the members of your audi-



ence decide whether to engage in listening to your message. Either they connect with you, or they don't. Consequently, the way you begin talking is critical to your success. A good opener creates expectations for more good things to come.

## Tips for a Successful Introduction

You can make a good first impression with your audience by following these suggestions.

### WATCH YOUR TIME

Make the length of the introduction appropriate for the length of the talk. A five-minute intro for a twenty-minute presentation is an inappropriate balance. For most presentations, this is the best way to allocate your time:

Introduction	5 to 10 percent of your allotted time
Body	80 to 90 percent of your allotted time
Conclusion	5 to 10 percent of your allotted time

### DON'T RUSH INTO TALKING

It's tempting to start speaking just as soon as you're in front of the audience. Don't! Stop, take a breath, and look at the audience. Connect with some friendly eyes. After a moment's silence, begin talking with confidence. If you're being introduced, make sure to let the anticipated applause subside before you begin speaking. If you're speaking online, give a heads-up by announcing that you'll be starting your presentation in one minute.

### Speaking of . . . Great Starts

A great opening can help *you* feel confident and comfortable very quickly. The feeling is similar to that of a sports team that takes a commanding lead early in the game. The feeling of "I really can do this" begins to take over.



## DON'T READ YOUR INTRODUCTION

Know your opening cold. A speaker who begins by reading the introduction will almost always lose his or her connection with the audience. Reading removes the advantages of eye contact, facial expressions, and natural-sounding speech. The only people who seem able to really connect while reading have been professionally trained to read well.

### Bonus Point

Don't begin your presentation with an apology. Don't start with "I'm sorry I didn't have much time to prepare" or "I'm sorry my voice may not hold out" or "I'm sorry to call this meeting on short notice." Just do your introduction, and move on.

## Goals for Your Introduction

Make sure you start your presentation in a purposeful way. A good start should accomplish these goals.

### GAIN ATTENTION

It's important that you use your introduction to hook your audience right away. You won't get another chance to make that first impression, so you need to get it right the first time. If your listeners aren't involved from the beginning, it's especially challenging to get them interested in the middle. You can, but it's difficult.

### SET THE TONE

Setting the tone refers to the mood or atmosphere that you establish at the beginning of your talk. The tone creates the emotions that your audience will use to evaluate your message. When President Obama gave his inauguration speech, he had the difficult task of finding a balance between the gravity of the world economic situation and his optimism for the future. He chose his words carefully and precisely. In doing so, he set the tone for the next four years of his administration.



## STAY RELEVANT TO YOUR TOPIC

The introduction must relate to your message in content, tone, and style. An interesting story that gets our attention and has an impact but bears no relevance to the content of the speech is *not* an appropriate attention getter. A humorous story of your trip to the auditorium that morning may not be a good opener if it has nothing to do with your presentation. Choose something that supports, illuminates, or illustrates your message.

## CREATE A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP

Establish a positive relationship with your audience by letting them know how listening will benefit them: “We’re in this thing together. I’m here to share something I think you’ll find useful. I’m not here to antagonize you, turn you off by displaying my superior knowledge, or make you feel uncomfortable.”

### Speaking of . . . Rapport

Rapport is the positive connection people establish with each other. It’s the ability to see each other’s point of view and to feel an affinity with someone.

## GET THE AUDIENCE INVOLVED

The introduction should welcome the audience to your message and get each member thinking about how the presentation relates to him personally. Internally and unconsciously, the people in your audience will ask, WIIFM? “What’s in it for me?” Your introduction will let them know it’s worth their effort to listen and will answer their silent question by telling them, “There’s a lot in it for you! Just listen to what’s coming.”

## PUT YOUR MESSAGE IN CONTEXT

Your introduction will create the setting or the circumstances that surround the topic. In the intro you can define the scope, your point of view, and cue the audience where you’ll be going during the presentation. When you lay out a plan, the group knows what to expect, becoming more receptive to your message.



## Techniques That Get Attention

There are many ways to start your talk, but not all of them are effective. Here are some methods that will get you started right.

### USE AN ANECDOTE OR TELL A STORY

An effective way to make a point is by telling a good story. An anecdote can illustrate your central theme and makes the message come alive to your listeners. If you have several stories you'd like to tell in your presentation, it's sometimes a good idea to use the best one as your introduction.

We all know someone who can tell a great story. We also know people who just can't. Make sure you're in the first group if you choose storytelling! If you're not sure, ask your friends. Practice telling your story before a group of people who will not be attending your presentation. Choose people similar to the makeup of your audience for your practice, and then adapt the story according to their reactions.

**Caution:** Even if you're an expert storyteller, don't use foul language or tell an off-color story in a corporate or academic setting. You cannot recover from this mistake.

#### Speaking of . . . Anecdotes

An anecdote is a short, interesting, amusing story. A common mispronunciation of anecdote is antidote. An antidote is a remedy to counteract the effects of a poison. Make sure to say anecdote [**an**-ik-doh't], not antidote [**an**-ti-doh't], when you're speaking of a short story.

### ESTABLISH COMMON GROUND

You can damage your credibility as an information source if the audience members feel you can't possibly relate to them. But when they know they can identify with you, your experiences, or your ideas, then your credibility quotient begins to go up. When a connection is important to your message, establish common ground early.

Imagine yourself in this situation: The speaker was asked to fill in at the last minute and knew nothing about the audience. She had less than twenty-four hours



to prepare a seminar on stress management for an audience of thirty people. Having spoken on this topic before, she quickly prepared information, and on the morning of the speech, she entered the room with confidence.

The room she entered was a lunchroom filled with thirty middle-aged, male, blue-collar workers who had just gotten off the 11:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. shift. They were forced to go to this monthly safety meeting but really just wanted to go home. Our speaker, having prepared for an executive breakfast, was wearing a business suit and high-heeled pumps; she was carrying an expensive leather briefcase. Immediately, she knew that to have any credibility with her audience, she had to change the introduction to her speech and immediately establish some relationship with them.

After she was introduced, she walked to the front of the room, and rather than stand behind the table, she sat on top of it, crossing her ankles. She began the presentation this way:

Shift work is usually hard, dirty, and stressful. For eight years, I was married to a cop who changed shifts every five days. We almost never had a normal meal or a good night's sleep. We had no social life. People wouldn't call or ask us out because he was always sleeping or at work. I spent a lot of time alone. You may have noticed that I said I *was* married to a cop. We divorced two years ago. Yeah, shift work is stressful.

This is my story. It happened several years ago, and when I walked into that room, I knew it was a sink-or-swim situation. By making some quick changes to my plan, I was able to salvage a potential disaster. When I spoke from the heart and disclosed my own story of the pressures of shift work on my family, we made the connection. The audience empathized with me, shared common stories, and listened to my suggestions.

### Bonus Point

Telling a story helps involve the audience with you and your message. If you start with a story, make sure to conclude with a reference to the story.



## REFER TO A PREVIOUS SPEAKER

Sometimes you can't prepare for a great opportunity that the previous speaker might offer you. Coach Gene Stallings didn't realize it when he gave me the perfect setup for my presentation to the Alabama Association of Association Executives. Mr. Stallings is the former coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide as well as the Dallas Cowboys and the St. Louis Cardinals. I was nervous and excited to follow a speaker who was a true hero to most of my audience. In my experience, most speakers from the world of athletics have great stories but are only average speakers. Coach Stallings, however, proved to be an outstanding speaker. His pacing was superb, his speaking technique was polished and professional, and as you might expect, his stories were fascinating and relevant.

Coach Stallings gave me the link to my talk when he challenged the members of the audience to take notes and actually learn from every conference they attend, or they shouldn't bother to turn in an expense account. The second slide for my talk is a big number 3. When the 3 pops up on the screen, I promise the audience that everyone there will walk away with at least three things he or she can apply immediately. Bingo! The perfect connection!

Referring to a previous speaker works because of timing and relevance. It lets the audience know you paid attention to the same thing they did. (And if they weren't paying attention, it lets them know what they missed and that you found it important.) You have the opportunity to tie together the theme of the day. Keep in mind that your comment has to be positive and sincere; misquoting the previous speaker or mispronouncing his or her name can turn everyone off.

## ASK A QUESTION

In just a few quick words, a good question in your introduction not only can gain the attention of the audience, but also can focus them on your topic and how it relates to them. Usually the question is rhetorical, one you don't expect anyone to answer out loud. If you would like a response, let the audience know. For a small audience (thirty or fewer), you can ask for audience members to call out answers. Ask larger groups for a show of hands.

For a workshop on presentation skills, Charlotte began her talk by asking for a show of hands: "Who can't wait to stand up and give a talk?" she asked. She followed that question with "Who would rather have a tax audit than stand up and give a talk?" Since there are usually several people who raise their hands in response to the second question, those raised hands give the audience visual proof that presentations can be intimidating for some people.



“Who would like to win the lottery?” is the opening question Janet used when she talked about her family’s experience of going from middle class to wealthy and back to middle class. After all the hands went up, she added new information before repeating the same question several times: “If your sudden wealth meant that your friends and family would start to see you as their personal bank, would you still want to win the lottery?” “If it meant that you would feel deeply depressed and your health would start to suffer, would you still want to win the lottery?” Janet’s audience was now open to hear that coming into a large amount of cash might not be as wonderful as it seems.

### Speaking of . . . Rhetorical Questions

When a rhetorical question is asked, no one expects an answer. The question emphasizes a point or causes the listener to think about something that may be obvious.

### MAKE A BOLD STATEMENT

“In only four seconds, thousands of people saw their lives turn to rubble. Ninety-five hundred died. The force was the equivalent of five atomic bombs.” This was the introduction to a speech on the power of earthquakes. The speaker chose to use a powerful Mexico City earthquake, which rated 7.9 on the Richter scale, to get the attention of the audience.

“Four out of ten Americans will be the victim of a crime this year. Look around this room. There are forty of us here. Which four will be the victims?” So began Officer Davis’s talk on home security.

Both of these examples hook the audience’s attention with the boldness of the ideas. Both provide a wow factor that makes the audience want to know more.

### Bonus Point

If you use a quote, keep it short. In general, the most effective spoken quotes are no more than three sentences in length.



## USE HUMOR

Starting your presentation with a laugh can help establish a friendly relationship with your audience. In general, the more original the humor, the better. If you are naturally funny and possess a good sense of timing, relating your own story to the topic might work. If you choose to use humor, make sure it is appropriate for your topic. For instance, don't start a presentation on breast cancer prevention with a laugh.

Using a canned joke can be dangerous: if the audience has heard the story, it's hard to recover from the sinking feeling that comes from listening to your audience pretend to laugh at your joke. If your humor attempt bombs, move on quickly. Explaining or belaboring a bad joke just makes it worse. Apologizing works only if it's quick, simple, and straightforward. A long apology simply makes the audience more uncomfortable. Obviously, avoid using any language or making any references that could offend your listeners.

## GIVE A DEFINITION

A word that when defined creates a visual image or evokes a specific feeling for the audience can be the subject of a great intro. If you quote a specific dictionary, reference the source: “‘Abandoned . . . given up; forsaken; deserted’: That’s the way *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* defines the word. I would define it as three months alone in the darkness.” That is the way Lynne Peterson began her presentation on spending a cold winter alone in rural Alaska.

## REFER TO HISTORY

Starting your talk with a reference to an event related to your topic draws the audience into your presentation. Some presentations open with an event that occurred that day or that week in history. Every day is the anniversary of something.

The common history shared by your audience, its organization, or its industry is another good option for starting off your talk. When Jacob was assigned a talk on the subject of air travel safety, he knew right away that his opening would refer to the plane that made a safe emergency landing in the Hudson River. Pauline used a reference to the *Challenger* explosion to remind her nursing students of the need for clear and open communication to avoid a potential disaster.



## USE A PROP OR A VISUAL

Visuals grab attention immediately. The audience silently ask themselves, “What’s that?” “Why is it there?” And if you’ve chosen a great prop, they’ll remember it for a long time.

When computer paper came in long sheets separated by perforations, I saw a speaker begin her talk on interviewing techniques by talking about how much information was available on the topic. She told us she had printed out only the *most* appropriate information she found on interviewing. To make her point, she held up the first sheet of the ream of paper on the floor beside her and began walking around the stage. She created a huge “paper trail” that visually made her point. If she were to do that talk today, she could start by sharing the number of hits she got on Google. Since Google returns about 3,470,000 hits for “interviewing techniques,” she could use a jar of something small like gumballs or dried beans to represent the number of hits. That would certainly create a visual impact.

### Speaking of . . . Safety

Getting your audience’s attention is a good thing, but doing it by dangerous or illegal means is not! Don’t think about burning money, setting off firecrackers, or waving a gun to get attention.

## GIVE A QUOTE

A thought-provoking quote can provide an excellent start for your speech. People like to know what famous or high-ranking people have to say. You can piggyback on the authority of the person you quote if you carefully craft your introduction around the words of a well-respected source. With all the resources available today, you can rapidly find quotes on any subject. Bookstores, the library, and the Internet provide a multitude of sources for quotations. Try to quote someone who has credibility with your audience.

When you use a quote, choose a brief and concise one. If the quote is long, paraphrase the parts you feel are insignificant to the meat of what you want to express, while maintaining the intended message of the statement.

In her talk about how the Science of Mind works, Dianne used this Napoleon Hill quote: “Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve.” From there she went on to explain that if you change the way you think, you will



change your life. Dianne chose a credible source for her topic and a quote that reinforced her message.

## Tips from the Pros

### The Gift of Storytelling by Dana Eldridge

Storytelling is fun. Think of your story as a gift that will give your audience a great deal of pleasure—one they will recall and even want to retell.

What gives us pause is how to deliver the gift. It also gives us shaky knees, an accelerated heartbeat, and other such things. I have found that these nervous palpitations can be minimized—no, they can be eliminated—if you know the subject of your story thoroughly. Write it out, and read it aloud, preferably to a friend—a friend who is brave enough to tell you if your story is worth repeating. This talking-it-out technique will tell you if the talk flows, and if both of you agree that it does, then your gift for your audience is about ready to unwrap.

When your story becomes second nature, the talk itself will become a casual affair, much like relating any experience to a friend. Indeed, it will no longer be any sort of an ordeal at all; rather, it will be a chat with friends or at least friendly people. And the vast majority of folks are friendly. This casualness will allow you, the storyteller, to easily ad-lib humorous lines into the tale.

As you become more proficient at storytelling, you will find, as I have, that when giving talks, you will slip into a different persona. I'm scarcely aware of it, but something inside of my subconscious seems to click to "acting mode"—something any actor (emoting onstage) is very familiar with.

So get off your seat, and go to the podium looking confident (whether you feel it or not) and certain you know more about your subject than anyone facing you.

And as always, when you give, you receive. You will receive the feedback that you are a gifted storyteller.

### Tips

1. Relax—*it is going to be fun.*
2. Know your material thoroughly. *Thoroughly.*
3. Relax—*it is fun.*
4. Talk slowly.

(continued)



5. Interact with the audience:

- Look people in the eye.
- Smile (and mean it).

6. Interject humor.

7. Relax—*it has been fun* after all.

Now know you have given your new friends a gift of some proportions.

## QUIZ

1. Which technique is *not* an effective way to begin your presentation?
  - (a) Mention the last speaker.
  - (b) Refer to a historical event.
  - (c) Ask a question.
  - (d) Apologize for starting late.
2. How does referring to a previous speaker influence the audience?
  - (a) It reminds the audience of something foolish that the previous speaker said.
  - (b) It notifies the audience that your topic is more important than the previous one.
  - (c) It reminds audience members of something important that they need to remember.
  - (d) It reminds the people in your audience that the day is coming to a close and they should pay attention.
3. The introduction for a one-hour talk should be approximately how long?
  - (a) Ten minutes
  - (b) Two minutes
  - (c) Less than six minutes
  - (d) It depends!



4. What should your introduction do?
  - (a) Get attention
  - (b) Be short and to the point
  - (c) Give a preview of your main points
  - (d) Establish that you are an expert on the subject
5. Which technique is an effective way to establish common ground?
  - (a) Tell the people in your audience all the ways you are like them.
  - (b) Show the people in your audience ways you have a sincere connection with them.
  - (c) Let the audience know where you come from.
  - (d) Try to be like the audience.

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## CHAPTER 7



# Building a Powerful Conclusion

“Time for bed, kids. Once upon a time, there was a big mountain covered with beautiful trees. Inside a tree lived a giant rabbit. His hair was spiky, and his name was Boomer the Bunny. He was very scary.” So began the bedtime story that Katherine was telling her kids. After Boomer had some great adventures, Katherine ended the story by saying, “Boomer had a lot of fun being mean to people, and he shouldn’t have done that, so goodnight, kids.” She left the room and headed down the hallway.

What did Katherine forget? She left out two important steps in the bedtime story process. Her story didn’t have an interesting ending, and more importantly, she forgot to tuck the kids in. They were left hanging. How is that important to this chapter? All presentations should have a clear ending. And whether your audience is two sleepy children or a hundred executives, never leave them hanging. Tuck them in! A great conclusion brings closure to the presentation process.



You have the most power to make an impact on your audience at the *beginning* and the *end* of your presentation. Since people tend to remember the first and the last things they hear, make sure you conclude carefully and with emphasis.

## Avoid Conclusion Pitfalls

Incorporate the following suggestions for your conclusion to help avoid some common mistakes.

### GIVE A SIGNAL THAT THE CONCLUSION IS APPROACHING

Don't make the audience guess whether or not you're wrapping up. Give them a cue that you're about to conclude, so they can be prepared to ask questions, to applaud, or to leave. Here's an example:

And before I leave you today, I'd like to offer you one more reason to consider organ donation. She's sitting right here. Meet my daughter Lauren. She received a new liver five years ago.

### Bonus Point

Don't introduce new facts during your conclusion.

### CONCLUDE CONCLUSIVELY

Help the audience avoid the awkward moment that occurs when a speaker just fades off the stage. A conclusion that disappears can diminish all the good you have done in the body of your speech. Make sure you've covered all the points you intended to address, and then conclude with conviction. When you've reached the end of your conclusion, stop! For example: "I'd like to thank you for your time, the questions you've just asked, and your willingness to get involved with our community green-space project!"



## **END ON TIME**

No matter how well you spoke, the audience will appreciate the fact that you kept your “promise” to them. Whether you’ve published an agenda or just told the audience when you are scheduled to end, you’ve essentially made a promise that you need to honor. Even if you started late, be respectful and finish on time. Here is an example in which the speaker acknowledges her promise at the end of her conclusion:

That brings me to the end of my presentation. It’s now three minutes until twelve o’clock, and we’re scheduled to finish at noon. I’d like to wrap up so that those of you who have commitments at noon can begin your travels. We’ll open this room now so that our next speaker can set up. For anyone who would like to ask additional questions, I’ll be next door in room 27, and we can continue our discussion.

### **Speaking of . . . Preparing Your Conclusion**

Because introductions and conclusions are so closely related, it’s a good idea to create them at the same time. Check for consistency in tone and content. Remember that you have the best opportunities to hook your audience at both the beginning and end of your talk.

## **Goals for Your Conclusion**

The conclusion is your final opportunity to make your point with your audience. A good conclusion accomplishes these goals.

## **PUT THE CAPSTONE ON YOUR TALK**

A good conclusion assures that everyone knows you’re finished with the formal part of your time onstage, in the conference room, or online. A great conclusion brings the communication process to a close—at least for now.



## HELP THE AUDIENCE REMEMBER

Your conclusion allows you one final opportunity to emphasize your message. This is the time to remind the audience of what's important. You can repeat the points in a new way to make them more memorable.

## MOVE THE AUDIENCE TO TAKE ACTION

For any persuasive speech, the point is to convince the audience to do, to think, or to feel something. Just like a salesperson with a good product to sell, you can do all the convincing in the world, but until you ask people to buy, you haven't finished your job.

### Bonus Point

Wrap up your presentation with confidence. Never let your conclusion sound like you're thinking, "Boy, am I glad this is over."

## Conclusion Techniques

Here are seven ways to end a presentation, with examples of each.

### SUMMARIZE YOUR POINTS

Most presenters summarize at some point. They reiterate what the audience should remember in either the conclusion or the transition from the last point into the conclusion. Sometimes a summary can simply consist of repeating your main points. For example:

So remember, it's not a complicated process. Just six simple steps can lead you to a lower golf score:

First, balance your weight evenly on both feet.

Second, hold your head directly above the ball.

Third, keep your eyes on the ball.



Fourth, keep your elbows locked.

Fifth, use a smooth movement on your backswing and follow through.

Sixth, now sink that putt!

The most common method of summarizing is to make a general statement about your main points.

That's all it took—a job in modeling, a Ph.D., a trip to Croatia, and a few great stories along the way. That's how Emily Santana came to publish her first bestseller!

## **REMIND THEM WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM**

To get buy-in, tie the points you've made to the audience's situation. As you learned in Chapter 6, "Creating an Introduction," one of the purposes of a strong opening is to get the audience involved. Your conclusion again answers the question "What's in it for me?" and involves the audience emotionally.

In introducing a new company procedure for cutting costs, the CEO ended this way:

The new J and L process will mean more work for us, especially until we get used to the changes. In a few months, however, our processing will be more efficient, and your work will flow more smoothly. In the long run, the company's bottom line will increase, our processes will be simpler, our customers will get their products quicker, and your profit-sharing bonuses will increase!

## **CHALLENGE THE AUDIENCE TO DO SOMETHING**

The conclusion often challenges your listeners to take action. You may be asking them to vote for your candidate, choose your proposal over the others, recycle, or even call their mother! You miss the mark in a persuasive presentation if you spend precious time convincing the audience of all the good reasons to do something but then neglect to ask them to do it.

The most famous persuasive conclusion is probably that of John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."



## REFER TO YOUR INTRODUCTION

When you mention your opening remarks in the wrap-up, you bring your presentation full circle. You saw the following introduction in the previous chapter:

Shift work is usually hard, dirty, and stressful. For eight years, I was married to a cop who changed shifts every five days. We almost never had a normal meal or a good night's sleep. We had no social life. People wouldn't call or ask us out because he was always sleeping or at work. I spent a lot of time alone. You may have noticed that I said I *was* married to a cop. We divorced two years ago. Yeah, shift work is stressful.

This intro got attention, gained credibility, and laid the groundwork for some good tips on handling the stress of shift work. Here's one example of a conclusion that refers back to this introduction:

We've covered a lot of techniques for reducing the stress of shift work today. I think you can apply a few of them to your own life. I believe you will have a different result from mine. I hope your marriage is strong and your personal life is *yours*, not your job's.

### Bonus Point

When you finish speaking, continue to stand in front of the audience and, if it's appropriate for your topic, smile appreciatively until the applause begins to die down. Then leave the front of the room.

## ANSWER THE QUESTION YOU ASKED IN YOUR INTRODUCTION

If you've opened your presentation with a question, an ideal ending includes an answer that ties the presentation together.

A presentation for supervisors of a major company began with the question "What do you think employees in America consider the number one thing that motivates them on the job?" It might end with this conclusion:



So, as you've seen, the thing people want most from their jobs is not what supervisors think they want. People don't say that money or job security leads the list of most desired things. What employees want most is full appreciation for a job well done. Simply treating people with consideration and honestly appreciating what they do are the best motivators of all. When you go back to work tomorrow, give yourself a checkup to determine how well you provide your employees with what they need.

## **USE A QUOTE**

You might choose to end with the words of an expert or someone with known credibility on your topic. A well-chosen quote should be thought provoking. Make sure you choose a quote that is relevant to your topic and resonates with the listeners.

A financial adviser ended the last session of her workshop titled "Know How to Make Your Money Work for You" with these words from Suze Orman: "It's better to do nothing with your money than something you don't understand." The quotation was effective and credible.

## **ENVISION THE FUTURE**

When you've presented your argument and laid the groundwork for a solution to a problem, lead the audience into the future, so each person can see what life will be like when your suggestions are implemented.

That is the state of the "green effort" in America today. And tomorrow . . . well, the future is up to you. If each and every one of us makes one change to stop wasting resources, we can live in a better world. Children will drink clean water, trees will take toxins from the air, and Superfund sites will be a thing of the past.

Envisioning a negative future can be exceptionally effective as an ending. But used poorly, it can also fail miserably by depressing your audience and erasing the positive message as well as damaging the positive personal relationship you've developed during the speech. If you choose to see a negative future, make sure that you give your audience a way to improve the situation.



## Observe and Improve

One of the best ways to learn how the opening and closing can change the impact of a presentation is to observe speakers in several settings. Watch different types of presentations. Conference sessions, online classes, business meetings, C-SPAN, project updates, city council meetings, and weddings are just a few of the opportunities for observing presentations.

When you observe other speakers, consider the following questions:

- Was the introduction relevant to the topic?
- Did the speaker establish a positive relationship?
- Was the audience encouraged to get involved intellectually? Emotionally?
- Which techniques did the speaker use to gain attention?
- Was the conclusion relevant to the topic?
- Which technique did the speaker use to conclude the presentation?
- If the speaker were to start over again with this presentation, what suggestions would you make regarding the introduction and conclusion to make the presentation even more effective?

### Tips from the Pros

#### **Humor in Presentations: Make 'Em Laugh** *by John Coerper*

Humor is much misunderstood and often misused in public speaking. It's misunderstood because we don't all have the same sense of humor, so the same thing isn't funny to everyone. That reason alone should make you wary of using humor in a presentation. Add to that the fact that audiences react differently at different times of the day or on different days of the week; the news, even the weather can affect what's funny.

But still, many presenters use humor. Some use it successfully.

The key to using humor is knowing *why* you're using it. Unless you're auditioning a comedy act, humor should only be used for a purpose. If you are confident in the purpose, you can match the humor to it.

- **Opening (ice breaker).** Sometimes it's necessary to warm up your audience, or yourself. Once I had to address a group of over a thousand in the grand hall of a museum. I was doing it extemporaneously and used a slide deck to keep me on track. But I was



afraid if I stumbled at the beginning, I might lose my audience. So I decided to open with humor. In my opening, I told the audience that I was nervous, but I'd been told that if an audience scared me, I should just imagine them naked. Then I pulled out a pair of binoculars and scanned the audience from the stage. Now they were nervous. My slammer was a slide of a caricature of a prominent member of the audience, shielded only by a fig leaf. The audience roared, and I proceeded from there.

- **Bonding.** If you are a stranger to your audience and your credentials are your reason to be there, citing a humorous event tied in some way to your host will create a commonality that will bond your listeners to your message. Be sure to vet the comment with a trusted person first. You don't want to use something that's funny to you but carries a different emotion to your audience.

- **Making a point.** Especially in technical presentations awash with esoteric facts and figures, using humor to make a point seizes on the esoteric nature of the topic. It works like an inside joke, funny only to a select few. In the current crop of crime dramas on TV, there are many examples of this as a tension reliever.

- **Leaving 'em laughing.** When all is said and done, your audience will remember all of your opening, some to none of your main presentation, and all of your departure. That's because they're keyed up when you arrive, and they wake up when you leave. Using an anecdote or salient one-liner to exit with is a good way to ensure enough applause to get you off the stage.

Remember, never allow humor to dilute your message or demean anyone. You may get a cheap laugh, but it will surely come back to haunt you.

## Bonus Point

If you are planning to take questions at the end of your presentation, be sure to close the Q & A section with a brief recap of your main points. This lets you take back the power and leaves the audience with your intended message, not just the answer to the last question.



## QUIZ

“I appreciate your time this afternoon. Today I’ve shared with you the four levels of the Emotional Intelligence Model. I believe you’ll find it to be time well spent.”

1. In the preceding conclusion, what goal did the speaker remember to accomplish?
  - (a) Show appreciation.
  - (b) Remind the audience why the topic is important to them.
  - (c) Summarize the most important points.
  - (d) Ask the audience to do something.
2. In an effective conclusion, what does the speaker *not* do?
  - (a) Ask the audience to do something
  - (b) Add new information
  - (c) Refer to the introduction
  - (d) Use a quote
3. What should a good conclusion do?
  - (a) Add only one additional point
  - (b) Establish that you are an expert on the subject
  - (c) Clearly signal the end
  - (d) Make the audience feel good
4. Envisioning the future is an effective conclusion when you want the audience to:
  - (a) Adopt your suggestion
  - (b) Feel good
  - (c) Ask more questions
  - (d) Take your ideas seriously



5. Challenging the audience to do something is an effective conclusion for which kind of speech?
- (a) Ceremonial
  - (b) Entertaining
  - (c) Informative
  - (d) Persuasive

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## CHAPTER 8



# Using Notes

Isabella Davis gave the same presentation, called “To PMO or Not to PMO,” at least twenty-seven times. Her audiences were always small to midsize companies debating whether or not to create a Project Management Office that would coordinate their projects. To make her case, she asked the audience if they ever experienced specific problems, and Isabella always used the acronym CLASS to help them remember the issues. CLASS stands for:

- Cost overruns
- Late project endings
- Anger or frustration among team members
- Scope creep
- Surprises

The acronym never failed . . . until the twenty-eighth presentation, when Isabella forgot that the A stands for anger. Even though she had said this so many times, she just couldn’t remember. If she had had just one note card with the CLASS code on it, no one would have ever known, and she would not have been embarrassed.



As Isabella learned, good speaker notes can be a lifesaver. Bad notes, however, can damage your delivery, get in your way, or cause more frustration than they're worth. Investing time in creating your notes pays off. You may not be aware that most speakers use notes of some kind. Even professional presenters who appear to be speaking off the cuff often have teleprompters or cue cards. Politicians, stand-up comedians, and talk-show hosts have help with sounding spontaneous. Speaking without notes is like walking the tightrope without a net—unpredictable and dangerous!

### **Bonus Point**

Unless you're a professional speaker, don't rely on your slides to be your cues for the whole talk. Make a few notes on paper as a guide. Be sure to number the pages!

## **Why Should I Use Notes in Addition to My Slides?**

It's easy to use the notes function in your computer's presentation software, and I recommend it as a way to structure the flow of your talk. But your computer slides don't always provide enough support while you're in the spotlight.

### **NOTES ALLOW YOU TO KEEP SOME SECRETS**

Your slides will make each point visually, but your cards are just for you. Notes can include scribbled bullet points, words you want to emphasize, and stage directions that are for your eyes only. If your slides include everything you are going to say, then you don't need to be talking!

### **NOTES ARE YOUR GPS**

Notes keep you focused on your structure. Think of them as a road map. Notes can reduce the tendency to take a detour and spend too much time talking about something you hadn't planned. Notes are focused on your goal and can assist in getting you easily from your starting point to your final destination.



## NOTES ARE A SAFETY NET

Notes will get you back on track if your mind goes blank and you suddenly have no idea why all those faces are looking at you. They can keep you from being embarrassed by forgetting something the way Isabella did. Unfortunately, memory lapse happens even to the best of speakers. If you get lost, you can go directly to the next point on your note card and get right back on the road to your destination.

## NOTES HELP YOU FEEL CONFIDENT

Having a note card in hand can give added confidence to a nervous speaker. Even if you don't think you'll need a single note, just having the cards beside you can make you feel better. Well-prepared notes can help a speaker sound self-assured and natural. I know a speaker who puts a "secret code" on his notes. He feels the code works like a lucky charm. Some athletes and fans wear the same shirt or shoes for every game, believing that the shirt or shoes bring good luck. This speaker feels the same way about his secret code—when he sees it, he feels like a winner.

## Preparing Your Notes

If you take a public-speaking class, most professors give instructions on the kind of note cards they expect students to use. If you receive a grade on your note cards, *construct them exactly as instructed by your professor*. If you are speaking outside an academic setting, you have plenty of freedom to choose a style of note preparation that works for you. Use the tips presented here within the restrictions dictated by your instructor or your corporate culture.

## USE CARDS FOR PRESENTATIONS OF UNDER FIFTEEN MINUTES

Standard three-by-five-inch note cards are less conspicuous than a sheet of paper. If your hands tend to shake, it is less noticeable to the audience when you carry smaller note cards. Cards don't rustle or make as much noise as larger, thinner sheets of paper when you move them.

There are, however, some exceptions to the note card rule. Presentations of over fifteen minutes might require so many notes that cards become cumbersome. Standard  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ -inch paper is your best choice for long presentations. Some speakers simply prefer typed notes because they're neater and can be stored in computer



memory. If you choose to type your notes, use a large font (eighteen points minimum) to ensure good visibility. If you use handwritten notes, print large and legibly.

## PREPARE MULTIPLE COPIES

If you are giving your presentation more than once or if you might later need to remember all the specifics of what you have said, make sure to save an electronic version of your notes. You can easily misplace handwritten notes between speaking engagements. Why reinvent the wheel? The computer provides a backup, so you won't permanently lose anything. Another key benefit of the computer is that you can save different versions of the notes. This way, you can adapt the presentation without a total rewrite. You can go back and review the different versions to remember exactly what you said to each group. Make sure to edit your slides to match the changes.

As a professional speaker, I have seven versions of one program on my laptop. Each one is customized for length and audience needs. If you choose to keep multiple versions of a talk, be sure to label each one clearly.

## USE KEY WORDS

Don't write out full sentences on your cards. Use key words to focus on the points you want to make. Key words allow you to sound fresh and natural as you make your way through the presentation. There are, of course, a few exceptions:

- Write out quotes to ensure accuracy.
- Write out statistics as well as the statements you'll use to rephrase the numbers to make them more easily understood.
- Write out any specific details that must be given verbatim.
- Use a script when dealing with highly sensitive information. When there is no room for misinterpretation, read from the script.
- Write out the first few words of introductions and conclusions to assure a smooth start and finish.



## INCLUDE TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

Transitional phrases help you move smoothly from point to point. They provide a signpost for the audience to know you are changing ideas. Here are some examples of transitions:

- Next . . .
- Followed by . . .
- Now let's look at . . .
- And finally . . .

Include these phrases in your notes, but again, don't write out the full sentence. Just use a phrase or two to help you remember the appropriate way to make the transition.

## USE ONE SIDE ONLY

Print notes on only one side of each card or paper. Flipping cards over distracts the audience and can confuse the speaker. In a Web-based meeting, the sound of shuffling papers is annoying, so keep extraneous movements to a minimum. Onstage or online, using double-sided notes is an invitation to disaster—really!

## NUMBER YOUR CARDS

Number each note card or page boldly in the upper right corner. This is a good preventive measure. In case cards are dropped or mixed up, you can quickly get them back in numerical order. Don't staple or bind your notes.

When Ari Anderson was a keynote speaker for the Firefighters Association, he got off to a rough start. Ari came to the stage with his notes in his hand as Carlos Pena made the introduction. As Carlos said Ari's name, he gestured widely, and bumped Ari's hand. Cards went flying. Since the notes weren't numbered, it took a few minutes to get them back in order, and Ari lost the impact of his introduction.

## USE AS FEW CARDS AS POSSIBLE

The more cards you have, the more potential there is for confusion and distraction. You might be tempted to write out information in great detail, "just in case" you forget something. *Don't talk yourself into doing this!* When you stand before an



audience, the written word can act like a magnet, and your eyes will irresistibly go to the cards. This eliminates any chance for you to look or sound natural. Fewer cards can help the verbal and visual flow to stay smooth. As you become more experienced, you'll quickly learn how many cards, containing how much information, work for you. This number varies from person to person.

### **Speaking of . . . Stage Directions**

Stage directions are instructions that a director gives an actor. Stage notes for a speaker are instructions you mark on cards to remind yourself to do something at a particular time. Some examples are “Hold up prop,” “Pause for emphasis,” and “Point to the screen.”

## **WRITE STAGE DIRECTIONS ON YOUR NOTES**

Remember that no one sees your notes but you. It's perfectly acceptable to mark up the notes any way you please. Just make sure you know what your marks mean. In general, the simpler your system, the better it works. On my notes, I've marked when to ask a question, turn to a specific audience member, or hand out samples.

## **USE COLOR**

Use the same color scheme for your cards each time you prepare a speech. The colors you use are a matter of personal preference, but remember that certain colors are far easier to see than others. For instance, yellow is an excellent highlight color, but does not work well for text. I use this simple technique for handwritten notes: blue ink for text and red for stage instructions. In the left margin, I use black for any last-minute additions to the speech. I've done this enough that I hardly need to read the words, because I know what the colors mean.

## **BRING AN EXTRA COPY**

Make a photocopy of your notes, and keep it with you on the day of your presentation. Keep it somewhere other than where you keep the first version. Think of the extra copy as something like a spare house key or car key you put in a safe place, just in case you get locked out. Bringing an extra copy has saved many of us from having to wing it without notes.



## Practicing with Your Cards

Practicing while using your notes is as important as practicing your spoken words. Using your notes seamlessly will help you to look your best. Here are some tips for practicing with your note cards.

### PRACTICE WITH REAL NOTES

Some speakers use “practice” notes for rehearsing and then make a clean copy for the actual presentation. This is not a good idea. Use the same notes for dress rehearsal and the big day. You’ll be comfortable with the spacing and design of your cards and be accustomed to any handwritten notes or pictures you may have drawn on the cards. All these little things help retention and contribute to a better final presentation. No one else will see your notes, so make them yours—mark them up any way that works for you!

### MIRROR THE REAL SITUATION

Practice in an environment similar to that of the actual presentation. Practice as often as you can in a room the size and shape of the one where you’ll formally present. Practice while sitting, standing, or using a lectern. If you need to hold your cards in the formal presentation, it’s important to practice while holding them. This lets you feel comfortable with your gestures and practice your eye contact.

### KEEP NOTES INCONSPICUOUS

Practice with a video camera to check the way you turn or move your cards or papers. Notes should be as unobtrusive as possible, supporting your speech, not detracting from it.

#### Bonus Point

Whenever the stakes are high, practice your presentation before a small live audience. Nothing beats *real* feedback from someone supportive yet impartial. Change your notes to reflect the feedback.



## Using Cards During the Presentation

These tips will help you to use your notes easily and to look and sound your best as you stand before the audience.

### **CARRY YOUR CARDS IN ONE HAND**

Carry your notes in one hand as you approach the lectern. Carrying note cards in a jacket pocket can present a problem. It's easy to drop cards while taking them out of a pocket, and as Ari found out, playing fifty-two pickup is a terrible way to begin a speech. Simply carrying your cards inconspicuously in one hand is usually the best and safest technique. If you use typed sheets, carry them in a simple folder with pockets. Sometimes you may want to leave your cards on the lectern so they'll be there when you stand up. This isn't a bad idea unless there is a speaker before you who might move your notes or take your notes away when leaving.

### **DO NOT HOLD NOTE CARDS (IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO)**

If you tend to get shaky hands, place your cards on a lectern or a small side table. This keeps your cards from drawing attention and hides the nervous shake. When you become more confident, this won't be an issue. Do not under any circumstances *hold* a full-sized sheet while speaking. A large sheet is almost guaranteed to distract the audience, especially if you tend to talk with your hands.

### **LOOK AT YOUR AUDIENCE, NOT YOUR NOTES**

For some inexperienced speakers, the note cards become a security blanket. The speaker's eyes stay on the notes, but those eyes don't *see* anything. Try to look at the notes only when it's time to move to a new point or when you truly need to be reminded of a point.

### **DON'T MEMORIZE**

It's essential to connect with your listeners, and one key of connection is to sound natural. Most of us don't sound the least bit natural when we recite a memorized script. Even some actors have a difficult time sounding natural when they're trying to be themselves rather than playing a role. Public speaking calls for a different set of skills than acting. A primary difference is that, in a speech, you do not play a character. *You* are the character. Be yourself. Be the *best* you that you can be. Be the



“you” who stands up straight, uses good grammar, and is confident and charming. By the time you give your presentation, you will have practiced enough that you’ll know each point you want to make. Comfort with the material lets you sound natural.

## DON’T REARRANGE NOTE CARDS

When you finish the information on one note card and are ready to go on to the next, move the used card from right to left on the lectern. Do not turn the card over or place it behind the other cards; simply move it out of the way and go on to the next card. You can put the cards back in order after your presentation. If there is no lectern and you are holding your cards, simply slide the one you’ve finished to the back of the stack.

Isabella could have used this simple system to help her remember the acronym CLASS.

### Determine the Need

<b>C</b> Cost overruns	(Show dollar prop) (red ink)
<b>L</b> Late project endings	(McKinsey story) (black ink)
<b>A</b> Anger or frustration among team members	(South team) (black ink)
<b>S</b> Scope creep	(Turn to Jay for creep story) (red ink)
<b>S</b> Surprises	(Tell Diane’s disaster story) (black ink)

## QUIZ

1. Why are note cards superior to notes on full sheets of paper?
  - (a) They can include stage directions.
  - (b) Note cards can be printed in an eighteen-point font.
  - (c) Note cards are less conspicuous than sheets of paper.
  - (d) Sheets of paper can include more information.



2. Which guideline for typewritten notes is *not* true?
  - (a) Print them in eighteen-point type.
  - (b) Adapt them to a new audience each time you speak.
  - (c) Use a key word format.
  - (d) Write them out in script form.
3. The following material should be written out in full, except:
  - (a) Statistics
  - (b) Sensitive information
  - (c) Quotations
  - (d) Your supporting points
4. Why is it important to use note cards in addition to notes generated with your presentation software?
  - (a) The notes written on slide software are hard to see when speaking.
  - (b) More information can go in your handwritten notes.
  - (c) You can adjust the size of the print.
  - (d) Slide-generated notes reduce your freedom to design your notes yourself.
5. Why shouldn't note cards be written out in full?
  - (a) A script leads to reading, not talking.
  - (b) It's hard to adapt to changes.
  - (c) A full script takes too much time to produce.
  - (d) Notes must be held, and a full script is too hard to hold.

## CHAPTER 9



# Creating Great Slides

Leon Jackson had spent hours creating a training course for the employees of his division. His objective was to teach them a new cable-splicing technique. As he developed more and more slides, with more and more words, he realized his presentation was doomed. He took a break from the project and drove his daughter to a play date. As he watched the kids create drawings, he had a flash of brilliance. Pictures! When he went home, he took digital photos as he spliced a cable. He inserted the photos in the slides, and voilà! He showed the process in a simple way that crossed all language barriers. Little had Leon known that his four-year-old would solve his PowerPoint problem.

Whether you're reporting the results of the nuclear power plant referendum, selling the latest software to a new client, or meeting with your school's fund-raising team, at one time or another you will be expected to use PowerPoint, Keynote, or other presentation software to create slides. PowerPoint is easy to use, and anyone can create a presentation without formal training. Surprisingly, that presents a problem.



PowerPoint is a tool. Why do you use a tool? Answer: To accomplish a task. The secret is to use the right tool for the job. A hammer doesn't work when you need a pressure washer. Use PowerPoint like a tool that supports you. Don't use it when it doesn't. PowerPoint is so user-friendly that sometimes the cultures of business and academia expect presenters to provide a slide show with every presentation. Sometimes it is the wrong tool for the job.

## Two Words of Warning

The audience can read faster than you can speak. When you put words up on a screen behind you, remember that the audience has finished reading before you've had a chance to parrot back your points. If your entire presentation is on your slides, then *you* are not necessary.

Make sure you know how your slides will be used. Many organizations expect your slides to be submitted for the audience to review before the presentation. Often they expect copies to be available electronically. When you attach those copies to an e-mail, stop and think twice before hitting Send. Once that file has left your computer, you can no longer control where the file will go. Do you really want the presentation you spent the past three months polishing to perfection to be available for others to access? You may trust the person who is to receive your file, but what if that person is required to pass it on to someone else? You can see where this is headed. Your intellectual property can be out in the public domain before you know it. Recently I found one of my presentations on the Internet. The person who posted it gave me credit, but there was no way to recoup control of my material.

### Speaking of . . . Pictures

A picture is worth a thousand slides.



## Templates

A template provides the overall background and theme for your slide presentation. Here are some suggestions to remember when choosing a template:

- **Create atmosphere with your template.** Choose a template that matches the atmosphere you intend to create for your audience. Choose colors that support your message.
- **Choose templates with small borders.** You'll have more room for the content of your slides.
- **Make your own template.** Standard templates have been seen multiple times. Why not create your own backgrounds to support your theme?
- **Avoid “chartjunk.”** Chartjunk refers to all of the extrinsic clutter on a slide. Your logo or image on every slide in your template can be glaring and distracting. Although a logo can add consistency to your presentation, it can quickly become boring and detract from your real message.
- **Choose a background based on lighting.** Most of the time, a dark background with light letters gives you the best results. But, when you'll be presenting in a bright room, a light background is a better choice. A dark background washes out in bright lights.

### Speaking of . . . Colors

#### Colors and What They Mean

Black—Heavy, technical, formal, sophisticated, authority

Blue—Tranquil, secure, peace, trustworthy, loyalty

Red—Caution, excitement, danger, intensity (Red numbers are bad.)

Yellow—Cheerful, optimism, fresh, youth

Green—Clean, environmentally friendly, calm, wealth, military overtones when combined with brown

White—Simplicity, purity, clean

Pink—Feminine, love, tranquil

Purple—Royalty, luxury, wealth, sophistication



### Bonus Point

Create your slides *after* you've developed your talk. Preparation takes more than twice as long when you create your slides while preparing the talk.

## Fonts

Your font determines the appearance and style of the letters and characters on your slide. Use these tips when making decisions regarding your slide fonts:

- **Capitalize words in your title.** Capitalize the first letter of each word in the title slide. Capitalize the first word of the bullet only in subsequent slides.
- **Use a sans-serif font.** Serifs are the little curls at the ends of some printed letters. Examples of sans-serif fonts are Arial and Helvetica.
- **Don't use more than two fonts per slide.** A change of font is a good way to get attention, but more than two per slide is distracting.
- **Choose large font size.** Font size should be twenty-four points or larger.
- **Use white space.** Keep slides uncluttered for maximum effect.
- **Capitals.** USING ALL CAPS IS SHOUTING. Use all capitals sparingly and *only* to emphasize a point.

### Bonus Point

Use the whole screen. Don't use borders that take space you need for your data. Let your slides fill the screen and your graphics fill the slide.



## Wording

Many slides will contain words to convey your message. These guidelines will help you use words effectively:

- **Use words sparingly.** If everything you say is on your slides, you are unnecessary and redundant. Use key words and simple phrases to make your point.
- **Remember “six by six.”** In general, use no more than six lines per slide and no more than six words per line. Use fewer lines and words if possible.
- **Don’t repeat.** If each bullet point starts with the same word, include it in the title followed by a colon.
- **Use phrases rather than sentences.** Short phrases are usually more effective than full sentences. Using a quote is the exception to this rule.
- **Spell-check.** Proofread and proofread again. Ask someone else to look at your slides with fresh eyes.
- **Be consistent.** Keep your use of verbs and their tense, punctuation, and bullet-point style the same throughout the entire presentation.

## Images

Photographs, drawings, and clip art are commonly found on slides. These tips will help you to use images to support your message:

- **Graphics are more powerful than words.** Adding a photo, graph, or drawing keeps your presentation alive and can add an emotional effect. Eliminate words if the graphic tells the story.
- **Pay for copyright privileges.** If you use copyrighted photos, graphs, or artwork, make sure to acknowledge the artist and pay the appropriate royalties.
- **Use clear images.** Check the quality and richness of your pictures. The more pixels in your photo, the richer and more accurate your projection will be.



- **Graphics must have a purpose.** Just because a picture is pretty or interesting doesn't mean you should include it in your slide show. Choose graphics that clearly support your message.
- **Keep it simple.** If your audience has to hunt to find the meaning in the graphic, don't use it.
- **Visual trumps verbal.** Pictures are more powerful and memorable than words on a slide.
- **Consistency counts.** Don't mix photos and clip art in the same presentation. If you use clip art, buy top-quality images.

## Transitions

Slides can support you as you make transitions in your presentation. Follow these suggestions when creating transition slides:

- **Open with a welcoming slide.** As your audience comes into the room, project a slide with your program name supported by a photo to set the mood.
- **Open with factoids.** To create a fun atmosphere, create rolling slides with trivia, movie facts, or company history. Let the slides roll as participants enter the room.
- **Transition purposefully.** Use a quote or simple graphic to indicate a clear transition between segments of your presentation.
- **Keep transitions simple.** Use special effects on a slide only when you want to create a special effect in your presentation.

### Bonus Point

If you don't need to show a slide during a portion of your program, press the B on the keyboard for the screen to go to black. Press B again to resume the slides where you left off.



## Using Your Slides with Style

Now that you have created great slides, following these recommendations will help you use slides with style and grace:

- **Don't read your slides.** We all know this rule, so why do so many presenters break it? It seems that the words on the slides just draw our eyes to them. People who can read the slides themselves do *not* want to hear you read them. Period!
- **Use a remote.** If you don't have a remote control, get one! A remote allows you to change slides from anywhere in the room. Each remote operates on a frequency and has a limited range. Check how much space you have in your range.
- **Beta-test.** Slide colors change with the calibration of each projector. Test your slides on the actual projector you'll use in your presentation to be sure the colors on the screen are true.
- **Hold onto your handouts.** Hand out copies of your slides or other printed materials *after* the presentation unless you're using the handouts as a participant guide for note taking. Waiting to hand out the copies prevents the audience from looking ahead.

## A Word About Rules

The guidelines in this chapter are just some simple tips to enhance the professional quality of your slides. Like most rules, sometimes they should be broken!



## QUIZ

1. For the best visibility, what should be the minimum font size for the words on your slides?
  - (a) Twelve points
  - (b) Twenty points
  - (c) Twenty-four points
  - (d) Thirty-six points
2. Which font style is easiest to read on a slide?
  - (a) Times New Roman
  - (b) Helvetica
  - (c) Serif
  - (d) Sans serif
3. What should you do if you know you'll be presenting in a bright room?
  - (a) Use a light background on your slides.
  - (b) Do not use a yellow background.
  - (c) Stay away from black type.
  - (d) Use a dark background on your slides.
4. Which of the following should you investigate before your presentation?
  - (a) Lighting in your presentation room
  - (b) Projector in your presentation room
  - (c) Copyright status of your graphics
  - (d) All of the above



5. Which color conveys caution, excitement, and danger?
- (a) Blue
  - (b) Black
  - (c) Green
  - (d) Red

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## PART THREE



# STAND AND DELIVER

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## CHAPTER 10



# Dealing with Anxiety

### Speaking of . . . Great Quotes

*There are two types of speakers, those who get nervous and those who are liars.*

—MARK TWAIN

As an executive speech coach and college instructor, I've listened to more than twenty thousand presentations and watched anxiety show up in many ways. One student still stands out in my mind. He trembled, stammered, and could not make eye contact. Tears actually came to his eyes while he spoke, and watching his deep anxiety was painful for the audience. Even after weeks of coaching, he still dreaded coming to speech class. I discovered that the topic he loved was music, and although he was very knowledgeable, his anxiety kept the passion and joy from surfacing when he spoke about it. Near the end of the semester, he invited me to come to see him play his violin. At 8:00 P.M. I arrived at the concert hall, and at 8:45 P.M. I watched as my timid public-speaking student took the stage in front of two thou-



sand people and played a flawless solo—for none other than the Philadelphia Orchestra!

This anxious presenter who felt fear speaking in front of twenty college students was a professional performer. When he held his violin, the audience melted away, and he was at home onstage. Once we found a way for him to translate his comfort on the orchestra stage to the classroom lectern, he did much better. He says he'll never really like public speaking, but now he can do it. And so can you.

### Bonus Point

Always know your opening line. This will reduce your anxiety and help you get off on the right foot.

## Stage Fright

Stage fright can happen to anyone, including a long list of famous performers as diverse as Barbra Streisand and Miley Cyrus, Sir Laurence Olivier, and Elvis Presley. In January 2009, Paul McCartney admitted on the television show “The View” that even he feels just a little stage fright before a concert. Some executives, CEOs, designers, and doctors stay out of the limelight because of their anxiety. So if you get nervous before a presentation, you're not alone.

When the majority of people find out that they have to give a presentation, they usually do one of three things: try to get out of it, procrastinate, or start working on it. Usually, they choose option number three only after they've failed at the first two!

Fear is the primary motivator for the first two responses. Usually we fear what's unfamiliar or seldom occurs. Since we spend so much of our time talking, why does the thought of speaking in public fill us with dread? It's frightening simply because we feel exposed.

### Speaking of . . . Glossophobia

*Glossophobia* is the technical term for stage fright. Stage fright can affect anyone. It seems to be innate in a few children who keep the fear into adulthood. It can develop late into adulthood or after one embarrassing onstage incident. Occasionally stage fright can have a sudden onset for no apparent reason. The good news is that it can be overcome.



### Top Ten Excuses for Not Making a Presentation

1. **I don't know anything.** Forget this attitude. You know a lot about a lot of things. People tend to believe that others know the same things they know. But other people *don't*! Or they don't know it the same way you do.

2. **I need to lose ten pounds first.** How many years have you been using that excuse? You can avoid many of life's best adventures by waiting "until \_\_\_\_\_." Fill in your own blank. No one else cares about the ten pounds except you.

3. **I get too nervous.** Here's an opportunity to overcome your anxiety. You are far more aware of your anxiousness than the audience is. Walking to the front of the room and looking at all the eyes looking back can be very intimidating. Being the center of attention can bring out the natural shyness in many of us. It can feel like every flaw is exposed. Sometimes we even invent flaws that don't exist and let our imagination run away with us. But your presentation is just a few minutes of your life. Keep it in perspective.

4. **People will laugh at me.** If you do something that makes people laugh, laugh with them. Offer a little self-deprecating humor, and move on. Most people are busy being happy they aren't the one standing up there, so they are more likely to admire your bravery than to laugh at you.

5. **I've never done a talk before.** Fear of the unknown can feel huge. Having an audience watch as you navigate through new territory can be a major obstacle for inexperienced speakers. Even professional speakers can feel intimidated in a new setting. Remember the first time you did something new? You observed, applied what you learned, and repeated . . . observed, applied what you learned, and repeated. And before long, the new task wasn't intimidating at all.

6. **I know I won't do it right!** There is no perfect score in speaking. Unlike the Olympics, there is no judge expecting you to score a 10 every time you speak. Even if you gave the same speech several times, it wouldn't always be a 10. Each situation, audience, and time is different, and the key is to be as good as you can be right now. Being "good" includes being flexible, able to adapt to the situation, and able to recover when things don't go perfectly.

7. **I don't feel well, and I'm sure I'll feel bad on the day of the presentation.** The mind is an amazing thing. You can easily talk yourself into being sick if it will get you out of something you don't want to do. How many kids try to avoid a day of school by saying, "But I really *do* have a stomachache"? Then after Mom makes them go to school, they forget the



stomachache and get through the day just fine. It's also interesting to know that the sniffles you feel just before you take the stage will disappear while you're speaking and then return after you've finished. The audience may never know you felt congested.

8. **I don't have enough time to prepare.** Face it—there's never enough time! Give yourself fifteen minutes, and you can pull together enough information to give a solid overview of almost any topic. Have you ever heard the phrase "Work expands to fill the time available"? It's true. Focus on how much time you have, not how little.

9. **I was humiliated onstage when I was seven years old.** You've grown up and learned how to do lots of things. You will have a new experience and a new outcome now. Childhood experiences can leave a lasting impression. If the feeling of humiliation has been embedded in you, call a counselor who can probably help you work through the experience and move forward.

10. **I'll die if I have to give a speech!** No, you really won't. Anxiety is real, but the situations we imagine might happen are usually not real. If you are extremely afraid of speaking in front of people, sessions with a good speech coach or a counselor can be a great investment in your future. Almost every career involves some contact with people, and improving your ability to communicate will have a positive impact on all of your relationships.

## A QUICK QUIZ

An impending presentation may be exciting, but it may also bring on feelings of dread. Here is a short quiz to determine what gives you the anxiety.

Rate yourself according to the following scale:

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ The night before a presentation, I cannot sleep.
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ I frequently contribute to discussions at work, in meetings, or in classes.



3. \_\_\_\_\_ I like to help others learn by teaching or instructing them.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I avoid situations in which I might have to give an unprepared speech.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ When talking to people, I find it hard to look them in the eye.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I get very uncomfortable when I'm in a situation that involves a heated debate and I might have to get involved.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Others have made positive comments about my speaking ability.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I have had at least one very embarrassing experience when speaking.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel intimidated in a job interview.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ It's fun to ask someone I admire to discuss a topic that interests me.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I can only speak from a written manuscript.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm comfortable when I'm acting.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I'd like to do stand-up comedy.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm comfortable selling things to others.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I'd rather go to the dentist, pay taxes, and clean closets than give a presentation!

To determine how much anxiety you have about speaking, review the way you rated yourself. Your ratings of each statement between 1 and 5 show just how strongly you feel.

- Is your fear related to specific situations like impromptu or unprepared speaking, or do you feel fear in all presentations? (Questions 1, 2, and 4)
- Do the size and nature of who is in the audience affect your fear? (Questions 3 and 10)
- Does the persuasive nature of an interview or debate scare you most? (Questions 6, 9, and 14)
- Do you telegraph your anxiety? (Questions 5 and 7)
- Do you have residual fear from an event in your past? (Question 8)
- Do you feel more comfortable if you know each line you'll say in advance? Are you more comfortable if you assume the character of someone else? (Questions 11, 12, and 13)
- Is simple survival your primary motive? (Question 15)



Focus on specific speaking situations where you need improvement. The more precisely you can identify your most anxiety-producing situations, the more success you will have in finding methods to deal with them.

### **Bonus Point**

If your audience is more than twelve feet away from you and you feel nervous looking people in the eyes, look at their foreheads, and they won't know the difference. If someone is closer than twelve feet, you must make eye contact to make a connection.

## **Methods to Combat Fear While Preparing**

Research shows that of all the scary things in the world, many people rate public speaking as their number one fear. That means speaking in front of other people is more frightening than snakes, bugs, heights, and even death itself. Let's look at some ways to overcome presentation anxiety.

### **SHIFT YOUR FOCUS**

We tend to get what we think about most. Focus on disaster, and the chances of disaster striking are dramatically increased; focus on success, and a successful outcome is more likely to be yours. Try this exercise: Look around the room you're in right now, and find five blue things. Got them? Now find five more blue things. So now you have identified ten blue things. Close your eyes, and name some of the blue things. Now with your eyes still closed, name five green things in the room. Chances are, naming the green things was a little challenging, but the blue items were easy to rattle off. Why? Because when you don't think about finding the green things, they aren't apparent to you. When you focus on blue, you find blue. When you focus on success, you're on your way to finding success.

### **USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK**

As you approach the day of your presentation, use positive language in your self-talk. Think how your presentation can make you a success in the eyes of your manager or your client. If you're a student, think how you can improve your grade for



the semester when you give a great speech for class. This is the opposite of the common approach of thinking negatively—thoughts like “I’m going to mess this up,” “They’d rather buy from my competitor,” “I’ll look foolish,” or “I don’t really know enough about this.”

If you experience some resistance to this positive talk or if you tend to talk back to your self-talk, just keep practicing. Keep your focus positive through affirmations and redirection of your thoughts. Don’t believe that thinking does it all. You do have to do the necessary work, but the positive thoughts provide the solid foundation for your success. Keeping positive does get easier with practice, and it pays off exponentially.

Remember that your audience is *not* looking for you to make a mistake. In fact, if you do misspeak, the listeners either won’t notice or will forget your error within minutes. Most audiences want the speaker to succeed.

### Bonus Point

Most people get distracted while rehearsing. If you start practicing your presentation at the beginning every time, you’ll know the introduction very well but may never get to the conclusion. Occasionally try practicing in reverse order: your conclusion, then your third point, your second point, the first point, and then the introduction.

## PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Although practicing itself can be frightening, your goal is to know your material inside and out. Going over the presentation in your head does not count as a *real* practice session. If you’re speaking at a high-stakes opportunity, create a rehearsal space that is similar to the real location where you’ll talk. Practice standing behind a lectern or sitting at a conference table—whatever matches the actual environment. Use gestures, and make eye contact with an imaginary audience. You’ll probably feel *really* silly. But no one else will know, so do it anyway. Review the content as thoroughly as you can, and practice by sometimes starting in the middle or at the end.

Perhaps the most valuable practice tip is to make a video of yourself during practice. You can review your “game tapes” to see how you really look and sound. A coach can repeatedly tell you about distracting habits you may have, but the critique often doesn’t become real until you see it for yourself. Remember, you will judge



yourself far more harshly than anyone else, so be kind and constructive in your comments!

Some of us resist recording videos because we're afraid to see what we really look like. Think of it this way: Wouldn't you rather see those little annoying habits now, in private, so you can correct them before you stand before your peers, your manager, or your clients? You really can correct the great majority of bad habits easily, just by becoming aware of them. Once you're aware, you can choose another, more appropriate behavior.

### Speaking of . . . Videos

Here are three things you need to know before you watch a video of yourself:

1. Your hair really does look like that!
2. Your voice really does sound like that!
3. You're *not* really that heavy. Cameras add between ten and fifteen pounds to your appearance. That's good news for most of us!

### DON'T MEMORIZE YOUR MATERIAL

If you've ever heard a child's lines for a poor school play, you've probably heard the sound of memorization. They sound, well, memorized, and most people don't enjoy listening to flat, monotonous recitation. Another solid reason for not memorizing is that as soon as you lose your place in a memorized script, finding your way back is very challenging. Even the most confident presenter can get the "yips" when she loses her place in memorized text. Convert your presentation to bullet points, and just like a GPS system, the bullets can help you easily get back on track.

## Methods to Combat Fear on the Day of Your Presentation

Anxiety can strike just before or during your talk. These tips can help you overcome your increasing fear and its symptoms.



## ASSUME THE ROLE

Start thinking you are onstage as soon as you enter the presentation room. Before the meeting begins, create small talk with people in the room, and act as if you are already onstage. When you assume this mind-set, the beginning of your formal presentation no longer feels like the beginning. If you are in a conference or large meeting session where several presentations take place, you can mentally go into character as the person who precedes you starts his talk. This technique helps take away the fear that some of us feel in the first few minutes of speaking. It functions like an easy on-ramp into your presentation.

### Speaking of . . . Stage Fright

Stage fright shows up in many forms. These are some of the physical symptoms of stage fright:

- Shaky hands, knees, or lips
- Dry throat
- Mild nausea
- Quivering voice
- Rapid or shallow breathing
- Rapid heartbeat
- Cold hands
- Itchiness
- Blushing
- Nervous laugh

## BREATHE

A common nervous reaction is taking short, quick, shallow breaths. Shallow breathing results in higher stress, lower oxygen levels, and reduced energy. When you catch yourself breathing this way, stop and consciously take a few deep, slow breaths, letting your abdomen expand. Breathing is a natural, easy way to calm down. A few deep, cleansing breaths will help you relax mentally and physically.



I learned a technique called 4-7-8 breathing in a seminar with Dr. Andrew Weil. This technique is frequently used in yoga and meditation classes. Here's how 4-7-8 breathing works: Place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, just behind your front teeth. Inhale with your mouth closed while counting to 4. Hold your breath while counting to 7. Now slowly exhale through your mouth to the count of 8. Keep your tongue in the same place. Do this up to three or four times; don't do more than four repetitions, especially if you're not used to deep breathing. You could become lightheaded, so make sure you're sitting down for your first few practices. Before long, 4-7-8 breathing becomes almost automatic when you're stressed.

### Bonus Point

Practice pronouncing any words that may trip you up. On a note card, write out the challenging words phonetically (the way they sound).

## EAT THE RIGHT FOODS

Your diet can affect the quality of your speech. On the day you're speaking, make sure to eat something light. If you're very nervous, it's even more important to eat, because your anxiety can cause nausea. Choose some protein and fruit or vegetables and a starch. Drinking grapefruit juice or sucking on a lemon will jump-start your salivary glands if you are feeling a sore throat.

Avoid consuming these foods and beverages before you speak:

- **Milk and sugar.** Both items coat your throat and cause phlegm.
- **Carbonation.** The bubbles cause, well, you know, burping!
- **Caffeine.** If you're anxious, cut your normal intake of caffeine by about half. If you usually consume lots of coffee or tea, don't go cold turkey on the day of a speech, but use moderation. Drinking any caffeine will increase your rate of speech and magnify any jitters you might normally experience from speaking. Your natural adrenaline will boost your energy.
- **Alcohol.** Just don't.



## EXERCISE

A little light exercise before a presentation can provide both a mental and a physical boost. Try clenching your fists for five seconds, and then release and stretch your fingers. Repeat the clenches three or four times, and then shake your hands. If possible, walk around a little. Do some knee bends, and touch your toes. Roll your shoulders forward and backward, and stand up straight. Any simple exercise keeps the blood flowing and the anxiety in check.

If you're talking online, any tension you may be feeling will be expressed in your voice. If you're not using a camera, stand up to improve your breathing. You can do shoulder rolls and basic stretches while you're online but not talking.

### Tips from the Pros

#### Getting Past the Fear by Tom Champoux

"The mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the minute you're born and never stops until you get up to speak in public."

I believe every one of us can identify with this quote. It happened to me the first time in the seventh grade. I knew my speech forward and backward. I had practiced successfully several times to myself—and it sounded pretty good, I might add—and then I stood up in front of my classmates, and *everything was gone* from my brain. I couldn't even remember the first sentence. Embarrassment. Humiliation. Defeat. The roar of destructive self-talk overwhelmed my self-worth for the day. Know my story?

Now, some fifty years later, I wonder how I got from that crushing embarrassment in the seventh grade to be a professional speaker and trainer for the past thirty-four years. The fancy term for my journey is called systematic desensitization. All it means is taking small, purposeful baby steps to get to your goal. Here are the five steps to help you get started on making a successful presentation.

**Step 1: Control your thinking.** Energy goes to what you think about and what you talk about. So think about a successful presentation. Stay away from defeating self-talk, which works against you. It seems simplistic, but controlling your thinking starts everything working for you.

**Step 2: Prepare in writing.** Collect your thoughts in a bullet format. Write two or three sentences about each bullet to clarify your thinking. Then put everything back in bullet format. *Do not take narrative to your presentation.*

(continued)



Develop your opening and your closing (they should make the same point). Find a single quote or story to increase the “stickiness” of your message. Now your speech is ready to be spoken.

**Step 3: Practice . . . out loud.** It is important for you to hear your voice saying your speech out loud. It is a different speech than the one you give in your head. Practicing out loud allows your voice to find its normal pattern, range, and rhythm, and magically, the nervousness disappears from your words. No matter how slow you are going inside your head, slow down. Out loud, it is much faster. Practicing out loud allows you to get it right.

**Step 4: Type up your first two or three sentences.** The most difficult part of any speech is the first two or three sentences. Type them up in a very large font, so they are easy to see. Practice them until you don’t need them in print, but take them with you, so your brain knows you have a fallback to help you get started. Your voice will be calm at the end of your opening sentences. Then you simply talk about your bullets and impress your audience with how much you know.

**Step 5: Breathe, smile, and begin.** Control your thinking. Know your speech is going to be successful. You know your content. You have practiced. You have your opening sentences and bullets in front of you. You have practiced speaking out loud, and your voice is under control. Take a breath, smile, and begin. Share the thoughts you have put together for your audience. Use your quote to drive your message home. End with one more smile and a thank you, and take a deep breath—you are done!

## Tips from the Pros

### A Successful Presentation Is an “Inside Job” by Georgianna Frenzelas

So you are walking up to the podium to begin a twenty-minute presentation that took you every waking hour to prepare and practice. You have completed your research, confirmed your content with your key stakeholders, and perfected your slides accordingly. As you stand in front of your audience, you feel your confidence level slowly diminishing as your heart beats harder and your mind chatter gets so loud that you can hardly hear yourself think. As you lose mental control, your thoughts begin to get involved in various distractions of the group dynamics, body language, and overall energy level.



The clock is ticking for you to begin as your attention is focused on wondering, “Why isn’t everyone at the edge of his or her seat, waiting to hear from me? I can’t believe people are still getting coffee and talking—don’t they see me up here? Do you believe someone is still on his or her cell phone? I see her whispering to him . . . what are they saying about me?”

*Stop!* Getting caught up in this mental trap can inhibit you from giving the best presentation of your life. Staying present as you present is your freedom that bypasses this unproductive mental chattering.

What presentation skills can you use to control what your audience is thinking about you? The depressing answer is . . . none. A hard and fundamental realization is that no one has any control of how people think about him or her. The encouraging news is that you do have control over how you think about you. This is what Ron Willingham addresses in his book called *Integrity Selling for the Twenty-First Century*. He refers to success being an “inside job.” Although Willingham writes about the sales profession, this concept can also be translated into the art of presenting. Your internal beliefs are what drive your success. In other words, the more you are able to control your thoughts, the more you will reap the benefits of success on the outside with your inside job.

The ways you view and talk to yourself are key components of a successful presentation. Your energy must be on your own positive thoughts about you, no matter how you interpret the group’s behaviors or what you think group members are thinking about.

Placing your energy on what others are thinking weakens your full potential to give the best presentation possible. Here are five “inside” steps that can help expand your confidence and success:

- I** Internalize your success to feel the power that lives behind your confidence.
- N** Notice your thoughts, and pay attention to how good or bad they make you feel.
- S** Say to yourself positive affirmations to support your self-image.
- I** Instill the positive mental approach in both your presentation and your daily activities.
- D** Develop a belief in yourself that broadcasts success and credibility to your audience.
- E** Experience the freedom that accompanies your self-acceptance as a master of your topic.

Give yourself the green light, and embody the power of these INSIDE steps. Your inside job is to think about what you are thinking about *you*. Doing so, you will reap benefits beyond what you ever imagined.



## Tips from the Pros

### Letting Go of Performance Anxiety: Refocusing on the Needs of the Client by Dr. Ira Orchin

I used to suffer from painful performance anxiety that persisted despite my regular schedule of workshop presentations. As a psychologist and consultant, I train peers, corporations, and law enforcement professionals. I worried about making mistakes, forgetting my lines, and disappointing the client and my boss.

The problem was twofold: (1) I was focusing on my performance when I should have been focused on the needs of the client; and (2) there was so much “noise” in my head that I wasn’t able to effectively listen to the client and optimally calibrate my presentation to the client’s needs.

The solutions:

- **Be the conduit, not the performer.** I remind myself from the outset of the project who I am serving and dedicate myself to them. I reinforce this pledge just prior to the presentation by asking for guidance in hearing the deepest needs of the group and assessing the group’s resources in addressing these needs. This ritual helps to shift me from the self-consciousness of doing/performing to opening and attuning myself to the group. It keeps me in the here and now, rather than worrying about what will happen in the future.
- **Take the pressure off myself.** Henry Ford reminds us that “failure is only an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”
- **Refocus/mindfulness.** I practice mindfulness meditation for five to fifteen minutes per day so that I can reduce the physical manifestations of anxiety and refocus my mind from anxious feelings and thoughts to the task at hand. It’s too late to begin your practice in the heat of the battle. Anyone can learn to quiet his or her mind with repeated practice. Take a class if you need guidance.
- **Resource past successes.** I remind myself of times in the past I’ve been successful in overcoming my anxiety and remind myself of my best practices in having done so.
- **Lighten up.** I used to be overly intense and grim. I now remind myself to smile and have fun. New research from neuropsychology tells us that “mirror neurons” are responsible for spreading our feelings. When we are relaxed, we evoke relaxation in others, and when we are tense, we elicit tension in others. Our moods are literally contagious. Lighten up when it’s appropriate, and the group will be more playful, creative, and energetic.



## QUIZ

1. Before beginning your presentation, what should you avoid drinking?
  - (a) Carbonated beverages
  - (b) Milk
  - (c) Alcohol
  - (d) All of the above
2. Before a presentation, what should you focus on?
  - (a) What can go wrong, so you can fix it
  - (b) Bad speaking experiences from the past
  - (c) Memorizing your material
  - (d) A positive outcome
3. Which condition is *not* a sign of stage fright?
  - (a) Deep breathing
  - (b) Cold hands
  - (c) Dry throat
  - (d) Blushing
4. What is the most effective way to practice your presentation?
  - (a) Go over it in your head.
  - (b) Practice from the beginning to the end.
  - (c) Use a video camera to record your practice sessions.
  - (d) Speak while looking into the bathroom mirror.
5. What is an outcome of memorizing your presentation?
  - (a) It makes the talk sound natural.
  - (b) It is a good way to learn everything you need to say.
  - (c) It makes it easy to lose your place in the material.
  - (d) It helps you get your points across.

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## CHAPTER 11



# Are You Listening?

“So can you help me?” Alex didn’t know how to respond as he stood there staring at his client with a puzzled look on his face. As Maureen, his client, rambled about the new system and its installation, Alex had been daydreaming about how he’d spend the commission check for last month’s sale. He totally missed Maureen’s comment about the minor malfunction that slowed down the new system. When he asked her to repeat the question, she became annoyed, and for the first time, Maureen began to doubt her choice of vendors.

Embarrassing situations like this have a high cost to salespeople, students, project managers, and spouses! Even though conversations aren’t usually considered to be presentations, both involve exchanging information, and both require good listening skills to be successful. To be a good communicator, you must be a good listener. Check out this thought-provoking self-assessment:

### Listening Self-Assessment

1. Do you frequently daydream during meetings or presentations?
2. If someone you respect makes a statement that you don’t understand, do you hesitate to ask for clarification?



3. Do you sometimes finish the statements of people who speak more slowly than you do?
4. Do you often speak more than half of the time in a discussion between you and one other person?
5. Do you frequently feel that listening to a colleague talk about topics unrelated to work or school is a waste of your time?
6. If you are attending a meeting and do not understand something that is being discussed, do you hesitate to ask questions?
7. Are you nervous or reluctant to speak in the presence of authority figures?
8. Do you get so distracted by your thoughts of bad news, like the economy, sinking profits, or your child's illness, that you don't concentrate during conversations?
9. Have people ever made comments to you that sound like these: "Why are you always so angry?" "Did you hear me?" "That is not even close to what I meant"?
10. Do you sometimes feel that listening is just too much trouble?

If you answered yes to four or more of these questions, you may have some challenges with your listening skills. You are not alone. Many of us have taken classes in reading, writing, and public speaking, but few people have had any training in listening.

Listening skills are hard to evaluate for yourself. To get a reality check, ask a few colleagues or friends to assess your listening abilities based on the questions in this self-assessment. Or to get truly impartial feedback, engage a trusted friend to conduct this survey *about you* for you. The people we interact with most often are the best judges of our ability to listen.

## Listening Distractions

Most of us experience keen competition for our attention. These are some of the most demanding distractions.

### OUR MONKEY MINDS

Imagine a room full of playful monkeys. That's how some people describe the constant thoughts that sound like chatter in their minds. Those random thoughts are



what keep us thinking of the past or the future—with our minds anywhere but focused on the present.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE**

Temperature, lighting, time of day, and actual sounds are all distractions. Anything in the environment that competes for our attention can be considered background noise.

## **LACK OF INTEREST**

When you simply don't care about something, it's hard to stay focused. You obviously won't be interested in everything you hear, but the inability to concentrate on what is important, whether you are interested or not, is a major barrier to listening.

## **POLITICAL FACTORS**

Politics can get in the way of any relationship. Whether there are real political differences, stereotypes, or just memories of past events, the way we feel about the person who is speaking can interfere with hearing just as much as a rock concert can!

## **PREPARING YOUR ANSWER**

Sometimes the urge to judge what's being said is so strong that we jump to conclusions long before the person has finished talking. When we know exactly how we want to respond, we just wait until the speaker takes a breath so we can jump in with our own ideas. We assume we know where the other person is going with the conversation.

## **"IT'S ALL ABOUT ME"**

Good listening requires that you focus on the other person, including the person's feelings, opinions, and needs. Some poor listeners hear only enough to know what part is all about me, me, me.



### **Bonus Point**

When someone in your audience is speaking, maintain a friendly, open demeanor, even if the person's message is negative. If an audience member becomes offensive or abusive, you are not obligated to answer or further acknowledge that person.

## **Listening Strategies**

Listening is far more difficult than simply hearing. These strategies will help you to attend to the appropriate message.

### **FOCUS ALL YOUR ATTENTION**

Quiet your inner chatter while you listen. Don't let your mind wander to all the things you think you should be doing. The distractions of a normal day—hunger, exhaustion, noise, or even the chime of your BlackBerry—can get in the way of paying attention. Discipline yourself to give your full attention when you listen.

### **Speaking of . . . Active Listening**

As the name implies, active listening is a communication tool that requires the listener to actively participate in an interaction. When a listener focuses full attention on a speaker (and vice versa), real understanding begins to grow, relationships improve, and people feel valued. Make a commitment to understanding, and get involved in the listening process.

### **USE SILENCE**

Have you heard the expression "I couldn't get a word in edgewise"? The person it refers to is talking too much—monopolizing the conversation so much that no one else can contribute. If either person in a conversation talks an inordinate amount of time, it shuts down the exchange of information. To determine if you talk too much, divide 100 by the number of people in a conversation. You'll arrive at the percentage of time each of you should be speaking. For instance, if four people are engaged in



conversation, everyone “should” speak about 25 percent of the time. Obviously, there are exceptions to this rule, but it’s a good guideline to follow. Do your part by monitoring the amount of time you are monopolizing.

## **MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT**

Looking at the speaker can help you focus on the task at hand. Read the speaker’s body language to help you understand the true meaning of what he or she is saying.

## **IGNORE ANNOYING HABITS**

Focus on the content of the message, not the delivery style. As hard as it is to do, you must ignore the numbers of “ums,” “you knows,” and “likes” that spill out of the speaker’s mouth. Ignore sniffles, twitches, and even the spot on the tie while you’re in conversation or watching a speaker.

## **LOOK LIKE YOU’RE LISTENING**

When you assume the body posture of a good listener, you are able to listen better. You can sit up, nod to indicate understanding, smile if it’s appropriate for the conversation, or just match the posture of the speaker. Each of these techniques can help you stay attentive.

## **DELAY JUDGMENT**

Rather than assessing what you are hearing too quickly, listen openly until you’ve heard the speaker out. If you feel judgmental about a message, don’t stop listening. Try to repeat to yourself the words you are hearing. If questions occur to you while you’re listening, ask for clarification when the speaker finishes talking.

## **PARAPHRASE**

You can check for understanding by paraphrasing your interpretation of what you’ve heard. Check for understanding by repeating what you think you heard but in your own words. Then ask if you’ve gotten the right message. You can say something like this: “Just to make sure I understand, what I hear you saying is . . . Is that right?” This lets the speaker confirm or correct your perception.



## GET MORE INFORMATION

When in doubt, ask open-ended questions. For example, you could follow up by asking, “Can you give me an example?” “What led you to that conclusion?” or “How did that make you feel?” Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a yes or no.

## DON'T PLAY “ONE UP”

When someone tells a story that is similar to one of yours, resist cutting her off to top her story with yours.

### Bonus Point

Hearing you say the words *no* and *but* can be trigger words that can anger or stop audience members from listening to you. When appropriate, replace those words with *and* to defuse emotions.

## Listening Facts

Contrary to popular opinion, listening is not automatic. We must work on listening to improve our effectiveness. Some of these facts may surprise you.

- **Hearing is a physiological process that each of us experiences to different degrees.** Listening, by contrast, is *not* an automatic physiological process. Listening is a choice that we make.
- **Adults spend about 25 percent of their communication time listening.** This figure used to be much higher until e-mail and other virtual communication tools became so pervasive. With so much competition for our attention, listening is more critical than ever. Since listening is a choice, it's hard to measure how the time is divided between listening and just hearing.



## Bonus Point

When listening, make sure to pay attention to nonverbal cues as well as the words being said.

- **Adults remember a small portion of what they hear.** How much information we remember is affected by several conditions:
  1. **When we heard it.** The smaller the time lapse since we have heard something, the better the chance we'll remember it.
  2. **Its position in a list of items.** We are better at remembering what we hear first and last on the list.
  3. **The importance we attach to the information.** If something really matters to us, we work harder to remember what we've heard.
- **American speakers usually speak at over 200 words per minute.** This ratio varies by region, age, the complexity of information, enthusiasm, and so on.
- **Listeners can process information at about 450 to 500 words per minute.** Even though we have about 200 words per minute coming at us in an average conversation, listeners have the incredible capacity to process words at twice that speed.
- **The connotative meaning of a word is its popular meaning.** Slang and acronyms develop meanings other than the dictionary definition. If you know a word has several meanings, it's important to clarify what you mean to avoid any possibility of confusion.
- **Trigger words may be so intense that they can block listening.** Trigger words evoke a strong reaction in listeners. The words that cause us to react vary from individual to individual, and the reactions can cause our train of thought to derail. Some common trigger words are *layoff*, *suicide*, *free*, and *spam*. Triggers can be positive or negative. Be aware of your purpose, and use triggers intentionally to affect the tone of your conversation.

You met Alex at the beginning of this chapter. Practice some of the suggestions in this chapter, so you don't find yourself embarrassed as Alex did. Listening is a skill that pays off at work, at school, and in all of your relationships.



## Tips from the Pros

### Working the Room by Tom Farmer

One fact that I learned early in my facilitating career was the importance of what is commonly known as working the room. Participant engagement is vital to the success of any presentation, and your ability to work the room will be the true vehicle to success in accomplishing your engagement strategy. Here are some considerations I always bring to my mind prior to starting my presentation:

- **Understand your audience.** I practice active-listening skills while the class does introductions. Many times participants reveal information that will reflect on their level of understanding of my subject matter. I will also use a polling question at the beginning of the session to check for a level of understanding. This allows me to tailor my presentation to the needs of the majority of the room. Lastly, I also spend time observing the behavior of the participants prior to the beginning of the session as well as on breaks. I seek insight into who comes across as confident, humorous, compassionate, or even disengaged. In response, I compliment confidence, stroke displays of compassion, ask a question of the disengaged, and work for laughs.
- **Tell compelling stories.** There is no better way to bring theory to reality than through a compelling story. Have a moral that ties directly to the content of your presentation. For emphasis, engage all the presentation skills you know, such as voice inflection, facial and hand gestures, and appropriate wording. Remember, you are not just telling a story but painting a visual for the audience.
- **Incorporate appropriate humor.** Getting people to laugh will lighten the mood in the room. Keep in mind that humor means different things to different people, but there is one thing I have found that generates a laugh from almost everyone. This happens when you tell people something funny about yourself while laughing at yourself. For emphasis, add in some of the visual presentation skills such as effective eye contact, voice inflection, and gestures to seal the deal on the laugh.
- **Make it about them.** Set the tone with stories and humor, and then get the participants to tell their own story. When you've paved the way, they will be inclined to share their own stories that will be even more meaningful to the audience than your anecdote. While they are speaking, physically move into their space. Vocally show your appreciation for their sharing of the story to inspire others to share.

The bottom line is that if you engage all of the fundamental skills of effective presentation delivery, working the room will become second nature to you.



## QUIZ

1. Which of the following responses interferes with listening?
  - (a) Making eye contact
  - (b) Paraphrasing
  - (c) Having a limited interest in the subject
  - (d) Asking for more information
2. Approximately what is the average rate of speech in the United States?
  - (a) 60 words per minute
  - (b) 100 words per minute
  - (c) 200 words per minute
  - (d) 300 words per minute
3. About how fast can listeners process speech?
  - (a) 60 words per minute
  - (b) 200 words per minute
  - (c) 350 words per minute
  - (d) 450 words per minute
4. What is a term for the constant chatter of random thoughts that interferes with listening?
  - (a) Cacophony of sounds
  - (b) Jumping-bean thoughts
  - (c) Monkey mind
  - (d) Treadmill thinking
5. Which technique will *not* help you to listen better?
  - (a) Use silence.
  - (b) Focus on your own needs.
  - (c) Paraphrase what you hear.
  - (d) Make eye contact.

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## CHAPTER 12



# Keep the Audience Interested by Using Your Voice

When Deborah thought back on the training session she had attended the day before, she couldn't remember very much of what she had heard. She knew that filling out the new forms was important, but the trainer was so monotonous and boring that she couldn't recall many details without looking at her notes. Even the trainer had seemed bored as he spoke!

The average attention span of an adult is not much longer than that of a child. It's a fact that we humans mentally tune in and out while we're listening. In seconds, we can move our attention from what the speaker is saying to what else we could be doing, what we would like to have for lunch, and how we might avoid rush-hour traffic, before we return to the message we're hearing. Consequently when you



peak, you not only have to *get* the attention of the audience, you have to keep *regaining* it.

This chapter shows you ways you can use your voice to maintain an audience's interest.

## Using Your Voice

Actress Fran Drescher grew up in Queens, New York, and rather than changing her accent, she exaggerated it to become her personal “brand.” Each sound is drawn out in a nasal whine that delights many listeners and sends others rushing for the remote. Most speakers would *not* choose this speaking style, but it works for her. The rest of us can analyze our vocal style to capitalize on its best qualities. Your voice is unique, just like your fingerprints. And the voice is a tool each speaker can use to connect with the audience. Your speaking voice should sound natural yet controlled and professional.

### Speaking of . . . the Sound of Your Voice

Most of us have heard our voices before, but try this technique to really listen to the way you sound. Record yourself reading a newspaper, talking on the phone, or giving a presentation. You'll need only a five-minute audio recording to get a good idea of how your voice sounds in conversation. Listen to your pitch, range, volume, and rate. Does the sound of your voice send the message you want to send about yourself? If you were hearing yourself for the first time, what would you think of the speaker?

Listen to the way you pronounce and enunciate words. Ask someone you trust if you are accurate in your assessment. Do you speak clearly and understandably? If you discover specific problem areas, practice reading aloud to improve the problem. If working alone doesn't help, call a local university to find a voice and articulation coach. Most problems can be corrected. You won't regret the investment.

Consider the following vocal qualities when you determine ways to keep the audience tuned in.



## PITCH

The pitch of your voice is its high or low musical quality. Is your voice more like a tuba (a bass) or a flute (a soprano)? Most of us can use our natural pitch for best results. However, if your voice is particularly high-pitched and you're frequently mistaken for your child when you answer the phone, you may want to consider working with a speech coach to adjust the pitch. Women with childlike voices have a problem being taken seriously in business settings and can be passed over for promotions at work.

## RANGE

The group of notes from low to high that your voice reaches comfortably and naturally is your range. The more notes you're comfortable using, the more variety in your speaking voice. Use a wide range to avoid a monotone. The wider your vocal range, the more options you have to use your voice to get and keep attention.

### Bonus Point

To determine how you sound to someone else, replay a few voice messages you've left for colleagues and family members. You might surprise yourself.

## VOLUME

Volume is the loudness and force you use to project your voice. A booming voice can make the people in the audience sit back in their seats. Too much volume can be intimidating and offensive. A more common problem occurs when a speaker uses too little volume. If you make the audience work to hear what you have to say, they won't listen long. They may judge you as lacking confidence or competence.

Make sure to project from the diaphragm. The diaphragm is a muscle just below the rib cage. Singers and musicians who play brass or wind instruments must breathe from the diaphragm to sustain the quality of notes they play. Practice this type of breathing regularly. Exhale breaths that are longer and deeper than normal. (Try the 4-7-8 breathing technique, described in Chapter 10, "Dealing with Anxiety.") Feel as if you're squeezing a toothpaste tube from the bottom rather than the middle.

Keep this in mind: A loud voice *often* gets the attention of your audience. A long pause followed by quietly spoken words *always* gets attention. Silence is your most



powerful tool. If you find audience members are visibly bored or begin to chat with each other while you're onstage, try ten seconds of silence. This normally gets everyone's attention. Change your position onstage, lower your voice, and use direct eye contact with the audience. Insert some humor, and involve the audience by asking them to do something or answer questions. This should get them back. (For more techniques, see Chapter 13, "Nonverbal Communication.")

### Bonus Point

If you're describing a process, use words to help the listener follow the sequence. Words like *first*, *second*, *next*, *followed by*, *then*, and *finally* are good transition words.

### RATE

The pace, quickness, and tempo of your speech pattern determine the rate. Vary your rate of speech during a presentation to keep attention. Don't race to the end, and don't plod along. We tend to speak more quickly when we're excited or passionate about a subject. Although showing excitement is important, speaking so quickly you leave your listeners behind is not a good choice. Adjusting your rate is particularly important when speaking with an intercultural audience.

Most listeners prefer to hear a moderately fast, resonant voice. Resonance involves prolonged vibration and makes your voice sound richer and more pleasant to listen to. Have you heard James Earl Jones in movies or commercials? He has the best-known resonant voice in the United States. You may not sound like James Earl Jones, but you can speak reasonably quickly and loudly. If you find you have persistent problems with any of these qualities, ask a teacher or speech coach for a little individual attention, and search the Internet for suggestions. There are simple exercises that can improve almost any problem.



### Bonus Point

When you're telling a story, choose words that help the listener visualize the scene or situation you're describing. Most people think in pictures.

## Using Language

The words you choose to say in your presentation are essential to your success. The way you say your words will also affect how you are received by the audience. Consider the following factors when using language.

### ENUNCIATION

The way you make the distinct sounds within a word is important for your audience to understand your message. Sound out words crisply. Don't slur together sounds like "gonna" in place of "going to." Teachers tell students who mumble to enunciate more clearly.

### DIALECT

Have you noticed how people from other locations pronounce words differently from you? We all have a dialect—a pattern of pronunciation and phrases common to a group of people or a region. Stacy Shafer discovered how deeply her dialect was ingrained in her personality when she spoke for the Chicago Association of Association Executives. She was curious when one of the audience members rushed forward and asked where she had grown up. Stacy paused and said, "Before I answer, why do you ask?" "Because when you said that we 'might could' find answers by calling the supplier, I thought you sounded like you were from my home in Mississippi." Stacy had worked hard to make her accent sound as neutral as possible, and she had done a good job of sounding like a broadcaster, but that little phrase "might could" gave her away. Stacy's answer showed her regional dialect, which the audience member picked up immediately.

Listen carefully to the dialects you hear when you are speaking away from your home location. Some things may be hard to understand. Don't hesitate to ask some-



one you trust to interpret for you. Also, be aware that some things you say may be misunderstood when you speak in your natural style. Listen and ask questions. When in doubt, look it up. Even if your family members say a word one way, they aren't necessarily right!

## PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation is the way a word sounds when it's spoken. The sounds of each syllable add up to the way a word is pronounced. Listeners make assumptions about a speaker's intelligence, professionalism, and potential based on his or her pronunciation.

### Speaking of . . . Commonly Mispronounced Words

"Expresso" coffee instead of espresso

"Excape" instead of escape

"Liberry" instead of library

"Wadn't" instead of wasn't

"Acrost" instead of across

"Dint" instead of didn't

"Feb-you-airy" instead of February

"Off-ten" instead of often

## DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

*Denotation* is the dictionary meaning of a word. *Connotation* is the meaning gained through pop culture and society's accepted definition of a word.

- Before the 1960s, *cool* meant a chilly temperature, aloof, or calm. Today, *cool* means those things as well as something good or interesting.
- In the 1970s, the phrase *jumped the shark* came from a ridiculous TV episode of "Happy Days" in which Fonzie jumped over a shark pool on his motorcycle. This was the point when critics began to say the show had



been on the air too long. Now, when something has “jumped the shark,” its quality has started to decline sharply. The expression has nothing to do with sharks.

- In the 1980s, “threads” meant clothes, and a “Bill Cosby sweater” was an attractive, multicolored sweater.
- In the 1990s, something good was called “bad.”
- After the 2000 presidential election, the term “red state” or “blue state” came to mean states that voted for either the Republican or the Democratic candidate.
- In the 2010s, well, we’ll have to see what catches on and lasts for years to come.

There are strong cultural differences in the connotations of words. Be cautious if you are speaking with an audience you don’t know. If you are uncomfortable with the meaning of any words or phrases, check with a trusted friend who knows the culture of the audience.

### Bonus Points

Never use off-color material. No excuses. If you’re a professional comedian and are expected to be off-color, you don’t need to read this book.

## SIMILE AND METAPHOR

The techniques of simile and metaphor compare one thing to another. They make your language more colorful and visual and can be a very effective tool to add interest to an otherwise dull topic.

A speaker uses *simile* by saying one thing is “like” another. Simile involves the words *like* and *as*:

- Someone who swims well is said to swim like a fish.
- When something happens suddenly, it’s like a bolt of lightning.
- Someone who isn’t affected by adversity is tough as nails.
- Something hard to find is like a needle in a haystack.



A *metaphor* makes a comparison directly, calling one thing something else:

- “The idea died on the vine” means it wasn’t discussed any further.
- An important topic can be “red hot.”
- “You’re driving me crazy,” said the young mom to her two-year-old child.
- If someone fooled you, you were “outfoxed.”

Although metaphors and similes add interest to your message, they don’t always translate well to other cultures. Sports terms commonly used in business can present big challenges, since people in different countries play different sports and use unique terms to refer to each sport.

## VISUAL WORDS

Use words that create a visual picture in the audience’s mind. For example, to describe a thunderstorm, you could say, “The sky was dark, and it was raining hard.” You might better say, “The clouds rolled in as the sky turned from blue to gray and from gray to charcoal. Rain poured as if someone had opened a faucet.”

When the audience can visualize your words, it can embody them.

## SIMPLE WORDS

Make the complex as simple as possible. If you must share detailed information, state the facts as simply as possible, and follow your description with a slide, an Internet link to background information, or a handout listing all appropriate information.

## REPETITION

Repeat key words, and rephrase important points intermittently to help the audience remember your message. Try phrasing statistics in several ways to make them understandable and memorable:

Of the million people who cast their vote for the Markley proposal, 763,988 voted yes. Since over three-quarters of the voters approved, the project was easily approved.



## STREAMLINE

Don't overload your presentation with too much material. Divide a long, information-loaded presentation into shorter, more comprehensible segments. Audiences can't retain huge amounts of information in one sitting. Supplement verbal information with slides, Internet links, and written handouts to aid retention.

## EAR-FRIENDLY LANGUAGE

Choose and structure words that sound natural. In most situations, you should sound conversational but not casual. Sentence structure that is acceptable in print may be ineffective when spoken aloud. For example, a newspaper article may read, "‘The council members are frustrated with the new voting procedure,’ the mayor said." This is obviously unacceptable in a speech. Instead, you could say, "The mayor announced that the council members are frustrated with the new voting process."

## In Addition . . .

Your voice is only one of the nonverbal tools you can use to keep your audience involved with your presentation. At the beginning of this chapter, you met Deborah, who couldn't recall any of the information she needed to fill out her forms. If the presenter had combined the vocal skills you've learned from this chapter and the nonverbal techniques you're about to learn in the next chapter, Deborah would have finished her forms in no time at all. Your audience will stay tuned into your presentation when you deliver your message with great vocal and nonverbal style.

### Tips from the Pros

#### Take Care of Your Voice by Rosemary Ostrowski, M.M., M.S. CCC-SLP

As a voice specialist, licensed speech pathologist, and professional singer, I work with training and retraining the speaking and singing voice.

Everyone needs a voice to communicate, but if you rely on your voice for your livelihood, then you are a professional voice user. Here are some tips for maintaining a healthy,

*(continued)*



dynamic voice. Taking care of your voice (and your body) now will aid in preventing voice disorders in the future. Prevention is the key!

### Enemies of the Voice

Following these simple steps may prevent hoarseness, strain, and vocal fatigue, and a visit to your doctor:

- **Dehydration.** Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages (coffee, tea, soda, alcohol), and increase water intake. Drink at least two cups of water two hours prior to presenting. Be sure to have water during the speech.
- **Noise.** Be aware of background noise, and avoid speaking over it.
- **Smoke.** Don't do it, and avoid smoky environments.
- **Diet.** Avoid spicy meals and large meals. Drink one or two glasses of water before eating to aid in digestion.
- **Sickness.** Don't force the voice to work if you are hoarse. Speak softly until the hoarseness subsides.
- **Overuse.** Try being quiet sometimes. Practice being a good listener.
- **Sleep.** Get plenty of it. Too little can cause voice fatigue and potentially weaken the immune system.
- **Medications.** Antihistamines and decongestants can cause severe dryness. Be sure to drink plenty of water with these medications.

### Your Vocal Signature

Now that your voice is healthy, here are some more tips for the final product:

- **Posture.** Be aware of it! Stand tall, balancing equally on the feet. Try not to lock your knees. Allow the arms to hang free at your sides. Avoid arching the back or any other movement that may cause muscular "holding" or tension. Your ribs should be free to expand and contract with the breath. As you practice, be aware of any muscular tension in the body, and try to let it go.
- **Breath.** Don't over-breathe! This is the biggest mistake of most voice users. You have plenty of residual air in your lungs. Focus on a low breath, allowing for the expansion of the rib cage and the natural descent of the diaphragm (which causes the belly to protrude slightly). Breathing high in the chest will cause anxiety and raise the larynx, causing your throat to tighten.



- **Pitch.** Vary the pitch of your voice; it not only captivates your audience, but also is the healthy way to speak. When you inflect, your larynx is in constant motion, which hinders muscular effort or “locking.” Speaking monotone will cause fatigue over time.
- **Articulation.** Pronounce words correctly. The energy produced by the consonants will help with the rate of your speech and slow you down. Most people speak too quickly. Your tongue is the primary articulator for consonants and vowels. Keep your back teeth separated and loose.

## QUIZ

1. What term refers to the popular meaning of a word?
  - (a) Dialect
  - (b) Connotation
  - (c) Enunciation
  - (d) Denotation
2. What term refers to the speed at which we speak?
  - (a) Connotation
  - (b) Rate
  - (c) Denotation
  - (d) Dialect
3. What term refers to the dictionary meaning of a word?
  - (a) Denotation
  - (b) Metaphor
  - (c) Simile
  - (d) Connotation



4. What term refers to the way you say the sounds within each word?
  - (a) Pronunciation
  - (b) Enunciation
  - (c) Denotation
  - (d) Connotation
5. Saying a speaker has a bass voice refers to the speaker's:
  - (a) Volume
  - (b) Pitch
  - (c) Range
  - (d) Clarity

## CHAPTER 13



# Nonverbal Communication

Richard Van Alstyne stood on the big stage as he rehearsed his portion of the program for the national sales conference. His data showed just what the company needed to position itself as the leader of pharmaceutical sales. As Richard practiced, he moved his feet in a six-step pattern. He repeated those six steps over and over for twenty minutes. Richard wasn't a dynamic speaker, but he was good enough—except for his annoying dance! When we gave him feedback about his feet, he brushed it aside, saying he certainly wouldn't do that during the talk. After all, this was just a rehearsal. As we made repeated suggestions for him to practice standing still, he refused. Since Richard is an executive, we could push him only so far.

When Richard took the stage in front of six hundred employees, what do you think happened? Yep! He danced for twenty minutes, damaging his reputation as an executive leader and weakening the message.



Verbal communication includes the words we say. Nonverbal communication involves *how* we communicate what we have to say. Nonverbal communication takes place constantly. Each sigh, yawn, smile, and raise of the eyebrow says something. A frequently used phrase is “We cannot *not* communicate nonverbally.”

### Bonus Point

Sound enthusiastic. If you’re not engaged in your topic, don’t expect the audience to be engaged.

## Elements of Nonverbal Communication

Each of your nonverbal messages strongly influence what your audience hears you say. The following are all factors of nonverbal communication.

### PROXEMICS

The study of how we use space is called proxemics. How close or far we stand from someone tells that person something about us. We can make the person comfortable or uncomfortable by adjusting our distance and space. The larger the distance, the more formal we are perceived to be. The way we use space to organize our office, conference room, or home also sets a tone.

In his classic 1969 book, *The Hidden Dimension*, Edward Hall defined four distances that Americans observe without consciously being aware:

Intimate	Touch to 18 inches
Personal	18 inches to 4 feet
Social	4 feet to 12 feet
Public	12 feet or more

Think about how your comfort level varies according to who enters each of these zones. When a stranger comes into the personal or intimate zone, the most common response is to back away and finally leave the situation without ever letting the violator know what happened. If you find that people move away from you, perhaps you’re violating their space.



This tendency was demonstrated on the sitcom “Seinfeld” in an episode featuring the “close talker.” In this episode, Elaine’s boyfriend stands just inches from the other person when he speaks, causing all the other cast members to slowly move away until each has been backed against a wall.

You can use this technique to your advantage if you’re speaking before a small or medium-sized group. If two or more members of your audience are having a private conversation rather than listening while you’re speaking, keep talking while walking toward them. Don’t look at them—simply approach and stand near them while you continue with what you were saying. Their conversation normally stops when you come into their space. With this simple movement, you do not embarrass them or break the pace of your presentation.

When people meet in a business setting, they usually shake hands. Observe two people when they approach each other to shake hands. Both people extend their right hand, lean forward, shake, and then rock back so they are standing straight while having their conversation. They’re now about four feet apart—right where personal and social distances meet. That’s our comfort zone at work! Classroom and conference room presentations usually take place in the social distance. Normally, any situation that involves speaking before a group of more than twenty-five or addressing a group of any size from a stage takes place in the public distance.

## PARALANGUAGE

The tone (pitch or quality), volume (loudness), and rate (speed) we use to speak all contribute to communication. Many vocal factors affect how we communicate. (For more information, see Chapter 12, “Keep the Audience Interested by Using Your Voice.”)

### Bonus Point

Practice your nonverbal mannerisms as well as your words. Much of your credibility depends on how you sound and how you look.

## POSTURE

The difference between standing straight and slumping can change an audience’s perception of you. Try this: Stand naturally in front of a mirror. Once you’ve seen



how you look, roll your shoulders back by one inch. Don't stand at attention; just move your shoulders slightly. Move back to your usual standing posture, and then straighten up and move your shoulders slightly back again. Most people say they feel and look more confident by moving just that one little inch. Stand in the "ready position," distribute your weight evenly on both feet, and hold your arms comfortably at your sides. You can send that strong message of confidence to any audience by standing tall. When you sit to present, you can send the same message by rolling your shoulders back and sitting tall.

Remember that you are "onstage" at all times, and your audience judges you *before* you even speak.

### Bonus Points

Never put your hands in both pants pockets when standing before an audience.

## DRESS

The clothes and accessories we wear are another form of communicating. Your jeans can mean self-expression, conformity, or nonconformity, or they might simply be a choice for comfort. Imagine yourself walking down a dimly lighted street late on a dark night. From behind, you hear footsteps approaching. As the steps get closer, you turn to look at the stranger. He is twenty years old, wearing a stocking cap and a dark jacket and pants. His face is partially covered with a scarf. How will you react? If you see someone wearing a sport coat and tie and carrying a wrapped gift, will you feel differently? Most people say they feel more comfortable with the second man, even though all we know about these two characters is what they are wearing.

In general, the better an individual is dressed, the more positively we judge that person. That is true up to a point. Someone very overdressed for an occasion also can arouse suspicion. A general rule of thumb is to dress just a little better than your audience in order to be perceived in the best light. Here's another tip: if you want the best service at a restaurant or expensive store, dress well. It works!



### Bonus Point

Dress to match the situation. If you are too formal, you can be perceived as intimidating. If you dress too casually, you can lose credibility.

## FACIAL EXPRESSION

People who rate high in “emotional intelligence” are good at interpreting the meaning of facial expressions. True emotions are found in small expressions. We can easily identify the differences between a smile, a scowl, a wink, and a blank stare. Just as easily, we attach meanings to those expressions. Sometimes we’re wrong in the interpretation. Expressions like a grimace, raised eyebrows, or a grin can add even more meaning. Make sure that your facial expressions correspond to your intended message. Sometimes a nervous speaker smiles without being aware of it. This can be misinterpreted when the topic is serious. Just as often, nerves keep some speakers from demonstrating any facial expression at all. An audience can’t get excited about a topic that doesn’t appear to excite the speaker.

Do you feel that people often misread your message? Do people sometimes look at you quizzically when you talk? If so, maybe you’re sending mixed messages with your expression. If you say, “The book was really good,” but you roll your eyes and speak with a sarcastic tone, the audience will believe the nonverbal behavior over the spoken words. You may not know you’re doing this. When you practice with a video camera, check for appropriate facial expressions during all parts of your presentation. Ask for feedback on your facial expressions from someone you trust.

### Speaking of . . . Congruency

Things that are congruent correspond or agree with each other. When we communicate, our verbal and nonverbal messages should match. When the two are out of sync, the observer will believe the nonverbal cues before the actual meaning of the words.

## EYE CONTACT

In the culture of the United States, direct eye contact indicates trustworthiness, friendliness, and confidence. Averted eyes usually indicate just the opposite. Ask



yourself this question: Would you prefer to have a conversation with someone who looks at you most of the time or someone who looks at her shoes, the ceiling, or someone else? Most people prefer to speak with someone looking at them. Avoiding eye contact makes most people uncomfortable and signals that something is not right. The audience prefers good eye contact, too. If you're particularly nervous about looking people in the eye while you're speaking and you have the opportunity to speak before a large audience of twenty-five or more, look people in the forehead. Find a spot just above the nose and at a distance of over ten feet; it looks as though you're looking the person in the eyes.

Averted eyes don't communicate confidence, but neither does continuous staring. When a speaker stares at the decision maker, she excludes the rest of the audience and probably makes the decision maker uncomfortable.

## GESTURES

Grab a seat in any coffee shop, and watch people talk with each other. What do you see? Chances are you can observe arms flailing in all directions, fingers pointing, and hands jumping from spot to spot. Humans gesture to add emphasis to our words. The meaning of hand movements varies considerably from culture to culture. In most places in the United States, a wave of the hand means hello or good-bye. In Hawaii, extending both the little finger and thumb says, "hang loose." Putting both hands up with palms facing forward generally means "back off" or "I'm not armed."

We usually aren't aware of what our hands do while we're talking. We just don't think about them. To see people who've just become aware that people are watching them gesture, watch students in a public-speaking course. They become so self-conscious about their hands that they can barely talk. You'll see these positions:

- **Praying to finish.** Hands are clenched near the body a few inches above the waist. This makes you look uncomfortable and scared.
- **Building the church.** This is the same as praying to finish with the addition of finger movements. Point and touch the tips of the index fingers to add the "steeple."
- **"I dare you."** Arms are crossed tightly over the chest. This makes you look hostile or removed from the audience.
- **Hands in pockets.** Both hands are jammed in pockets. This says to the audience, "I have something to hide" or "I don't want to be here."



- **Fig leaf.** Hands are joined together, covering the groin. In this position, you're saying, "I feel exposed."
- **Directing the plane on landing.** The speaker flails her arms. The excessive movement looks uncontrolled and is exhausting for the audience to watch.
- **Fidgeting.** The speaker seldom knows he is fidgeting or playing with a marker, wedding ring, paper clip, or something else. It definitely signals insecurity.
- **Face touches.** Continually touching the face or hair could mean embarrassment or insincerity.

With so many "bad" gestures, what should our hands do during a presentation? Here are some basic tips:

- Use your natural gestures, and control them.
- If you don't naturally gesture, start adding hand movements to your everyday conversations until it feels normal.
- Use a two-handed, open-palm movement to emphasize a big point.
- Use one-handed gestures to indicate direction or movement.
- Keep hand gestures in the area between your waist and your shoulders.
- Don't use the same gesture over and over in a pattern. Practice until a variety of movements feel natural to you.
- Use the length and strength of a gesture to mirror and emphasize your message.
- Match action gestures with action words.

## Bonus Points

Keep your hand gestures between your chin and your waist.

Once gesturing becomes second nature to you, you'll lose the self-consciousness, just as public-speaking students do. When you've watched yourself gesturing on video and made some improvements, you won't have to think about your hands anymore!



## Speaking of . . . Gestures

Unlike facial expressions, gestures are culturally bound. The peace sign or OK symbol might indicate something perverse in another culture. Waving, touching your nose, or patting someone on the shoulder can send the wrong message entirely. If your audience is predominately from a culture other than your own, make sure to learn about gestures before you speak!

## BODY MOVEMENT

Always use movement purposefully. An inexperienced speaker sometimes has so much adrenaline running through her body that she begins to “dance” behind the lectern. The speaker may not notice that she continually shifts her weight from her right foot to her left while speaking. The audience watching the dance notices, however, and may feel a little seasick. Find a balance between too little and too much movement. Standing stiff and totally motionless can be as detrimental to getting your message across as pacing uncontrollably. If you pace, the audience watches your pacing and ignores what you say.

Here are some hints to combat uncontrollable movements:

- **TV talk-show hosts have a mark on the floor where they stand for perfect lighting and camera angles.** Walk to a specific spot on the floor and stop moving before beginning to speak. Standing solidly in one position draws the full attention of the audience to your introduction.
- **Plant your feet solidly on the floor.** Men should stand in the “ready position” with feet shoulders width apart, knees straight but not locked. Women can assume the same stance or, if they prefer a slightly more feminine stance, try a modified ready position with feet about six inches apart, one foot facing forward and the other foot at about a thirty-degree angle.
- **Once you are planted at the front of the room, keep your feet in the same position for at least thirty seconds before choosing to move.** If you move to a new position, take at least two steps, and plant your feet again. Stay in that position for at least thirty seconds before moving again. The thirty-second minimum keeps a speaker from appearing to pace. A polished speaker will time his or her movements to indicate transitions from one point of the speech to the next. This adds emphasis and nonverbally signals the audience that a new point is coming.



All of these elements of nonverbal communication add up to your general appearance. For you to be a good speaker, the content of your presentation *must* be good. How you sound and look can help or hurt your credibility as a speaker.

### Bonus Point

Don't fidget! If you naturally rock or shift your weight, practice while standing on a newspaper. The paper will make noise every time you move.

## Determining Nonverbal Cues

We seldom really know how we look to other people. Has anyone ever asked you why you were mad or what was so funny? Maybe you hadn't said anything, but somehow the other person perceived that you were mad or silently laughing. That's nonverbal communication in action.

Record a video of yourself to test your own nonverbal messages. (See Chapter 10.)

## NONWORDS

In addition to listening to the words you speak, listen to the other sounds you make. Most inexperienced speakers should pay particular attention to nonwords like *um*, *ah*, and *and*. When someone uses *ums* and *ahs*, the sounds usually fall into patterns. Some people fill the pauses between sentences or words with an *uhhh*, often uttered in a long, drawn-out single tone. This almost sounds like singing and doesn't allow a break in the monologue. Other people use nonwords in a short staccato style in the beginning or middle of a sentence.

Look out for the favorite phrases *like* and *you know*. These are common fillers and may be acceptable in normal conversation among peers, but not in presentations.

Some of us get into the habit of frequently and unconsciously repeating one phrase or word like *actually*, *basically*, or *literally*. Listen for this pattern while you watch yourself in a video. If a speaker has this habit, the audience stops hearing the presentation and starts counting the repeated phrase.

To stop using nonwords, you need a video camera and a friend you trust. Watch your recording with your friend to hear your pattern. After you've looked at your video, go back and rework the wording, and concentrate on improving any nonver-



bal language that might be inappropriate. Ask your friend to give you a signal every time you fall back on using your pattern. Do this in private, of course. Once you're made aware while you're in the process of saying the sounds, you can break your habit.

### Speaking of . . . Curing *Ums*

When you rehearse alone and hear yourself saying "um" in a video, try these two techniques to break the habit: (1) Breathe in every time you normally say "um." You can't make the noise when you inhale. (2) Close your mouth when you would usually say "um." You can still make the noise, but just changing your mouth position will stop you from making the sound. You'll feel very silly doing these exercises, but they work!

Before it's showtime, make sure you do at least one more recorded performance, practicing your new and improved style. It's important for you to see that you look and sound better. It's almost a guarantee that you'll improve between the first and second recordings—if you make the effort.

How others perceive you is critical in your interaction. Perception may not be accurate, but to the perceiver, it is reality. Your first impression may color your relationship with this individual for months to come.

## Top Ten Negative Nonverbal Cues

### 1. INAPPROPRIATE EYE CONTACT

Looking directly at audience members helps them connect with you as a person. Most people in an audience have more trust and confidence in speakers who look directly at them. Turning to look at the slides behind you is fine to draw attention to something, but to really connect, you need to make eye contact. If you're intimidated by looking people in the eye and you're speaking in a large room, you can look at the foreheads of anyone more than twelve feet from you. (See Chapter 1.)

If you're speaking with an international audience, do a little research to determine how the audience is likely to react to eye contact.



## 2. NONWORDS

*Um, like, and you know* are huge credibility killers. Chances are that someone comes to mind immediately when you think of these nonwords. Don't let that person be you.

## 3. WEAK HANDSHAKE

Both men and women in the U.S. culture shake hands frequently. The limp handshake from either gender sends a negative message. For a culturally desirable firm handshake, the web between the thumb and forefinger should touch the web of the other person's hand, and the squeeze should be firm but not hard. Men in business settings should not give women the fingers-only grip. Even if the intent is to be polite, the message can be demeaning.

But before you take a hand, watch for anyone who has an obvious injury or an older person with swollen knuckles. If someone has hand pain, you do not want to make it worse. A gentle, polite handshake works well.

## 4. INAPPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Always consider the environment when you choose your clothes. If you are in a business environment, dress in a fashion that is acceptable within your industry—or the industry of your audience. If you are headed out on the town after your talk, add or remove layers. Don't be the one who tries to change your industry's culture without expecting some negative pushback.

Wear what fits you! If you're a size 10, don't wear your size 8s when you're presenting. Unless you are a supermodel, wearing anything ultra tight draws attention that isn't particularly flattering. Generally, we behave more professionally when we're dressed more professionally, so give yourself the edge with your attire.

## 5. TOO MUCH BLING

Many people have a particular style of jewelry and clothing that becomes their signature style. When you choose your attire for the day, consider the occasion. If you are interviewing for a job as an accountant or banker, wear conservative jewelry for your meeting. If you are standing onstage for a business presentation, the best choice is jewelry that doesn't move too much or reflect bright lights. Earrings shouldn't dangle so much that the audience watches the movement, and bracelets shouldn't jingle. Men who wear earrings should consider whether the audience will accept



your jewelry. If you're a rock star, wear whatever you want! The key is to fit the occasion.

## **6. PODIUM DANCING**

Unconsciously rocking back and forth while you speak is an annoying habit that can easily be broken. If you see in a video of yourself that you're a "dancer," simply stand on a newspaper when you rehearse. Every time you shift your weight, the paper will rustle. When you become aware of your movements, you can choose which ones to keep and which to eliminate.

## **7. POOR POSTURE**

Posture counts! Whether you're sitting or standing, keep your back straight and your shoulders back. Simply making this one change makes you look and sound more confident. Slouching implies apathy or fear, whether you sit or stand.

## **8. BAD BREATH**

It really doesn't need to be said that when you are speaking one-on-one, bad breath is alienating. If you are networking or people will be chatting with you after your presentation, keep a few mints handy so that you don't have to worry about this problem. But don't chew gum or eat mints while giving your presentation.

## **9. REPEATED HAND MANNERISMS**

Watch what other people do with their hands as they speak either formally in a presentation or informally in conversation. You'll notice habits of touching the face, brushing hair back, scratching any one spot repeatedly, and other annoying, unnecessary movements. Anytime someone repeats a mannerism over and over, it's easy to get distracted by watching the movements and forget to listen to the words. Some people tap their fingers, click a pen, or shuffle papers just to have something to do with their hands. To become aware of your own hands, watch a video of yourself, or have a colleague give you feedback. Then practice keeping them still except to gesture.



## 10. GENERAL BAD MANNERS

The category of bad manners can encompass a variety of behaviors, such as looking everywhere except at the person you're talking with, or interrupting others without listening to what they have to say. If you have a habit of consistently arriving late, using crude language, or rubbing your ear, improve those habits before your presentation. Be especially conscious of using time well. It is rude and inconsiderate to take more time for your presentation than you have been allotted. Begin and end on time.

Here's a tip on getting feedback. Because we are often the last to know of our own bad habits, try to think of times that friends or family have subtly suggested you improve something about yourself or gently teased you about one of your traits. Usually these people want to help you. If you've gotten feedback on the same thing more than once, it's probably real. If only one person has told you about a problem and it just doesn't seem to fit your pattern, the feedback may say more about the other person than you! Weigh comments carefully, and consider the source.

## A Final Word on Nonverbal Communication

Even the best nonverbal skills can't make a bad presentation good. But bad verbal skills can ruin your great content. As an executive speech coach, if I had the opportunity to improve just one area for a client, I would choose nonverbal mannerisms. Improve the way you look and sound when you say the words you've prepared, and you'll give a better presentation.

### Tips from the Pros

#### **Authenticity Is Essential: Be the Power of You by Susan Waldman**

When presented with what, for most of us, is the daunting task of speaking before a large audience or group of peers, it's tempting to conjure up the persona of someone whose presentation style has impressed you in the past. Maybe if you can somehow channel his or her charisma, style, or presence, your audience will be moved, your presentation a success, and your impression long lasting.

*(continued)*



However, unless you're a medium, the only persona you will be able to capably channel is your own. And trying to deliver your message through someone else's style will create the kind of energy-message mismatch that will leave your audience confused and cause your presentation to fall flat.

Compelling communications are created from a tight match between your message, your energy, and your style. Find your own genuine style—what makes you special or different—and channel that. Your own personal passion and energy about your topic are what will engage your audience and deliver impact.

Speaking through your own authentic passion expands the power of your words, strengthens your ability to connect with your audience, and elevates your delivery to its highest power—the authentic power of you.

## QUIZ

1. How can you improve your foot movements onstage?
  - (a) Wear comfortable shoes.
  - (b) Practice on a carpeted floor.
  - (c) Use a lectern.
  - (d) Stand on a newspaper while practicing.
2. Which rule applies when you shake hands?
  - (a) Touch the web of your thumb to the web of the other person's thumb.
  - (b) Stand about three feet apart.
  - (c) Hold a steady gaze with the other person's eyes.
  - (d) Wait until you finish the handshake before you start to speak.
3. What is the "ready position"?
  - (a) Your stance as you are being introduced
  - (b) The name for the first speaker on a panel
  - (c) Feet shoulders width apart and knees straight but not locked
  - (d) Hands above the waist and eyes looking forward



4. In general, under what conditions do we behave more professionally?
  - (a) When we know our material thoroughly
  - (b) When we dress professionally
  - (c) When we have practiced using good posture
  - (d) When we make steady eye contact
5. When you review your video, how often should you watch it?
  - (a) Once and then erase it
  - (b) Twice and then do the real presentation
  - (c) Three times and then rehearse again
  - (d) Never—just sell it to “America’s Funniest Videos”

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## CHAPTER 14



# Where Shall We Meet?

The slides were beautiful, motivating, and persuasive. Karen looked great, and she knew that her product was priced right and exceeded expectations in every way. She confidently entered the client's office, ready to make the sale. Her confidence drained away as she was kept waiting for thirty minutes. From the reception area, she watched the meeting in progress through the glass wall. Tempers flared, and she could hear raised voices. When she was called into the stuffy, overcrowded conference room, she found the projector didn't work, and she was told that the key stakeholders had another meeting in five minutes. Karen quickly decided to eliminate the slides, reorganized her material, and cut to the chase. As she was about to make the most compelling statement, the CEO looked at his iPhone and left the room saying, "This is fine. Just put together a proposal, and I'll get back to you." Karen couldn't help wondering why she hadn't invited the clients to meet at her own company's new training room.



As Karen discovered, the location, room size, seating arrangement, temperature, noise level, and mood all affect your presentation. Even though it's often easier to accept whatever location and room arrangement you might be offered, the more control you can exert over the environment, the more control you have over the outcome of your meeting. To leverage your position, plan the setting as well as you plan the content of your talk.

## Location, Location, Location

Every real estate agent knows that the location can cause even the best home to look bad, and every great speaker knows that a bad location and environment can absolutely ruin a great presentation. Speaking in a large room implies that you possess power, simply based on the size available for the audience. Small, well-furnished conference rooms can imply exclusivity and power. Your physical location in a room also conveys power. Standing on a stage or sitting at the head of a table sends a message that you are an expert, while sitting next to a very powerful person can suggest that you are powerful by association (whether you have power or not).

Large meetings are usually held in hotels or conference centers. Client sales meetings can be held in a variety of locales: in private offices, conference rooms, or a Starbucks coffee shop, or even on the Internet. Meeting on your own turf often gives you the power to choose the room arrangements, attendees, and logistics. Whenever you have a choice, pick a setup that supports your message and the type of presentation you're giving.

## Large-Room Arrangements: Fifty Participants or More

Most large meeting rooms are set in the same basic arrangements. If you are speaking at a hotel, conference center, or auditorium, you should be able to get a diagram to review as you prepare for the event. If you're fortunate enough to be working with a meeting planner, that person will help you choose the appropriate room arrangement. If you're on your own, these descriptions should help you choose the best room setup.

Let's look at some common large meeting room arrangements.



## Speaking of . . . Power

A speaker's power comes in many forms. Here are some types of power that you might not know you have:

- **Referent power** is based on association. We give power to people and groups we identify with and are perceived to have power when we are associated with desirable groups, causes, or people. For instance, a manager who is a close friend of the company president is perceived to have more power and influence than other managers.

- **Legitimate power** is authority or influence based on position or title. Elected officials, people high on the organizational chart, licensed religious leaders, and parents all have legitimate power.

- **Expert power** is granted based on knowledge, specialized skills, or abilities. As long as someone is in need of the information possessed by the expert, the expert has power.

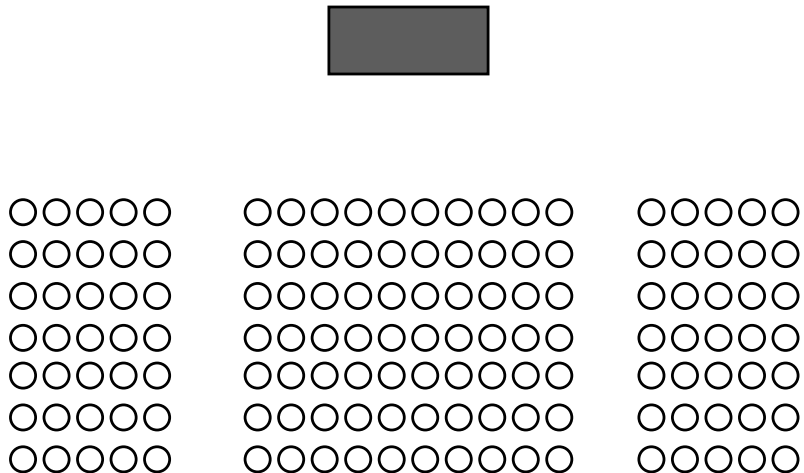
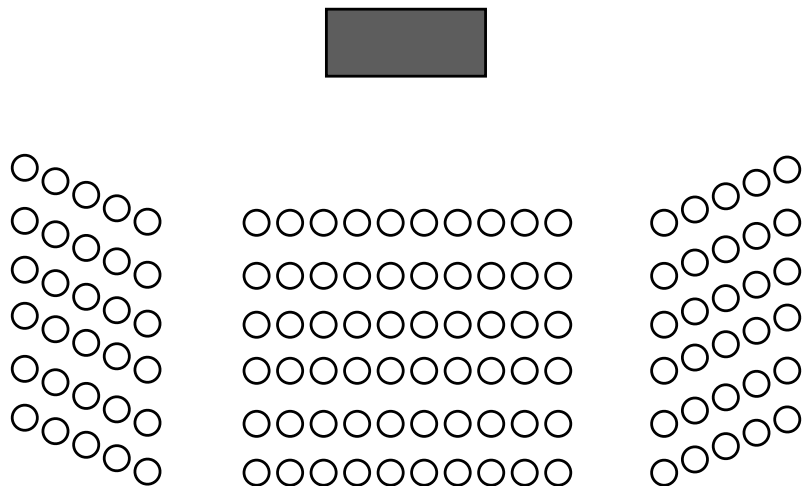
- **Reward power** belongs to anyone who can dole out something considered valuable. Parents give allowances, managers give raises, and club owners can give free event tickets. Reward power can be perceived as coercive. It is ineffective when the reward is not considered valuable.

- **Coercive power** comes from the ability to remove rewards or give punishment. Frequently, someone with reward power can use coercive power if rewards don't work.

The first three types of power are often given willingly, but the last two types are based on holding a specific position.

## THEATER STYLE

Nearly every large, formal speaking situation uses a theater-style seating arrangement. It's known as the "sage on the stage" format, where one person stands on stage and imparts information to the masses. An audience of more than one hundred usually requires this arrangement, since it offers more available space in the room. Figure 14.1 shows a typical large theater, and Figure 14.2 shows a small theater.

**Figure 14.1****Figure 14.2**

Normally, the room is divided by one center aisle, and a podium and screen are at the center, in front of the room. Very wide rooms will have two to three aisles placed about every twenty-five to thirty chairs. Rooms set in this style are large enough that speakers should use a lectern and microphone. Theater style feels formal and limits interaction among audience members.

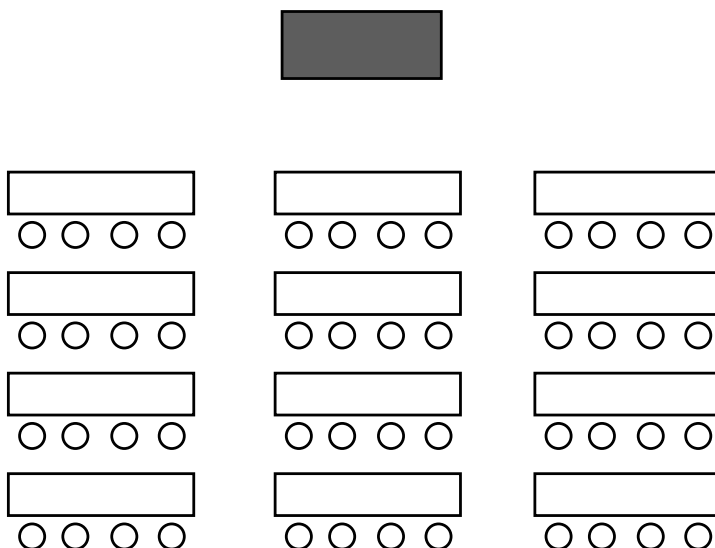


## CLASSROOM STYLE

The classroom-style arrangement is most commonly used for small to medium-sized training situations with one primary speaker or a panel of speakers. Figure 14.3 provides an example of a classroom-style arrangement.

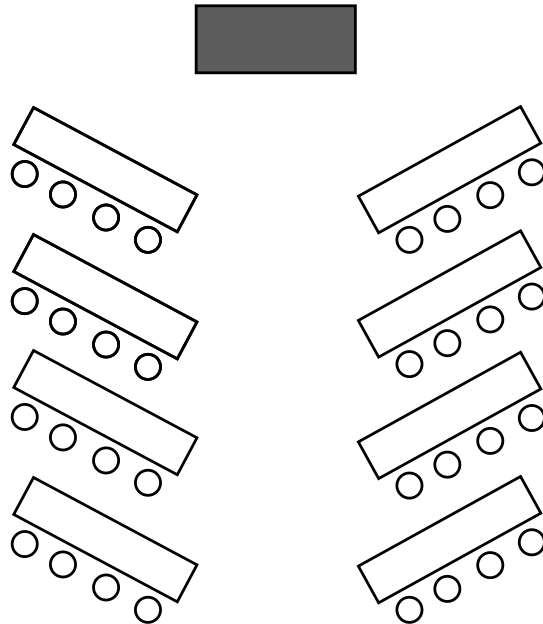
The classroom arrangement gives you the freedom to move down the aisles and is less formal than the theater arrangement. A classroom setting is convenient for taking notes and handing out materials, because each participant has a table for writing. Since the tables take up a considerable amount of space, this style can seat fewer people than the theater style.

**Figure 14.3**



## CHEVRON STYLE

The chevron style features chairs forming a “V” shape facing away from the speaker. The center of the room always features an aisle for easy movement between the front and back of the room. For an example of chevron style, see Figure 14.4.

**Figure 14.4**

The chevron style allows for more group interaction than the other large room settings do, because the participants can see each other more easily. When you are speaking, you have more opportunity to move up and down the aisle and still maintain some eye contact with most of the audience. Meanwhile participants can turn to see and converse with each other. Chevrons can be set with or without tables.

## Midsized-Room Arrangements: Eight to Forty People

Midsized rooms are most often used for team meetings, training sessions, or small-group functions. The following descriptions will help you choose the most appropriate arrangement for your meeting.

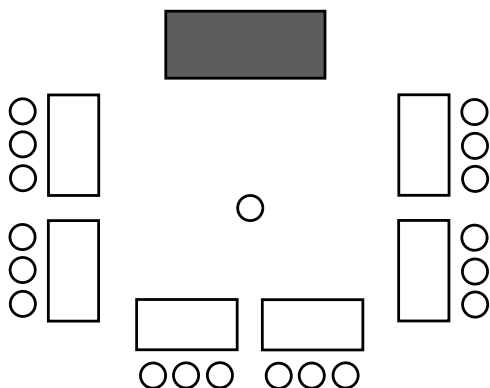


## U-SHAPED

The U-shaped arrangement features rectangular tables that resemble the letter *u*. Figure 14.5 shows a typical U-shaped arrangement.

Use a U-shaped arrangement when audiences are to be perceived as equals, since there is no head of the table, and no position conveys more power than another. This setting is conducive for a small group of twenty-five or fewer and is effective for training settings. You can walk into the middle of the U and interact directly with each participant. Participants can make eye contact directly with you as well as with most other members of the group. Your presentation style determines how formal or casual participants feel in this setting. Use it when you want the entire group to be involved in discussions.

**Figure 14.5**



A disadvantage of the U shape is the possibility of distraction, because audience members can look at and talk with each other. The limited space for small-group discussions also is challenging. To overcome this issue, move chairs into the middle of the U so that smaller groups can be formed on both sides of the table.



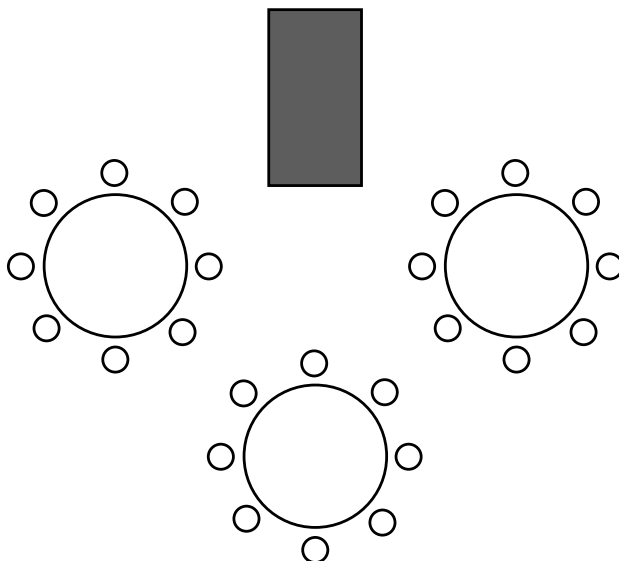
## BANQUET STYLE, PODS, OR ROUNDS

With the banquet style, the audience is seated in “pods,” or small tables with chairs on all sides. A basic example of the banquet-style arrangement is shown in Figure 14.6.

This arrangement works well when you want the audience to have small-group discussions. Participants can interact easily and have a work space where they can take notes or handle props. Almost every after-dinner speaker uses this arrangement.

The disadvantages include the easy opportunity for listeners to start table conversations and the numerous distractions that occur when people can see each other, talk with the wait staff, or check cell messages rather than listening to *you*. A speaker who has to compete with the sound of tables being cleared is fighting a challenging battle. Sitting at round tables also is uncomfortable for some audience members when they must turn their body or their chair to see the speaker.

**Figure 14.6**





### Bonus Point

Perform a complete reconnaissance of the meeting room before the audience arrives. Check all the details, including the location of microphones, light switches, and temperature controls.

## Small-Room Arrangements

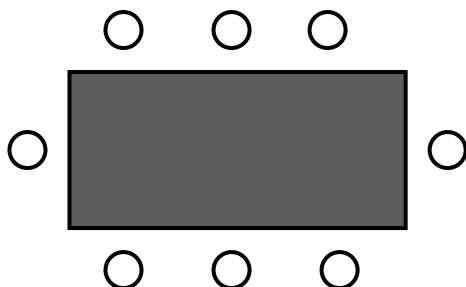
Small rooms generally accommodate fewer than eight people. The descriptions apply to small-group settings.

### BOARDROOM STYLE

A boardroom has one long rectangular table. The participants are seated around the table, and the primary presenter is normally located at one of the short sides of the rectangle, as shown in Figure 14.7. The boardroom setting can be very formal or very casual. Power in the boardroom comes from the history, the exclusivity, and the location of the room. Learn as much about the room as you can before your presentation.

Visibility and eye contact are limited, especially for those seated on the long sides of the table. Boardroom meetings can feel cramped if the room is filled with people. It's particularly awkward if the table must accommodate a projector as well as handouts and assorted coffee cups. Make sure you have plenty of space before you begin. Moving things around during your talk can be disruptive.

**Figure 14.7**

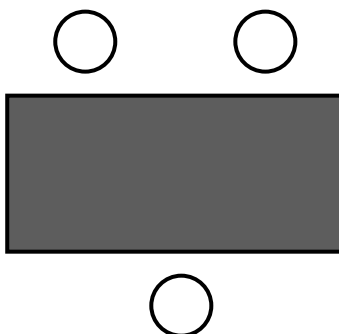




## OFFICE SETTING

Most one-on-one meetings occur in offices. A typical office consists of a desk and two side chairs placed across from the desk. (See Figure 14.8.) This is the most casual setting and the most private. It can convey either high or low power, depending on the situation. If people frequently move in and out of the office, the meeting will be perceived as having low power. If the space belongs to a powerful person, the meeting will be perceived as being important.

**Figure 14.8**



## STAND-UP MEETING

Stand-ups are short meetings among coworkers, usually held daily to share project status or updates on the current realities of a job or team. As the name indicates, everyone typically stands for this quick interaction. A typical stand-up lasts only five to ten minutes and is held at the same time every day. The format is structured but casual, and in many settings, everyone is invited to make a quick comment after the leader starts off with announcements. Not much preparation is necessary on the part of the participants; however, the facilitator must be focused and concise.

### Bonus Point

Always know the exact directions to the building and room where you're presenting. Your credibility is damaged every time you are late.



## Room Size and Shape

Movies and TV are full of examples of room settings that detract from good communication. If you're a fan of "The Simpsons," think of Mr. Burns's office and his dining room. Both are oversized and designed to connote power and affluence. Think of how small Bart looks when he's sitting at the far end of the dining table and how uncomfortable he seems when he's trying to make conversation. Mr. Burns seems to have power just because of the setting. You can imply power and get attention by using a room to your advantage.

### Bonus Point

Whether you're in a small office or a large meeting room, don't position yourself in front of a window when you speak. The listeners will be distracted by anything visible outside and you will appear to them as a silhouette.

## SIZE

A small room, crowded with listeners, is physically uncomfortable and often gets hot and stuffy. This limits your ability to maintain attention for an extended time. Conversely, a large auditorium setting with a small audience feels awkward and cold to you and your listeners. In this setting, people in your audience may feel conspicuous and want to slip out the back. If you find yourself in this situation, ask everyone in the auditorium to move to the front. People hate to do this, but once they have settled into a new seat, they regain their comfort level.

When setting up chairs, consider the comfort of large people, not the average size. You don't want your audience to feel as if they are crammed into the middle seat of an airplane. Make the environment welcoming.

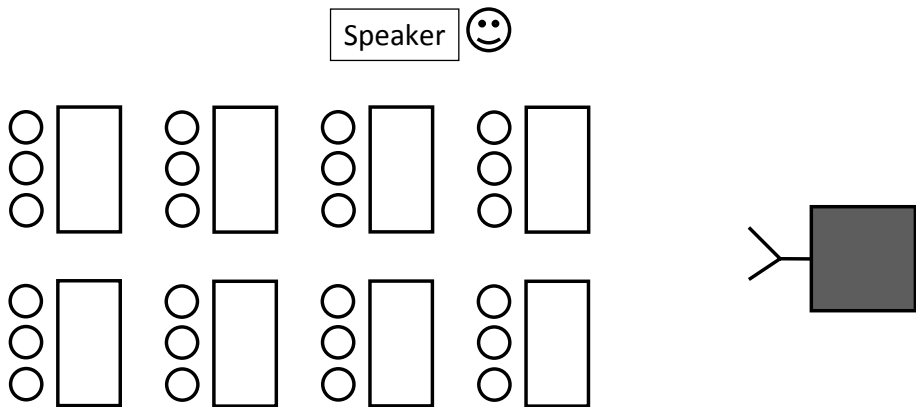
## SHAPE

Long, narrow rooms present a challenge for every speaker. If you find yourself in this kind of space, stand in the middle of the long side of the room for the majority of your program. Move around if possible, so everyone can feel a connection with you. The screen should be placed on a narrow side of the room. If you're not using



a remote, you'll need to move to the computer to change slides or better yet, assign someone to change slides for you. Figure 14.9 shows a typical classroom-style setting.

**Figure 14.9**



## Hygiene Factors

Psychologist Frederick Herzberg first defined *hygiene factors* as conditions that exist in the environment that are not intrinsically motivating to people but negatively affect morale when the factors are missing. In the presentation environment some of the primary hygiene factors are lighting, noise, and temperature.

### LIGHTING

Conference-room lighting is notorious for making a speaker look bad. Most conference rooms have fluorescent ceiling lighting that makes everyone look bad. If you're lucky, your room will also have recessed "top hats" that offer a more natural look. The most challenging rooms have only two settings on the light switch—off and on!



## Speaking . . . of Lighting

Lighting in the ideal presentation room will have these characteristics:

- Dimmers that control individual or small banks of lights (front, back, and middle of the room)
- Dimmers clearly marked for using a projector and screen
- Natural as well as incandescent lights
- Adjustable lights on the presenter's face

## NOISE

Noises that interfere with your meeting can come from your audience, feedback from technology, or noisy conversation in the hallway. Check for the volume of concurrent sessions if meeting rooms are near each other. Rooms with movable walls are notorious for sound leaks.

Joseph learned about the challenge of noise pollution when he gave a presentation for a large meeting of executives. His material was excellent, and he knew it inside and out. It was interactive and informative. The audience was very motivated to be there. That sounds like the perfect arrangement, doesn't it? What no one was prepared for was the man drilling into the cement on the other side of the front wall! Extrinsic noises both inside and outside of your room are major distractions.

## TEMPERATURE AND AIR FLOW

To keep the audience engaged, the ideal temperature for your meeting room is in the range of about sixty-five to sixty-eight degrees. Warm, stuffy rooms are the worst environment for speaking. Participants get sleepy and bored very quickly. You'll need to adjust your style and content to be more interactive. Take frequent breaks if you can. Cooler settings are almost always the most conducive for meetings. Err on the side of cool temperatures to keep your audience alert. It's always a good idea to remind participants to dress in layers.

Moving air that doesn't blow directly on anyone is ideal. A stuffy room induces claustrophobia and mental dullness. The speaker and the maintenance staff should be the only people allowed to adjust the room's thermostat.

**Bonus Point**

Come out from behind a lectern and stand in full view to connect with your audience.

**QUIZ**

For questions 1–3, choose the room arrangement that is most appropriate for the given situation.

1. A conference breakout and team-building session for fifteen participants
  - (a) Boardroom
  - (b) U shape
  - (c) Theater
  - (d) Classroom
2. An orientation meeting for seven newly hired employees, with the goal of teaching the group to fill out insurance forms
  - (a) Classroom
  - (b) Boardroom
  - (c) Chevron
  - (d) Conference
3. A shareholders meeting for three hundred people
  - (a) Boardroom
  - (b) Theater
  - (c) U shape
  - (d) Chevron
4. What is the best room setting to emphasize hierarchy and power?
  - (a) U shape
  - (b) Boardroom
  - (c) Theater
  - (d) Chevron



5. What is the best room temperature for a presentation?
- (a) Sixty-eight degrees controlled by participants
  - (b) Seventy-two degrees controlled by participants
  - (c) Seventy-two degrees controlled by maintenance
  - (d) Sixty-eight degrees controlled by the speaker

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## CHAPTER 15



# Are There Any Questions?

“What time is the three o’clock parade?” Wow, what a silly question! The three o’clock parade is at three o’clock, isn’t it?

Well, not necessarily. I learned in a Disney training session that the parade question is among those most often asked in the Magic Kingdom. Even though it might seem like the person asking this question must not have been listening, you might want to dig a little deeper to find out what’s behind the question. Consider that a parade starts at one spot and then meanders throughout the park. What the person really wants to know is “What time does the parade pass by *here*?”

Answering questions well is an art to be mastered. The way you respond to questions can make or break your credibility as a presenter, so don’t let yourself be caught off guard. Even though the questions you’ll get may be unpredictable, there are many things you can do to prepare, prepare, prepare!

The first thing to decide is whether you’ll take questions during or after your presentation.



### **Bonus Point**

To keep the audience involved, allow for questions and answers throughout your presentation. (A very tight schedule limits the amount of time you can allow for answering questions, so control questions that derail the topic.)

## **When to Take Questions**

Deciding whether to take questions during or after a presentation is often a challenge for speakers. The following suggestions will help you decide the best approach to take when addressing questions.

### **QUESTIONS WITHIN A PRESENTATION**

The advantage to taking questions throughout your presentation is that any confusion your listeners have can be clarified immediately, and you can speak directly to their concerns. The major disadvantage is that the sequence, emphasis, and your major message can get lost when you give floor time to individual audience members. Any listener with a personal agenda can grandstand during your allotted time. Taking questions during your performance tends to give the presentation a more informal tone and may be the best technique to use with small groups or as you become a more experienced presenter. Taking questions during a talk requires flexibility and often demands more time for the total presentation.

### **QUESTIONS AFTER THE PRESENTATION**

Holding questions until the end of your speech allows you to maintain control. You have the opportunity to make important points at the time you choose to make them. The disadvantage is that you may have overlooked some information, and some audience members may be lost. Sometimes a simple clarification in response to a question might have eliminated some confusion.



### Speaking of . . . Questions and Power

You have the most power at the beginning and end of your presentation. So make sure that the last words the audience hears are from *you*. After the last question is answered, give a quick recap of the key ideas that you want the listeners to remember.

## Techniques for Fielding Questions

The job of tackling questions can be challenging for a speaker. The following tips will help you sound and look professional as you take questions from your audience:

- **Answer the question being asked.** Sometimes speakers look foolish because they answer the question they anticipated rather than the question really posed. Listen carefully to make sure you get the gist of the question before you start answering.
- **Let the questioner finish the question.** All eyes focus on whoever is speaking, so the person asking the question may be more nervous than you are. It may take a few seconds for the questioner to get to the point, so make sure to let him or her speak long enough to feel heard.

### Bonus Point

To assure you get the last word, tell your audience that you'll take a few questions and then wrap up your talk. This cues audience members that it's time for questions and tells them you're not finished yet.

- **Repeat the question so that the entire audience can hear.** If there is any doubt that everyone can hear the question being asked, be sure to repeat it. When everyone can hear the questioner, repeat only those questions that need to be simplified.
- **Answer each part of compound questions separately.** If questions are layered one upon another, respond to each question separately.



- **Watch for hidden agendas.** When someone attempts to grandstand on his own agenda, keep the focus on your topic by limiting the amount of “airtime” you give him. Use a neutral tone to rephrase any leading or biased questions. If a questioner remains openly hostile toward your topic, offer to speak with him after the presentation.

### Bonus Point

Avoid answering what-if questions. They can be a trap, since there is no right answer. Speak about what *is*, rather than what might be.

- **If you don’t know an answer, don’t fake it.** When you fake an answer, you risk losing credibility with the listeners. An honest response is the best approach. If you’re asked a question that you can’t answer, you can refer the question to an audience member who has more expertise or promise to find the answer and get back to the questioner. If you make the offer to get back to someone, be sure to follow through.
- **Think of each answer as a tiny speech.** When answering a question, use an introduction, main points, and a conclusion. Whenever your answer is multilayered, this will help keep you on track.
- **Look directly at the questioner as you begin your answer.** As you continue with your answer, include the entire audience with your eye contact. Conclude your answer by looking back at the questioner.

### Bonus Point

Ask the audience, “What questions do you have?” rather than asking, “Are there any questions?” It’s a little less intimidating to audience members.

- **Don’t look back.** If a questioner begins to dominate the Q&A period, do not look back at her as you conclude your answer. Turn your eyes to another part of the room as you finish speaking. This is a polite, nonverbal way to stop the questioner from dominating your time.



- **If the questioner is monopolizing your time, don't conclude by asking, "Did I answer your question?"** You can avoid giving a dominant person more airtime by simply giving a brief answer and moving on. However, if you are teaching and a student is asking for a more thorough explanation, "Did I answer your question?" is an appropriate response.
- **Rephrase your answer if asked a question you have previously answered.** Regardless of whether the questioner wasn't listening or you weren't clear in your explanation, attempt to help the questioner save face and not be embarrassed for repeating a question. Here's an example. Imagine that after you've worked hard to explain your process, someone asks how you reached your conclusion. You might respond this way: "We reached our conclusion by working through the four steps I explained." You could briefly state the four steps and then conclude with, "Then we drew final conclusions based on the results in step four." This is a straight, simple response that should not make the questioner feel stupid. Avoid saying, "As I just said . . ."
- **Give a preview, or use some humor.** If someone asks a question you will cover soon, give a brief answer, and promise a more thorough explanation in a few moments. If a preview isn't appropriate, find a way to tell the questioner that she must be a fast learner, since you're just a few minutes from talking about that subject.
- **Answer as concisely as possible.** Don't get sidetracked or ramble.
- **Anticipate questions.** As part of the preparation process, list at least fifteen questions that you think you might be asked. You'll cover the appropriate answers in the talk, and for the information that doesn't fit your material, just come prepared with statistics and examples to support your responses to questions if they arise.
- **Plant or sow the seeds.** If no one asks a question on a point you would like to reiterate, you have at least two options: you can plant someone in the audience to ask the essential question, or you can ask the question yourself. You might say, "Some of you may be wondering . . .," and then follow with the information you want to give.

### Bonus Point

You can encourage the audience by mentioning that you plan to take only four or five questions or by saying you'll take questions for five minutes.



- **Make it safe.** If the people in your audience are hesitant to ask questions, encourage them by asking each person to find a partner and discuss any questions they might have. After two or three minutes, ask what questions were unanswered. This normally helps a shy audience to speak out.
- **Take back the power.** Remember that you have the most power with an audience at the beginning and end of a presentation. When the question-and-answer period has ended, give a brief wrap-up, and restate your conclusion. If you asked the audience to act, now is the time to repeat your request.

### Speaking of . . . Questions and Power

If there is any doubt that everyone heard an audience member who asked you a question or if you are speaking to an audience of twenty or more, repeat the essence of the question before you answer.

## How to Improve Your Answering Skills

To increase your ability to be quick on your feet when answering questions, use this technique to practice. Partner with a friend, or work on your own. First, find a list of questions on the Internet, or get a book of questions for which there are no right answers. Choose some questions at random (without thinking about them in advance). Take only one minute to prepare your answer, and then speak for two minutes. Ask your friend to tell you when two minutes have elapsed, or set a timer. Practice these things:

- Answering in the format of introduction, body (with three main points), and a conclusion that ties back to the introduction
- Rephrasing the question
- Using humor
- Saying “I don’t know” in a variety of ways
- Being concise



For accurate feedback, it's important to record a video of yourself during this exercise. If you're practicing with a friend, let the friend play the roles of different kinds of audience members. The video will let you see if you're equally comfortable in impromptu settings like Q&A sessions and more formal presentations that allow sufficient preparation time.

## QUIZ

1. Which statement describes an advantage of taking questions during your presentation?
  - (a) Your audience feels involved and can contribute.
  - (b) Your audience gets immediate clarification.
  - (c) You can control your time.
  - (d) You lose control of your time.
2. Which statement describes an advantage of taking questions only after your presentation?
  - (a) Your audience feels involved and can contribute.
  - (b) Your audience gets immediate clarification.
  - (c) You can control your time.
  - (d) You lose control of your time.
3. If a questioner is openly hostile to you during your talk, what response should you use?
  - (a) Ask the questioner to leave.
  - (b) Offer to speak with the questioner after the session.
  - (c) Hear out the questioner; he may have a point.
  - (d) Ignore the questioner.
4. If you ask for questions and no one speaks up, what should you do?
  - (a) Clarify a point by saying, "You might be wondering . . ."
  - (b) End your program early.
  - (c) Call on someone.
  - (d) Allow for some silence so someone will speak up.



5. Why should you say a few words after answering the last question?
- (a) You take back the power of the presentation.
  - (b) You can recap your main points.
  - (c) The people in your audience will remember what they hear last.
  - (d) All of the above

## PART FOUR



# SPECIAL SITUATIONS

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## CHAPTER 16



# Webinars and Online Presentations

Last week I participated in a webinar on creating the future. I use the term *participated* loosely, since I ended up working on my “things to do” list while the speaker droned on, reading the slides that were on the screen. I could hear him most of the time, except when his daughter, Danielle, was playing with her friend, Shannon. Why do I know their names? Because they fought and shouted each other’s names for a full minute before the facilitator’s wife could get them out of the room. Except for our copy of the slides, the webinar was a waste of time. But I did get to watch a rerun of “Seinfeld.”

## Webinars and Teleconferences

A webinar is an online meeting for participants in multiple locations. Most online classes use a webinar format for parts of their sessions. A teleconference is an



“online presentation” mentioned in the title. A teleconference is similar to a webinar but uses only the phone to connect participants instead of an Internet connection. Since no computer is involved, the participants will not see slides or have any interface with computer technology.

Most techniques offered in this chapter apply to both environments.

As in many other business decisions, cost and convenience are the primary forces behind the trend toward holding Web-based meetings. As travel becomes more expensive and more challenging, presenting online is a cost-effective way to reach audiences around the world. Technology is becoming standardized and user-friendly. Any number of participants can attend from multiple locations and multiple time zones.

The increasing demand for online courses and meetings puts new demands on speakers everywhere. Instructors can lose the personal contact they enjoy when working face to face with students, facilitators must be more alert to the nuances of each word, and time zones become a factor to be concerned with. Hosting a webinar can be intimidating for the technically challenged instructor. One upside is that now you can teach a course or give a sales presentation from your kitchen while wearing your jammies and fuzzy slippers. Once you’ve participated a few times, the intimidation factor will go down considerably and presenting online can become an effective and pleasant platform for presenting.

### Speaking of . . . Paying Attention

The industry standard for attendance at a Web event is 40 to 50 percent of those registered. The percentage of people who actually pay attention can’t be measured.

The following suggestions serve as a primer for presenting online. The first-time presenter will benefit from the section titled “Preparing to Lead a Program.” Everyone can learn from the tips on preparing your slides and the hints for what to do on the day before, the day of, and the day after your session.

### Bonus Point

Your audience gets no visual cues when you’re speaking online without a camera. Speak enthusiastically, and stand up if you need extra energy in your voice.



## Preparing to Lead a Program

If you are a first-time presenter, consider these pointers as you build your presenting skills:

- **Take a class.** This seems obvious, but if you haven't participated in an online event, sign up for one. I'm surprised by the number of my students who jump into teaching online without ever having learned online. Read all the materials sent in advance. Do all the prework, and start thinking about what you like and don't like about the way it's prepared.
- **Take a train-the-trainer course.** If your company offers training, take advantage of it. If not, find a course online. Learn what works best from an experienced presenter.
- **Practice teaching before class begins.** Set up a test session using the same technology you'll use online. Listen to your test course when you've finished. If that's not possible, practice with a recorder. Study your recordings. Sports coaches play back tapes showing their teams in action. This is an excellent way to improve performance and develop new skills. Listen to yourself as if your presentation were a game tape. Learn from what you did well, along with your embarrassing moments.

If you haven't rehearsed, you might be surprised to discover how hard it is to talk out loud while you're in an empty room. It's important for the instructor to come across as involved and enthusiastic, so while you're talking to the wall, sound like you're talking to an enthusiastic audience. Be prepared for your kids and spouse to tease you!

- **Analyze your audience.** In Chapter 2 you read about how important it is to learn about your audience. To be effective, your message must be designed so that the audience can best receive it. Audience analysis is much tougher for an online group, but you can get good information from the registration forms. If you are presenting as part of an ongoing class, check with previous presenters for any tips on working with the group.

### Bonus Point

Be patient with multicultural audiences. Translating from language to language takes time, so don't move from one topic to the next too quickly.



## Preparing Your Slides

Almost every course uses slides to support the material. Most of them are pretty bad. If you're not an instructional designer, consider meeting with one before you create your slides. If that isn't possible, check the Internet or pick up a book for detailed help.

- **Chunk your material.** Keep your course design simple. Separate ideas into small chunks, each containing only one concept. Each segment should last no more than twenty minutes. If a section will take longer, break it into two parts.
- **Design slides well:**
  - Make slides clean and simple. Intricate templates, fonts, and designs are more distracting than helpful.
  - Each slide should contain only one main point. Break down complicated slides into smaller segments.
  - Replace wordy slides with graphics whenever possible. Photos and drawings communicate better than words, especially with multicultural audiences.
  - Don't create PowerPoint slides that tell the whole story. If your slides do cover everything, they may be good as a leave-behind, but don't use them on the screen. Make new ones.
  - If a slide doesn't support your message, don't use it.
  - Don't use all the bells and whistles.
  - Proofread slides extra carefully. Your audience has plenty of time to check your spelling. Errors are magnified online.

## The Day Before Your Class

Taking these precautionary steps within twenty-four hours of your program can reduce a presenter's anxiety and increase the opportunities for success.

- **Make a test run.** Test your configuration well in advance of the call. Have a technical expert on hand if you don't know how to fix basic technical issues. Run through your slides to confirm that they all look the way you had planned.



- **Get a good night's rest.** Sleep helps you manage anxiety, whether it's your first online session or your last.

## The Day of Your Class

These tips will help you feel, sound, and look like a professional on the day of your presentation.

- **Load your slides early.** Log into the session as early as possible, and check your slides. Just because you tested everything yesterday doesn't mean it will work today. Be prepared for disasters. It seems that adding technology exponentially increases the possibility for things to go wrong.
- **Clear the decks.** Turn off your e-mail notification. Go someplace where the group cannot hear any background noise, including your TV, kids, or pets.
- **Open with a welcome slide.** When people log on, show a simple slide that tells basic information. The first slide should let the participants know they are in the right location, the instructor's name, and the time the course will begin.
- **Open with a clear cue.** When it's time to begin, offer a welcoming statement that invites everyone to mentally tune into the session. Introduce yourself. If the group is small enough, let others do the same. If you have lots of participants, give a quick overview of who they are and their locations.
- **Offer a quick overview.** Let everyone know your goals and the format you'll use during the meeting. Clearly list your objectives on a slide, and check for understanding. Take care of any housekeeping items, including whether you will invite questions during the session or prefer that participants hold them until the end. Teach them how to get your attention, if isn't obvious.
- **Listen for chipmunks.** What? I teach two online courses every week. My co-facilitator (the famous Jay Gassaway) and I have spent the past five years dealing with what we have come to call "chipmunking." This is a common problem that causes a sound delay followed by a rapid release of a voice recording. Essentially, everyone sounds like Alvin and the Chipmunks. The secret is to click off the microphone and pause all sounds



for about ten seconds. The system catches up, and you can start talking normally again.

- **Sound enthusiastic.** Don't read your slides. Discuss your topic; the participants in your group can read the slides for themselves. This may be more challenging than it sounds. Since there is no visual feedback as there is in a meeting room, it's tempting to focus on the slides.

## Speaking of . . . Vocal Energy

Stand up! Standing—and often moving—enables you to project more energy in your voice. If you naturally speak with your hands, use them. No one will know.

- **Be succinct.** Repeat any messages you want to emphasize. Rephrase them in different ways to assure that everyone understands. It's important to use short, uncomplicated sentences.
- **Check for understanding.** Pause frequently, and ask for questions. Keep listeners involved and interacting. If your system allows for virtual breakout rooms, consider team assignments.
- **Some topics are off-limits.** Your role is to facilitate, moderate, and sometimes referee. Stay away from politics or emotionally charged topics unless that's your subject matter. Be willing to redirect the conversation if it goes in the wrong direction. Avoid the role of referee as often as possible.

## Bonus Point

If you are setting the time for a webinar, be considerate of all time zones represented. Clearly define the starting time by time zone.

## After the Session

Some programs end with the last words you speak. Others are ongoing, and still others exist in a hybrid format. The most important point to remember is to keep



any promises you might have made during the course. You may want to follow up with handouts or marketing materials.

## Tips from the Pros

### Conducting Effective International Webinars by Melanie Moeller

As the daughter of a diplomat, I was exposed to diverse languages, behaviors, and cultural sensitivities. One invaluable gift for me was learning to listen differently in order to pick up the subtleties of language, meaning, and intention of those from different cultures. This experience has served me well as an international consultant and trainer, and online technology now allows me to work with those far and wide around the planet. As a master trainer who certifies coaches and consultants in a number of tools, I teach online courses from my home office. Several times a month, I speak with audiences of businesspeople all over the world. Doing this with those from other cultures presents its own unique set of challenges. Here are some quick tips I've learned over the years that make for an effective webinar with an international audience:

- **Conduct a practice run** to avoid and/or work out any technical glitches. This is beneficial for both you and the participants. Once they know how the technology works, they can focus on the content and their learning process.
- **E-mail materials** to each participant ahead of time if possible. Being able to review the materials ahead of time helps those for whom English is not their first language become familiar with what will be covered.
- **Arrive early**, so you can welcome the participants and present an initial slide so they know they are in the right place. This is also an opportunity to be creative. If appropriate, share something personal or professional about you that they can be reading while others are logging on. You may also present an initial question that will stimulate dialogue as you wait for all participants to join the webinar.
- **Set the pace** to include the different levels of English fluency. Remember to slow down and pause, so the information can be absorbed. Avoid the use of slang or sports lingo, such as “give me a ballpark figure” and “that was a slam dunk.”
- **Be patient** with questions and comments, as it can take a little longer to formulate a question or respond in another language. Be sure to invite questions if you are open to them, because in some cultures, questioning the teacher can be perceived as rude.

*(continued)*



- **Review guidelines** on how you would like people to participate (for example, chat, raise hands) and how to mute phones to eliminate background noise. If the course is a long one, discuss how often you will take breaks.
- **Build rapport** with introductions and expectations. Depending on the size of the group, I find this to be one of the most important elements to having a successful course. It is important to get everyone's voice in the room and to know what everyone wants out of the course. You can go first to role-model the format. Remember to listen closely, so you can begin to identify people's voices or accents and know them when they speak up.
- **Know your audience**, so you are able to be sensitive to cultural differences when using examples.
- **Provide a clear outline** of everything you are going to cover and what your learning objectives are at the start of the course. If there is a follow-up course, this is a good time to mention it.
- **Keep the session interactive** by providing places for people to ask and answer questions throughout the presentation, whether by virtually raising their hands, chatting online, or having a discussion over the phone.
- **Once you know people's names** and their areas of expertise, ask for their input, and include them in examples when appropriate.
- **Leave time for questions at the end.**

## Tips from the Pros

### No Whistling in the Dark: Presenting a Credible and Memorable Webinar by Perry Anne Norton

Podcasts and webinars proliferate as means of giving and gleaned information. As demand grows, so does availability. But quantity does not equate with quality. As an audio producer, I find it increasingly clear that while *what* is needed to create webinars and podcasts is ubiquitous, the *how* of presenting oneself credibly is largely missing from the equation. Studies show that the quality of a voice can determine a speaker's credibility as much as (or more than) the information presented. While it may seem as if being "visually anonymous" to your audience would make online presenting easier than giving a public presentation, it's possible to lose your listeners when you don't have any visual clues to their level of engagement. Here's how to prevent that from happening, so you'll shine in the dark:



### Pregame

1. If you're not used to speaking at length—especially with an unseen audience—get a coach, practice, and know your material inside and out.
2. Nervous? Learn proper breathing and vocal warm-up exercises. Stress can make your voice shrill or shaky, lessening credibility. A singing or voice coach can provide guidance.
3. Eliminate verbal mannerisms (such as *um, ah, yeah, I mean, ya know*). Record yourself in practice, and try simply pausing for a split second when you need to gather your thoughts. People use mannerisms because they're uncomfortable with silence, but mannerisms lessen the sound of confidence.
4. Make sure all technical issues, including audio quality, are worked out in advance. Are you using a reputable Web service to connect to your audience? Nothing hurts credibility like a failed connection or wrong conference line number at the opening of an online presentation—especially if your topic is technology!
5. Practice your material, but don't recite by rote. Use bullet points as a verbal guide to keep you focused and on track, but be spontaneous in your delivery.
6. Drink lots of water two hours before your presentation to hydrate your vocal cords. Keep water handy during the webinar. A few drops of lemon juice in your water can eliminate “mouth noise” and smacking.
7. Try to avoid dairy, salty foods, and tea before speaking—these create phlegm and/or dry out your vocal cords.
8. Don't talk down to your audience; prepare with their level of savviness in mind.
9. Find a fresh take on old topics. Use compelling graphs or visual aids or links people can refer back to. Make them available after your presentation. Use memorable, bulleted bites that get your points across and stick with the listener.
10. Before you begin, mentally pick out a friendly “face” to which you can direct your practice and presentation. Use a photo if you need to as an anchor. This will add sincerity and genuinely connect you with your listeners.

### Showtime

1. Briefly introduce yourself and your guest(s), or if you're using a Web service host, have the host do it for you.
2. Get quickly to the subject at hand, and remember that people are making an investment of their time in your information potential.

(continued)



3. Outline up front what listeners can expect to learn, and then follow through.
4. Keep an eye on the time allotted for each point you need to make. Do you have an hour? Ninety minutes? Is there a Q&A session at the end?
5. Stay engaged with and committed to your material. If there is a webinar host, give the host a list of prepared questions, along with key points you'll touch on to help you hit all your marks.
6. Exude confidence and "expert energy." If you're not truly interested in or don't believe in your material, your listeners won't either.
7. There's no need to cram an entire book into your allotted time. Your webinar can be a selling tool as well as an educational one. If appropriate, leave listeners wanting more detail so they'll follow up with you offline.
8. Allow enough time for questions, and answer the most compelling, relevant questions that your material may not have covered or that restate important points.
9. Succinctly recap your main points, and thank your listeners for their time. Let people know how to reach you for more information.
10. Consider following up with a satisfaction survey. Constant Contact or SurveyMonkey are examples of good online survey tools. Ask how you could have made the webinar a better experience. Then act on what you learn!

## QUIZ

1. In which situation should you *not* use a webinar format?
  - (a) You have many people in many locations.
  - (b) Your audience is located where you are located.
  - (c) You have technical information to share.
  - (d) Your technology is the state of the art.



2. How can you add enthusiasm to your voice?
  - (a) Stand up while you talk.
  - (b) Read your slides to make sure you cover everything.
  - (c) Have your kids in the room to act as an audience.
  - (d) Play lively music.
3. How many times should you check your technical configuration?
  - (a) Once
  - (b) Twice
  - (c) Three times
  - (d) As many times as possible
4. Which statement is *not* true about slides designed for a webinar?
  - (a) The slides should include graphics and photos.
  - (b) The slides should support your topic.
  - (c) Each slide should contain only one point.
  - (d) The slides should use plenty of animation.
5. Which purpose is *not* served by a welcome slide?
  - (a) Letting participants know they are in the right place
  - (b) Listing the course objectives
  - (c) Telling participants when the webinar will begin
  - (d) Listing the instructor's name

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## CHAPTER 17



# Special Occasions

There wasn't a dry eye at the wedding reception when Paul Olsen finished the toast to his daughter and her new husband. Paul spoke from his heart as he looked at Amy with a few happy tears of his own. He beamed with pride in his beautiful daughter. Everyone at the reception felt the supportive love that filled the room.

Weddings are just one of the speaking events that fall into the category of "special occasions." In this chapter we'll consider these situations: offering toasts at weddings, retirements, and birthdays; delivering a eulogy; campaigning for office; introducing a speaker; and chairing a meeting. But before we focus on each individual situation, let's take a look at the common celebratory practice of raising a glass in a toast.

### **Offering a Toast at a Wedding, Retirement, or Birthday Celebration**

Toasts are usually given to honor someone and commemorate an occasion. Typically toasts are given to celebrate milestone events. These occasions provide the



guests with memories for years to come. A toast that goes off course can put a damper on an otherwise festive event and create bad feelings.

For weddings, retirements, and birthdays, focus on happy times and the future. Focus your material on the honoree, and use the basic format of an introduction that gets everyone's attention, the body with about three main points, and a conclusion that ties back to the introduction. Simple!

It's especially important to take the job of "toastmaster" seriously. Prepare thoroughly and thoughtfully as Paul did, and follow these suggestions:

### Bonus Point

If you're introducing a speaker, the last words you say should be the speaker's name. "And now, I'd like to introduce Oprah Winfrey!"

- **Practice.** A special occasion like a wedding or retirement party is no time to wing it. Prepare your toast in advance, and know all the important points you plan to make. It's important to sound natural, so don't memorize all the words. Rehearsing several times is especially important, since you may be nervous and emotional at the event. Using a note card or two is perfectly acceptable. Paul had rehearsed enough that when he gave his message to his daughter and son-in-law, he was able to speak smoothly from his heart.
- **Raise your glass while you speak.** Everyone raises a glass in unison and drinks to the honoree when you signal that the toast is finished. The honoree does not drink to the toast.

### Speaking of . . . Celebrating with a Toast

The custom of raising a glass dates back to the days when intentional food poisoning was a significant threat. A taster would take a sip and raise his glass to indicate that the drink was safe and to invite others to join him. Touching the glasses together symbolizes the shared experience. The term *toast* refers to an ancient custom of putting a piece of burnt or flavored toast into a decanter to add to the taste of the beverage.



- **Keep it short.** People are attending the event to celebrate, not to hear a speech. Try to keep your toast to less than three or four minutes. Time yourself when you practice, and make sure you know when to stop talking.
- **Be truthful and tasteful.** If your Aunt Connie is known to be a grump, don't try to tell everyone that it's always a pleasure to be near her. Find honest and positive things to say about the honoree. If Aunt Connie has a generous and thoughtful side that she doesn't often show, you might tell a story that demonstrates those good characteristics.
- **Be positive.** Keep your talk upbeat. This occasion is not the time to bring up past injustices, slights, or grievances.
- **Be appreciative.** If you are the host, thank your guests for sharing the event with you. If you are not the host, be sure to start by thanking the people who invited everyone to share in the festivities.
- **Focus on the honoree.** Remember that the toast is about the person you're celebrating. Don't make it about you. Talking about your relationship is fine as long as the focus is on the honoree and makes a point the audience will appreciate.
- **Don't drink alcohol before you offer your toast.** Sloppy toasts will be remembered for a long time but not necessarily for the reasons that you might want. If you want to have a drink, have it after your talk.
- **Look at the honoree or couple.** Start and end the toast by looking directly at the person(s) you're honoring.
- **Be yourself.** If you have to work hard to be funny, don't! We can't all be Jerry Seinfeld, Chris Rock, or Tina Fey. Be yourself, and speak from the heart.
- **Be confident.** You were chosen to speak because of your unique relationship to the people involved. Smile, step into the limelight, and remember: it's not about you. Focus on your subject.
- **Prepare for problems.** If you suspect someone in the audience could be a heckler, you might want to have a friend prepared to remove or quiet the inappropriate person.

## TIMING IS EVERYTHING

One key to a successful toast is for everyone present to raise a glass and drink in unison. The key word here is *unison*, so before you start talking, make sure everyone has an appropriate drink. If you have a wedding planner or wait staff, they can



let you know when the stage is set and the glasses are full. If you are the speaker, it's your responsibility to get everyone's attention before you start. You might enlist the DJ to lower the volume of the music and make an announcement. If there is no DJ, simply stand and raise your glass, so everyone knows it's time to join in.

### Bonus Point

If you're leading a meeting, send out an agenda in advance, and respect your audience member's time by sticking to it.

## RESOURCES FOR MATERIAL

Good material for your presentation can present itself anywhere and at any time. Keep your ears and eyes open for appropriate comments to add to your toast. Here are a few resources you might want to investigate:

- **Quotes.** A good quote or poem can set the tone for your toast. Books, websites, and other sources for finding quotes are everywhere, but no matter what source you use, double-check the accuracy of the content and author. You can lead into your quote by citing the author this way: "As Robert Frost said . . ." Or you can give the quote and then add, "That's the way Colin Powell looked at it in his book . . ." Or you can have some fun: "As the famous philosophers, Ben and Jerry, say . . ."
- **Photos and videos.** Check out old pictures to jog memories of shared events and good times past. Look for events that included several of the people attending the celebration.
- **Family and friends.** Your own experience with the honoree is the best resource, but sometimes you'll need to get information from others. Be careful again to check for accuracy.

## Eulogies

Since eulogies are offered to honor and offer praise of a recently deceased person, the focus should be on the past rather than the future. Typically, a eulogy is given at



a funeral or memorial service, and your listeners will be in a somber mood. Here are a few tips for giving a eulogy:

- **Be respectful.** This is the most important thing to remember in compiling your talk. A eulogy is not time to speak negatively of the deceased.
- **Be accurate.** Don't take any chances that your information is incorrect. It's embarrassing for you and can hurt the feelings of family members. You'll never get a chance to correct what you say. Confirm your information with at least one person who knows the facts about dates and details.
- **Use humor appropriately.** Humor can lift the spirits of mourners and lighten an overwhelmingly sad situation. Tributes to fun times and happy shared experiences are a wonderful way to honor the deceased. Use humor that matches the personality of the person being eulogized.
- **How were you influenced?** If you are asked to speak, chances are that the person being honored was influential to you. Share a story that illustrates your relationship to point out how special your relationship was to you.

### Speaking of . . . Great Quotes

*There are two things that are more difficult than making an after-dinner speech: climbing a wall which is leaning toward you and kissing a girl who is leaning away from you.*

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

## Campaign Speeches

Running for an office, whether for city council or class president, usually requires giving a campaign speech—or several speeches. The purpose of your speech, of course, is to persuade the listeners to vote for you, so you'll want to look and sound your best. Here are some guidelines that will help you do that:

- **Speak about your credentials.** Emphasize your leadership skills, your experience relating to the position, and any volunteer work that might apply to the situation.



### Bonus Point

If you are in conversation with someone and a friend approaches, always introduce the person you're with to the person who just arrived. For example, if I'm talking with Dana, and Lynne walks up, I would say, "Dana, I'd like to introduce you to my friend, Lynne. Lynne, this is Dana."

- **Be specific about what you want to accomplish.** Voters will say yes only when the candidate will accomplish things they care about. Focus your message on each audience, and keep the needs of those people in mind. Be sure not to make promises that you know you can't keep.
- **Don't sound like everyone else.** Why should the audience remember you? Find your own voice, and be yourself—your best self.
- **Don't drown in details.** When you're campaigning, you'll want to discuss the highlights of your vision. Save the extended details, and leave the voters wanting more. Remember to keep your campaign speech short and engaging.

## Making an Introduction

When it's your responsibility to introduce someone, whether a keynote speaker, a nominee, or an award winner, the basic guidelines are the same. The most important point to remember is that the focus should be on the individual you're introducing, not on you. Follow these straightforward tips for preparing your introduction:

- **Names matter.** Practice pronouncing the person's name. Mispronouncing the guest's name is disrespectful.
- **Get the speaker's opinion.** Talk with the speaker ahead of time to confirm what he or she wants you to emphasize.
- **Offer key points.** Highlight a few of the person's most pertinent accomplishments to gain the attention of the audience. Build up to announcing the person's name.
- **Don't read all the details.** If you are given a long, written biography, emphasize only a few points. No one wants to hear a whole résumé!



- **Fame matters.** The better known the speaker is, the less you need to say in your introduction. Don't be the one who opens by saying, "Our speaker needs no introduction . . .," and then goes on to list accomplishment after accomplishment.
- **End with the speaker's name.** Pause, and then say the name. Always say the individual's name as the last words in your introduction, before applause begins.

## Chairing a Meeting

Although it isn't a traditional presentation, chairing a meeting is a job that requires strong communication skills. The meeting chair is like the ringmaster at a circus. All the acts must go on, and all the acts want attention from the audience. Time is limited, and the chair must keep to the schedule.

### Speaking of . . . Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is the formal structure of rules that organizations use to operate and conduct their business. The guidelines are outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

## BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

Many organizational bylaws require that meetings follow a formal structure. Most often the chair will follow parliamentary procedure. Here is an overview of the chair's basic responsibilities:

1. Call the meeting to order and check attendance.
  - (a) Welcome participants.
  - (b) Introduce visitors to other attendees.
  - (c) Review the agenda.
2. Ask for approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.
  - (a) Usually the secretary reads the minutes of last meeting.



- (b) If there are no formal minutes or no secretary, the chair may review what was accomplished at the last meeting.
- 3. Call for committee or individual reports.
  - (a) The details are reviewed at this time. This is the typically the longest part of the meeting.
  - (b) It is the chair's responsibility to keep the meeting on track and on time.
  - (c) The chair also directs and fields questions.
- 4. Lead open discussion of any old business. If any items were carried over from the last meeting, this is the time to discuss them.
- 5. Ask for new business.
  - (a) The chair begins by asking, "Are there new topics to be introduced?"
  - (b) The chair must keep discussions focused.

## Tips from the Pros

### The Wedding Toast by Paul Olsen

To successfully toast someone, we are often guided by as many dos as don'ts. Do be concise, selecting your words carefully, and consider your audience. Don't tell personal stories that may be embarrassing to someone or may bore most of your audience.

On the occasion of our daughter's wedding, I not only rehearsed my comments many times, but also rehearsed for my daughter, so she would not be surprised and become emotional. At the reception, I actually had my typed speech in hand for quick reference if needed.

Kate, my guiding light and partner of thirty-eight years, is also my best critic and adviser; wisely, she recommended that my opening comments welcome the groom's family and thank them for making the effort to be with us for this special occasion. The body of the speech was the easy part, with genuine heartfelt comments about our daughter and her special relationships with each of her brothers, her mother, and me (FOB). As I welcomed the groom into our family, I advised him that "we now share our greatest gift with him." Concluding, I asked that everyone join me in toasting the bride and groom, and wish them a wonderful life together.



6. Adjourn the meeting.
  - (a) Before concluding the meeting, the chair will review any assignments and announce the time of the next meeting.
  - (b) Finally, the chair will call the meeting to a formal close.

## QUIZ

1. What should you do when introducing a speaker?
  - (a) Say the person's name last before the applause starts.
  - (b) Read from the written material.
  - (c) Follow parliamentary procedure.
  - (d) Include all information about a famous person.
2. What should you do when offering a toast at a wedding?
  - (a) Hold your glass high, and then pour appropriate drinks for all.
  - (b) Make eye contact with the DJ, and begin the toast.
  - (c) Start with a question.
  - (d) Raise your glass when all glasses are full, and begin speaking.
3. What should a eulogy *never* contain?
  - (a) Humor
  - (b) Stories about work situations
  - (c) A disrespectful story
  - (d) Very personal information
4. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* says the meeting chair's responsibilities include all of the following tasks except which?
  - (a) Leading discussions
  - (b) Reading the minutes of the previous meeting
  - (c) Welcoming everyone
  - (d) Adjourning the meeting



5. What is symbolized by touching the glasses together after a toast?
- (a) Shared experience
  - (b) New beginnings
  - (c) Agreement among the listeners
  - (d) Joy for the honoree

## CHAPTER 18



# Presenting as a Team

Shawn McKinsey and his team took their places at the front of the conference room. Ninety-seven people listened attentively as Shawn welcomed the audience and introduced his team. One by one, all eight of his colleagues presented the results of their research into the viability of a \$7 million business initiative. Asking the company to spend \$7 million is a daunting task, but when the top fifty executives from your company are watching to see how well you handle the challenge of researching and presenting your case, the stakes go way up.

This scenario is real. Many companies invite teams of their high-potential managers to come together to receive training and research skills. These teams then act as internal consultants who investigate a business opportunity within the company. The process culminates with a persuasive presentation for the key stakeholders. It truly is a win/win situation. The company wins when it gets “free” consulting. The managers win when they get to be seen and heard by the top executives of their corporation.

Organizations invest thousands of dollars in improving their employees’ presentation techniques. Everyone from sales representatives to project managers and from executives to their assistants must communicate with other people. These



companies know they are investing in their future. Successful presentations can result in millions of dollars in sales and thousands of dollars' worth of goodwill. The cost of poor communication is hard to measure, because we don't know what might have been.

## Why Use a Team of Speakers?

Group presentations are often used for work group or project team reports, major sales meetings, and panels. Teams of speakers may be chosen to showcase the knowledge of certain people, introduce key members of the hierarchy, or just to add variety in a long presentation.

Sometimes organizations have politically oriented reasons for choosing a team format. Perhaps key members of a work team are poor speakers, a high-level executive may be especially nervous, or an audience member might have a connection with several people on the team. The key is to know your audience and its expectations. Once you've determined those things, match your team's skills, abilities, and needs to them.

Most of the basic rules that apply to a single speaker apply to group presentations. Here are some additional tips for preparing and presenting in situations involving more than one speaker.

### Bonus Point

Will you be working with a group over a long period of time? If group members have a history of getting too rowdy, try instituting a code of conduct. To get compliance, include all members in creating the rules.

## Preparing for a Group Presentation

Preparing to speak as a team is just a little more difficult than preparing to present alone. Consider the following factors when putting together a team production:

- **Practice together.** Practice your presentation together as a group as well as individually. Time spent together is essential for your team to check for



consistent tone, terms, and styles among all members. Practice making the transitions from speaker to speaker until they are seamless. Your words, as well as your physical movements, should appear smooth, natural, and professional.

For a twenty-minute corporate presentation like Shawn's, the team rehearsed together for a total of about ten hours. Individually, each team member invested another ten hours in practice time.

### Speaking of . . . Questions to Help Your Team Prepare

- Who needs what information?
- How often will we communicate?
- How will we communicate? By e-mail? Phone? Web meeting software?
- How can we confirm that we understand each other?
- When should we call a special meeting?
- Do we have a checklist?
- Do we have defined tasks?
- Is the schedule clear?
- How will we handle last-minute changes?

- **Manage your time.** Team presentations take more time and practice than individual speeches. They require more initial coordination with clear assignments to avoid lost time due to confusion of roles or purpose. Arrive for meetings on time, use e-mail and Web meetings to keep everyone up-to-date, and don't procrastinate. Begin immediately. For high-stakes team presentations, create a communication plan, a simple form to document communication responsibilities and schedules. Allow for just a little more time than you think you'll need.

- **Have a backup.** Things will go wrong. If you prepare well enough, no one will know when the pieces don't come together as planned. Have a person prepared to stand in for each speaker, just in case. The backup has to be comfortable with not only the words but also the appropriate style to get the message across.



- **Share the stage.** Not all members of a large group have to speak during the presentation. An ideal number is four to six presenters. Fewer than four speakers may not seem representative of a large group, and the transitions between more than six speakers can seem choppy. Other participants can be assigned to gather data, make the visual aids, or prepare the script and notes. Everyone representing the group should be available to answer questions. If you are a participant in a training class, ask the instructor if the group assignment means everyone is required to speak. If the audience expects to see you all present, then everyone should speak.

In Shawn's case, the corporation expects to see everyone take the stage, so all nine people spoke in the twenty-minute time frame. As a rule of thumb, a twenty-minute presentation should be filled by no more than five speakers unless there is a compelling reason to include more voices.

- **Use slides with consistent fonts, templates, colors, and styles.** When possible, one person should prepare visual aids for the entire team. Putting one person in charge ensures a consistent appearance and reduces any confusion about the final version. That person can also ensure that the number of slides assigned to each person is relatively consistent. A team's coordinated presentation appearance supports the perception of teamwork.

- **Know your environment.** Check out the physical setup before the audience arrives. Prepare and practice with that setup in mind. If the room is rearranged when you get there, return it to the agreed-on style if possible. If you can't change the arrangement, hold a quick discussion among group members to determine any adjustments you must make. Make sure everyone understands the changes.

- **Look like a team.** Perception is important, so use consistent clothing to enhance your team image. Dress in a similar style and complementary colors. A combination of suits and jeans sends a mixed message to the audience. Dress to match the setting, the topic, and the expectations of the audience. In Shawn's case, his company orders matching golf shirts for each team member, and everyone wears black or khaki matching slacks.

## Presenting as a Group

Just as preparing for a team presentation is slightly more complicated than preparing to speak alone, presenting as a team is also a bit more demanding. These ideas will help your team look and sound great:



- **Listen to each other.** Pay special attention during the question-and-answer period. Don't step on each other's lines, which means don't begin speaking until other panel members have finished. If a question has been answered incompletely or needs to be clarified, other panel members should feel free to add to the answer. Do so tactfully and without making the first speaker or group feel embarrassed.
- **Nonverbal communication counts.** Remember that the whole panel is onstage before, during, and after the presentation. Give full attention to the speaker; don't look around the room, practice your speech, or talk with someone else on your panel. While one person from the group is speaking, all other members should keep their eyes on the presenter.
- **Develop your own language.** Agree on a signal that the group members can use to indicate that a speaker's time is up. The signal should be unrecognizable to the audience but clear to the group. Trust each other for cues on posture, eye contact, or other distracting behaviors.
- **Share the Q&A time.** When the formal part of the presentation ends, all members of the group should either sit or stand together to take questions. The last speaker should not be the only one left standing, since audience members are then tempted to direct all questions to that person. For each question, the team member to answer should be the one who has the best information and is most comfortable with the topic.
- **Take back your power.** At the end of the question-and-answer period, one person should be prepared to give a quick wrap-up, reviewing the most important points. Return the audience's focus to your message, not just the last question.

For any group presentation, think *team*. Work together, support each other, and emphasize the best skills of each speaker.



## QUIZ

1. When preparing for a group presentation, what should the team avoid doing?
  - (a) Practicing each other's material
  - (b) Practicing together
  - (c) Expecting individual speakers to prepare their own slides
  - (d) Dressing alike
2. Slides used by the group should:
  - (a) Use a common template
  - (b) Use a consistent tone and message
  - (c) Be about equal in number from speaker to speaker
  - (d) All of the above
3. An investment group chose three construction companies as finalists to bid on the contract to build a shopping center. The investors invited representatives from all three companies to meet at a conference center to present their proposals. You're the project manager for CSL Contractors, a finalist in the bid process. Which is the best way to start your preparation?
  - (a) Start practicing your most important points right away.
  - (b) Choose what you will wear.
  - (c) Determine who will be in the audience, and choose your team members.
  - (d) Visit the conference center to determine your main points.
4. Continuing the scenario in question 3, when you arrive at the conference center on the day of your presentation, what should you do?
  - (a) Meet the technical support person.
  - (b) Check the room setup.
  - (c) Confirm that everyone is dressed in a similar style.
  - (d) All of the above



5. What does a communication plan *not* include?
- (a) Your slides
  - (b) The medium you'll use to communicate with the team
  - (c) How often you'll communicate
  - (d) The people with whom you'll speak

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## CHAPTER 19



# Stuff Happens

It was Monday morning, and I was doing a program on presentation skills for a group of fifty managers. I arrived an hour early and began to set up. When the projector was connected, the client's laptop couldn't read some of my slides. No problem. I attached my own laptop to the projector. The projector wouldn't recognize my laptop. No problem. I reattached the client's computer while I began to remove the slides that wouldn't work with their system. With ten minutes until my start time, Burt, the tech support manager, arrived and began to adjust the projector. When he got everything connected, the slides came up on the screen—upside down. No problem.

With only a few minutes left until showtime, I knew I needed to focus on how I would proceed. I let the technical team deal with the computer while I left the room and created a new introduction. I decided how I could make the whole situation an example of how easily things can go wrong. After all, I was teaching a presentation skills course, and the class needed to know about these things. With only two minutes until showtime, Burt managed to get the slides upright, and I went back to my original plan. No problem!



No matter how prepared you are, well, stuff happens. If you apply good project risk management to your presentation, you can head off most big challenges. Previous chapters have addressed ideas to avoid problems, so some of these suggestions have already been addressed, and some of the ideas are new.

Occasionally, situations are simply disasters, but most of the time, if you've done your homework, you can pull off your presentation with style. Let's look at risks you can avoid, risks you can plan for, and then emergencies and situations that spell disaster.

### Speaking of . . . Great Quotes

*Experience is a cruel teacher. She gives you the exam first and the lesson afterwards.*

—UNKNOWN

## Risks You Can Avoid

These disasters can be avoided if you prepare for them ahead of time. Consider these suggestions every time you're conducting a presentation.

### THE AUDIENCE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND OR ALREADY KNOWS YOUR MATERIAL

Your due diligence in conducting an audience analysis will eliminate or reduce the chances of having to deal with an audience that isn't on the same wavelength. If you sense that the group isn't responding to you as you expected, stop and ask a few questions. Adjust your material or style on the spot, based on audience members' responses. If they don't have enough background, you'll need to explain your material starting from a broad understanding and moving to a narrower focus. Don't get more specific than you must to cover your topic. If the group already knows some of your material, verbally acknowledge that by saying something like, "As many of you may be aware . . ." Then make sure to add a brief explanation for those who have no background. This honors those who had previous knowledge as well as those who did not.



## THE AUDIENCE SIZE DOUBLES—OR SHRINKS

You can give the same information to an audience of any size, but the way in which you give it should vary. If you've planned to use a lecture style with a very large audience and the group shrinks to thirty or so, move everyone to the front of the room, and create some interaction as you speak. If your audience is bigger than expected, make sure there are enough seats for everyone. If you are the only speaker, you need to stay in the front of the room, so enlist help to wrangle more chairs.

The larger the audience, the more formal you will have to be. Use a microphone, and stand or walk to a spot where everyone can see you. If you need more materials, ask for support from an audience member or a coworker. Remember that you need to be the speaker, not the administrator.

### Bonus Point

If you forget one of the main points of your talk, cut to the conclusion. You can get back on track during the question-and-answer session by saying, “And there is one more thing I want to share with you . . .”

## Risks You Can Prepare For

Sometimes disasters just happen. When you have developed a “disaster preparedness plan” you can be ready should any of these problems occur. Consider these suggestions every time you're preparing a presentation.

### FORGETTING TO BRING YOUR LAPTOP

If you forget to bring your computer to the presentation, the solution is easy—if another computer is available at your presentation site. Always copy your presentation to a flash drive, so you can load your slides and handouts onto another computer if necessary. If you choose to let someone else have a copy of the presentation and no confidential information is included, e-mail it in advance. If there is no computer at your speaking location, either borrow one from a participant or work from the printed copy of your slides you bring with you. Always travel with hard copies of your presentation.



If you use standard software like PowerPoint or Keynote to prepare your slides, you can reduce your chances of having the challenge I faced when the client's computer wouldn't read my slides. Whenever possible, check all the technology you'll be using ahead of the big day. Make sure to run through *all* of your slides at the presentation site since not all graphics are compatible with every system. It's possible that one slide will look great but the next one won't project.

### Bonus Point

If you're traveling to give your presentation, pack a hard copy of your material, your notes, a flash drive, and any props or handouts in your carry-on luggage.

## TECHNICAL FAILURE

Most venues that provide microphones also provide a technical-support person. Get to know that person, and get his or her cell-phone number before your talk. The facility will usually have a backup system for you to use. If your computer breaks down, the show must go on. Always know your material well enough that technology is only a support for you. The important part of the content is *you* and your message, not the slide.

### Bonus Points

When a video is embedded in your presentation, be sure to turn off the sound when the video is finished, to avoid a background buzz.

## POWER OUTAGE

Safety first. If you experience a power outage caused by a serious storm, fire, or any other potential disaster, follow the safety rules of the building. Otherwise, if the room is still bright enough to see, people are willing to stay, and you don't need a



microphone to be heard, be prepared to speak without any electronic support. One of the most powerful client sales meetings I know of took place in a conference room lighted only by natural window light. When the power went out, the presenter deviated from her plan and started an informal question-and-answer session. Ten years later, the client still remembers the meeting when the relationship with that vendor began.

## **FIRE DRILL OR FIRE ALARM**

The fire alarm goes off during presentations more often than you might think. If there is a fire drill, get out of the building. This seems simple, but before speaking, ask yourself, “Do I know the emergency exit route?” If you’re at a client site or conference center, the answer is usually no. The audience looks to you as a leader, so complete your due diligence in advance.

The biggest challenge I’ve encountered with fire alarms occurred with a new, malfunctioning system in a center-city office building. The alarm went off an average of three times a week, and everyone at this client site just ignored it and continued business as usual. As a speaker, it’s a tough call whether to comply with safety rules or the norms of your client. Again, safety first.

## **PREVIOUS SPEAKERS WHO EXCEED THEIR TIME LIMITS**

One of the most annoying situations a speaker can face is following a speaker who goes beyond his or her time limits. When a portion of your time onstage has been used up by others, your best bet is to cut to the chase. An audience is not willing to sit through an extra twenty minutes of talking just so you can tell them everything you had prepared to say—especially if people are hungry!

You can handle having your time cut short by telling the audience that you know everyone would like to stay on schedule, so you’ll be giving just the key points everyone needs to know, and you’ll welcome comments and questions at the end of your session. To identify what info to cut and what to keep, you can fall back on the surefire formula of introduction, three main points, and conclusion that ties back to the introduction. This allows audience members to get the key points while you honor their time constraints. They will appreciate your consideration. Once you’ve given your abbreviated talk, stay visible and available for anyone who would like to discuss your material further.



### Bonus Point

The audience's eyes will follow yours. If someone comes in late, most of your audience will ignore the latecomer if you, the speaker, ignore her.

## NEW MEETING DATE

If the meeting date is suddenly moved up, simplify! Determine what is most important for you to research, who your audience will be, and what audience members expect of you. Enlist help. Focus on what you'll say, *not* on creating slides or supporting material. Creating slides is a huge time consumer. Quickly decide the information you'll be sharing, and start rehearsing. If you've overlooked something important, either the audience will ask about it, or you can use the oversight as an opportunity to follow up with the group in the future.

## Emergencies

Emergencies call for quick reactions. If you've considered what you might do in an emergency situation, you're likely to respond in a positive manner. The following are examples of emergency situations.

### ILLNESS

If you get sick when you are scheduled to make a presentation, the answer to what to do is usually "The show must go on." If, however, you're about to pass out or have any gastrointestinal challenges, consider the health of the audience, and attempt to get a replacement speaker or reschedule. If you have a cold or congestion, you can probably stand before an audience without sounding too stuffy. Most of us tend to think we sound far worse than we really do. If you don't focus on feeling less than 100 percent, the healthy body takes over, and you can sound just fine.

If your audience is small and the stakes are low, maybe the meeting can be rescheduled. If the stakes are high, the event should go on. If you're not sure whether you should speak, ask the person who scheduled the meeting. Sometimes it's simple to reschedule an event. Sometimes it's not. If you are working with a meeting planner, let that person make the final decision on cancellation.



## **PERSONAL EMERGENCY**

What to do when you have a family emergency is obviously a judgment call. If you need to rush off immediately to be at the bedside of someone you love, then go. But you still have the responsibility of notifying someone who can either take over for you or reschedule the event. As a professional, you must take all of your responsibilities seriously.

## **Disasters**

Sometimes disasters happen and we can't prepare for them. The following are examples of disasters.

### **YOUR BOSS ACTS INAPPROPRIATELY DURING YOUR PRESENTATION**

Occasionally, an unfortunate presenter has a boss who behaves inappropriately during the presentation—say, interrupting, criticizing, or texting while the presentation is going on. That's a tough situation, and there is no one right way to handle it. If it happens to you, you need to accomplish two things: help the boss save face and still give accurate, appropriate material in your presentation. With some finesse, you can accomplish both. Discuss the situation with the boss in private only; contradicting your boss in public is seldom a good idea. The outcome of this situation depends on the personalities involved. Even when an employee handles a situation with great tact, a bad boss can still respond any way he or she wants to respond. When your boss acts up, it can truly be a disaster.

### **THE AUDIENCE WALKS OUT**

If one or two people in your audience walk out while you are presenting, remember that sometimes people need to leave for personal reasons having nothing to do with you or your presentation. The best thing you can do is honor their need to go and perhaps reschedule time with them. However, if several people unexpectedly head for the door, you might want to stop and ask for feedback from those who are headed out. Did you say or do something that was misinterpreted? If anyone in the audience responds to you, you'll have valuable information to correct the situation. You might find out that the people were just in the wrong room. If you don't get any feedback and the rest of the audience is still interested, use humor to regain your



composure, and simply go on with your presentation. Do some sleuthing afterward to determine if you could have done something to avoid the problem.

## **SOMEONE HAS HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK**

Alcohol and public speaking just don't mix. If you're speaking, avoid drinking alcohol. If you've been drinking, don't speak. If your audience has been drinking, keep your talk short, and don't expect to cover anything in depth. When a group's attention is clearly impaired after drinking too much, cut to the chase and end early. If one person is out of line, enlist the help of the audience to keep the focus on your talk. The situation will dictate whether the person should be removed or just quieted. If he is rude, sloppy, or threatening, you may want to have security remove him from the premises. Neither you nor your audience should ever put yourself in danger when dealing with someone who has had too much to drink.

## **Serendipity**

Not all risks associated with your presentation are threats. Along with looking at the negative effects of risks, it's smart to think of the opportunities that can present themselves. Opportunities can come serendipitously, they pop up from scanning the environment for possibilities, and they simply show up when they say yes to situations that present themselves to us. You can create positive opportunities by being open to them.

Serendipity occurs when you're looking for one thing and unexpectedly find something else that turns out to be even more valuable than what you were expecting.

## **SCAN THE ENVIRONMENT**

To make serendipity more likely, constantly scan your environment, expecting to find new opportunities everywhere. Do you remember the arm exercise described in Chapter 1? From the arm exercise, you learned that when you think negative thoughts, your body responds negatively and becomes weak. Conversely, when you think positively, your body becomes stronger. Since our thoughts influence the way we respond, we get what we think about most. When you expect to find new opportunities, they seem to pop up everywhere.

Use that philosophy whenever you are called on to speak. Preparing your material might present an opportunity to call someone you've wanted to meet. Most



people are willing to help someone else accomplish a goal—especially if that person is a student. Maybe your research will uncover a path to a new product or a process that will save you time and money. Scan your audience for a potential new client, a high-level manager, or a competitor who might be impressed with what you have to say. Who knows what might show up when you're open to possibilities?

## **Speaking of . . . Serendipitous Discoveries**

Here are some examples of serendipitous discoveries in our world today:

- Chocolate chip cookies
- Velcro
- Viagra
- Coffee
- Safety glass
- Post-it notes
- Rogaine
- Cornflakes
- Rubber
- Dynamite
- Penicillin
- Silly Putty
- Teflon
- Scotchgard fabric protector
- NutraSweet
- Retin-A

## **Bonus Point**

Turn off your own cell phone! It's especially embarrassing when the speaker's phone goes off. If a cell phone goes off in the audience, say something humorous as a reminder to silence all phones. If it happens a second time, ignore it and move on.



Another way to increase your serendipitous opportunities is to simply say yes. Have you been asked to speak? Say yes! Asked to help someone else do research? Say yes! Asked to sit in and watch someone else speak? Say yes! Some of the most interesting and productive relationships have been created when someone simply said yes. You can create positive opportunities for yourself by simply being open to possibilities.

## QUIZ

1. What should you do if a fire alarm goes off during your talk?
  - (a) Talk louder.
  - (b) Get out.
  - (c) Get the audience out, and then leave yourself.
  - (d) Call for help.
2. What should you do if your slides won't work?
  - (a) Do your presentation without the slides.
  - (b) Try to use your slides on another computer.
  - (c) Ask for technical help.
  - (d) All of the above
3. What should you do if your lead-in speaker talks too long?
  - (a) Stick with your original plan; you can still get in all of your material.
  - (b) Ask the audience for a few more minutes to make up for the time you lost.
  - (c) Shorten your presentation, and end on time.
  - (d) Complain about the previous speaker.
4. What should you do if you feel sick on the day you're scheduled to speak?
  - (a) Reschedule to a time more convenient for you.
  - (b) Speak as planned.
  - (c) Ask the meeting planner what he or she would like you to do.
  - (d) It depends.



5. What is serendipity?
- (a) A sense of peacefulness
  - (b) A speech software program
  - (c) An accidental discovery
  - (d) Sound judgment in making decisions

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# ANSWER KEY



## CHAPTER 1

1. b      2. d      3. b      4. a      5. d

## CHAPTER 2

1. c      2. c      3. d      4. d      5. a

## CHAPTER 3

1. d\*      2. c      3. b      4. c      5. a

\*The most accurate facts would come from the Internet and the library. The most accurate human interest details might come from interviews.

## CHAPTER 4

1. a      2. b      3. d      4. c      5. b

## CHAPTER 5

1. a      2. d      3. b      4. c      5. c

**CHAPTER 6**

1. d      2. c      3. c, d\*      4. a      5. b

\*Question 3 is a trick question, because answers c and d could both be correct. Answer c (six minutes) is 10 percent of the total allotted time for the talk. Answer d (it depends) is correct, too. Every situation is unique, and the only absolute is to keep the intro to less than 10 percent of the total talk time.

**CHAPTER 7**

1. a      2. b      3. c      4. a      5. d

**CHAPTER 8**

1. c      2. d      3. d      4. a      5. a

**CHAPTER 9**

1. c      2. d      3. a      4. d      5. d

**CHAPTER 10**

1. d      2. d      3. a      4. c      5. c

**CHAPTER 11**

1. c      2. c      3. d      4. c      5. b

**CHAPTER 12**

1. b      2. b      3. a      4. b      5. b

**CHAPTER 13**

1. d      2. a      3. c      4. b      5. c

**CHAPTER 14**

1. b      2. b      3. b      4. b      5. d

**CHAPTER 15**

1. b      2. c      3. b      4. a      5. d

**CHAPTER 16**

1. b      2. a      3. b\*      4. d      5. b

\*Two checks are generally enough, but if you run into problems, you may need more test sessions.

**CHAPTER 17**

1. a      2. d      3. c      4. b      5. a

**CHAPTER 18**

1. c      2. d      3. c      4. d      5. a

**CHAPTER 19**

1. c      2. d      3. c      4. d\*      5. c

\*Each of these answers is viable, depending on the situation. The key is to be responsible to all parties involved.

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## TIPS FROM THE PROS BIOS



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