

MPS 1  
Introduction to Public Speaking

Why study public speaking?

**Personal Benefits**

Mastering public speaking can help you acquire skills important to your success in college

Language and thought are inextricably connected, and as undergraduates develop their linguistic skills [including listening], they hone the quality of their thinking and become intellectually and socially empowered.

Includes analyzing, researching, organizing, wording, and delivering

These skills are transferable

They can help you anywhere you go & communicate

Can help you become more knowledgeable:

We remember:

10 % of what we read

20% of what we hear

30% of what we see

**70% of what we speak!**

Can help you become more confident

**Professional Benefits**

Strong relationship between communication competence and career success

Effective speaking skills help you secure a job *and* advance your career

Characteristics employers consider important: oral communication skills [including listening] rank first, followed by written communication skills

Your ability to stand in front of a group of people and effectively present your ideas is important to your career success

Effective communication helps improve productivity and understanding among employees

76% of executives give oral reports

If you're unable to effectively communicate in public, there are many rungs on the ladder of success that will be beyond your reach

There's a connection between effective public communication and successfully obtaining/ engaging positions of high responsibility and authority

### **Public Benefits**

Public speaking can help you play a role (and important roles) as a member of society

Public speaking is an important part of creating and sustaining a society of informed, active citizens

A democratic society is shaped, in part, by the eloquence of its leaders

### **Definitions of Communication**

To appreciate the power of communication, you must understand just what it is.

The word 'communicate' comes from the Latin *communico*: to share, divide out, give a share in, impart, inform by speaking or writing.

Communication is both a process and a product:

**“The sharing of meaning by sending and receiving symbolic cues”**

Interpreter: the speaker or listener

Symbol: anything to which people attach or assign a meaning

Referent: the object or idea each interpreter attaches to a symbol

The symbols I select 'refer' to the referents I have in mind that I believe the symbols 'stand' for

Referencing: the interpretive act of putting symbols together with referents

There's NO guarantee that we will attach the same referents to the same symbols

Fundamental source of misunderstanding

**So—bottom line:**

Words and other symbols have no inherent meaning. People have meanings; words do not

Or

**“Meanings are in people, not in words.”**

As a public speaker you must ensure that the message your audience hears matches as closely as possible the message you intended

## You must be audience-centered

**Public communication:** one person speaks face-to-face with an audience

### Elements of Communication

#### Speaker

Initiates communication

Sender

Source

Encoder—chooses symbols

#### Message

The ideas communicated by a speaker (maybe be unintentional)

Ideas do not walk by themselves; they must be carried—expressed and voiced—by someone. As a result, we do not encounter ideas neutrally, objectively, or apart from a context; we meet them as *someone's* ideas.

#### Listener

The decoder or receiver

Attaches meanings to the words, gestures, voice inflections (and more) received

At the same time, *listeners communicate* that they are listening (and speakers 'listen to' observe this communication while they are speaking!)

Cannot 'not' communicate

#### Feedback (see above)

All messages, verbal and nonverbal, sent by listeners to speakers

Because public speaking is an audience-centered activity, you as a speaker must be sensitive to feedback from your audience

You must be willing and able to adapt and respond to feedback *during* the course of your speech (called: 'ongoing audience analysis & adaptation')

e.g. if most of the audience looks puzzled—looks like they do not understand what you're talking about—you need to make some adjustments—maybe in word-choice, engage repetition, use an analogy, etc.

### Environment

#### The occasion of the speech

The reason people have assembled

Funeral? Somber?  
 Lecture? Intrinsic interest?  
 Political Convention? Celebration of values  
 Commencement? Formal?  
 National crisis? Uncertainty?

Dictates orders of appropriateness—decorum—*kairos* (time-timing)  
*To prepon*: fitting speech  
 What's expected  
 What does a President say in a *time* of national  
 crisis?

### The physical setting *where* the speech takes place

You should know the size of the room and the number of people in the audience

You should know whether the seating arrangement is fixed or changeable

You should know whether the venue has a lectern or Internet access

### Problems?

Is the lectern wobbly?

Is the venue hot and stuffy?

Are there buzzing fluorescent lights?

Is there a driveway/loading dock outside where trucks are backing in and pulling out?

Beep Beep Beep

**Whenever possible, manipulate the physical setting to your advantage—even to the point of changing the venue**

e.g. if the venue is huge and you're expecting a fairly small audience, move to a smaller location

### Noise

Anything that distracts from effective communication

Some form of noise is always present

Physical: sounds of traffic, air conditioners, people talking and laughing as they walk past the venue, climate, lighting, smells, anything in the immediate environment that interferes with communication

Physiological: a bad cold that affects your hearing and speech, a headache, and empty growling stomach, etc.

Psychological: distractions originating in the thoughts of communicators—anxieties, worries, daydreaming—can occur together with physiological noise, or independently

### **The public speaker as critical thinker**

Practicing public speaking can help develop your critical thinking abilities  
Reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do

Enables you to:

Focus: define problems, set goals and select pieces of information

Gather information: formulate questions and gather data

Remember: store information in long-term memory and retrieve it

Organize: arrange information so that it can be understood and presented more effectively

Analyze: clarify existing information by examining parts and relationship

Generate: use prior knowledge to infer and elaborate new information and ideas

Integrate: combine, summarize, and restructure information

Evaluate: establish criteria and assess the quality of ideas and information

### **In order to perfect your critical thinking abilities you must *care***

Caring is a necessary characteristic of critical thinkers for arguments and ideas do not have a life of their own; they are generated by people and critical thinking is an activity performed by people.

*What* a knower brings to the knowing and *how* a knower relates to the knowing are as important as the knowing itself

Caring helps us as speakers and listeners

Caring is being receptive to what another has to say and open to hearing the other's voice more completely and fairly

Critical thinkers care enough to be reasonable and to think clearly

To constitute a way of being together that fosters a community of caring, careful thinkers by means of caring acts of speaking and listening.

So—public speaking offers personal, professional, and public benefits

It is an audience-centered enterprise that may constitute a quality of community by means of its performance—again, by means of public acts of speaking *and* listening.