CHAPTER TWELVE

Presenting Your Message

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Stage fright is one of the most formidable barriers to effective speaking. In this chapter, we will look at

- The differences between facilitative and debilitative stage fright
- The sources of debilitative stage fright
- Ways to overcome debilitative stage fright

One of the first things to consider when preparing a speech is the style of delivery. In this chapter we will look at four types:

- Extemporaneous
- Impromptu
- Manuscript
- Memorized

Practicing your speech is essential. In this chapter, we will present a series of guidelines for doing so.

This chapter presents guidelines for effective delivery. These guidelines are of two types:

- Those dealing with the visual aspects of delivery
- Those dealing with the auditory aspects of delivery

Finally, this chapter will discuss guidelines for presenting effective criticism of your classmates' speeches in class.

All great speakers were bad speakers at first.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

You've developed a purpose, you've chosen and researched a topic that suits your own interests, your audience, and the occasion. You feel confident about your ability to organize your ideas in a logical, effective way, and you've built up a healthy reserve of supporting material. But all that doesn't solve your primary problem: When you think about the actual act of standing before a group, your self-confidence begins to erode. What if your hands shake, or your voice squeaks? What if you forget what you wanted to say? All of these questions make the prospect of talking to an audience seem threatening.

Because the act of speaking before a group of listeners may be a relatively new one for you, we'll look at the process now. The purpose of this chapter is to make you feel more confident about yourself as a speaker and to give you a clearer idea of how to behave before an audience. We will begin with a look at the topic of stage fright.

According to most surveys, the number 1 fear for most people is public speaking. Number 2 is death. Now this means, to the average person, if you have to go to a funeral you're better off in the casket than giving the eulogy.

Jerry Seinfeld

DEALING WITH STAGE FRIGHT

The terror that strikes the hearts of so many beginning speakers is called *communication apprehension* or *speech anxiety* by communication scholars, but it is more commonly known to those who experience it as *stage fright.*

Facilitative and Debilitative Stage Fright

Although stage fright is a very real problem for many speakers, it is a problem that can be overcome. In fact, research suggests that the problem can be overcome in basic communication courses such as the one you are taking now.[1] Interestingly enough, the first step in feeling less apprehensive about speaking is to realize that a certain amount of nervousness is not only natural but also facilitative. That is, **facilitative stage fright** is a factor that can help improve your performance. Just as totally relaxed actors or musicians aren't likely to perform at the top of their potential, speakers think more rapidly and express themselves more energetically when their level of tension is moderate.

It is only when the level of anxiety is intense that it becomes **debilitative,** inhibiting effective self-expression. Intense fear causes trouble in two ways. First, the strong emotion keeps you from thinking clearly.[2] This has been shown to be a problem even in the preparation process: Students who are highly anxious about giving a speech will find the preliminary steps, including research and organization, to be more difficult.[3] Second, intense fear leads to an urge to do something, anything, to make the problem go away. This urge to escape often causes a speaker to speed up delivery, which results in a rapid, almost machine-gun style. As you can imagine, this boost in speaking rate leads to even more mistakes, which only add to the speaker's anxiety. Thus, a relatively small amount of nervousness can begin to feed on itself until it grows into a serious problem.

Sources of Debilitative Stage Fright

Before we describe how to manage debilitative stage fright, it might be helpful to look at why people are afflicted with the problem.[4]

PREVIOUS NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE People often feel apprehensive about speech giving because of unpleasant past experiences. Most of us are uncomfortable doing *anything* in public, especially if it is a form of performance in which our talents and abilities are being evaluated. An unpleasant experience in one type of performance can cause you to expect that a future similar situation will also be unpleasant.[5] These expectations can be realized through the self-fulfilling prophecies discussed in Chapter 2. A traumatic failure at an earlier speech and low self-esteem from critical parents during childhood are common examples of experiences that can cause later stage fright.

You might object to the idea that past experiences cause stage fright. After all, not everyone who has bungled a speech or had critical parents is debilitated in the future. To understand why some people are affected more strongly than others by past experiences, we need to consider another cause of speech anxiety.

IRRATIONAL THINKING Cognitive psychologists argue that it is not events that cause people to feel nervous but rather the beliefs they have about those events. Certain irrational beliefs leave people feeling unnecessarily apprehensive. Psychologist Albert Ellis lists several such beliefs, or examples of **irrational thinking,** which we will call "fallacies" because of their illogical nature.[6]

1. **Catastrophic failure.** People who succumb to the **fallacy of catastrophic failure** operate on the assumption that if something bad can happen, it probably will. Their thoughts before a speech resemble these:

   "As soon as I stand up to speak, I'll forget everything I wanted to say."

   "Everyone will think my ideas are stupid."

   "Somebody will probably laugh at me."

   Although it is naive to imagine that all your speeches will be totally successful, it is equally naive to assume they will all fail miserably. One way to escape the fallacy of catastrophic failure is to take a more realistic look at the situation. Would your audience members really hoot you off the stage? Will they really think your ideas are stupid? Even if you did forget your remarks for a moment, would the results be a genuine disaster? It helps to remember that nervousness is more apparent to the speaker than to the audience.[7] Beginning public speakers, when congratulated for their poise during a speech, are apt to make such remarks as "Are you kidding? I was *dying* up there."
2. **Perfection.** Speakers who succumb to the **fallacy of perfection** expect themselves to behave flawlessly. Whereas such a standard of perfection might serve as a target and a source of inspiration (like the desire to make a hole in one while golfing), it is totally unrealistic to expect that you will write and deliver a perfect speech—especially as a beginner. It helps to remember that audiences don't expect you to be perfect.
3. **Approval.** The mistaken belief called the **fallacy of approval** is based on the idea that it is vital—not just desirable—to gain the approval of everyone in the audience. It is rare that even the best speakers please everyone, especially on topics that are at all controversial. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, you can't please all the people all the time—and it is irrational to expect you will.

CULTURAL IDIOM

bungled: done something imperfectly

hoot: express rude and disparaging remarks

a hole in one: hitting the golf ball in the hole with one swing of the club, a perfect shot

I have a slight inferiority complex still. I go into a room and have to talk myself into going up to people. If I'm the epitome of a woman who is always confident and in control, don't ever believe it of anyone.

Barbara Walters

I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everyone.

Bill Cosby

CULTURAL IDIOM

blows . . . out of proportion: exaggerates

freeze up: become immobilized through fear

give . . . the edge: provide an advantage

4. **Overgeneralization.** The **fallacy of overgeneralization** might also be labeled the fallacy of exaggeration, because it occurs when a person blows one poor experience out of proportion. Consider these examples:

"I'm so stupid! I mispronounced that word."

"I completely blew it—I forgot one of my supporting points."

"My hands were shaking. The audience must have thought I was a complete idiot."

A second type of exaggeration occurs when a speaker treats occasional lapses as if they were the rule rather than the exception. This sort of mistake usually involves extreme labels, such as "always" or "never."

"I *always* forget what I want to say."

"I can *never* come up with a good topic."

"I can't do *anything* right."

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear.

Mark Twain

Overcoming Debilitative Stage Fright

There are five strategies that can help you manage debilitative stage fright:

1. **Use nervousness to your advantage.** Paralyzing fear is obviously a problem, but a little nervousness can actually help you deliver a successful speech. Most athletes testify that a bit of anxiety before an event boosts their energy. The same thing is true in speaking: Being completely calm can take away the passion that is one element of a good speech. Use the strategies below to *control* your anxiety, but don't try to completely eliminate it.

2. **Be rational about your fears.** Some fears about speaking are rational. For example, you ought to be worried if you haven't researched or practiced your speech, and it's reasonable to be afraid of a hostile audience. But other fears are based on the fallacies you read about on pages 389 and 390. It's not realistic to expect that you'll deliver a perfect speech, or that everyone in the audience will find your remarks totally fascinating. It's not rational to indulge in catastrophic fantasies about what might go wrong. For example, if you are afraid that you are going to freeze up in front of an audience, analyze in advance how likely that occurrence actually is. And then analyze why that event, even if it did happen, would not be catastrophic.
3. **Maintain a receiver orientation.** Paying too much attention to your own feelings—even when you're feeling good about yourself—will take energy away from communicating with your listeners. Concentrate on your audience members rather than on yourself. Focus your energy on keeping them interested, and on making sure they understand you.
4. **Keep a positive attitude.** Build and maintain a positive attitude toward your audience, your speech, and yourself as a speaker. Some communication consultants suggest that public speakers should concentrate on three statements immediately before speaking. The three statements are:

I'm glad I have the chance to talk about this topic

I know what I'm talking about.

I care about my audience.

Nervousness can give your speech the edge—and the passion—all good speeches need. It has always been so; two thousand years ago Cicero said all public speaking of real merit was characterized by nervousness.

Dorothy Leeds

Repeating these statements (as long as you believe them!) can help you maintain a positive attitude.

Another technique for building a positive attitude is known as **visualization.**[8] This technique has been used successfully with athletes. It requires you to use your imagination to visualize the successful completion of your speech. Visualization can help make the self-fulfilling prophecy discussed in Chapter 2 work in your favor.

5. **Most importantly, be prepared!** Preparation is the most important key to controlling speech anxiety. You can feel confident if you know from practice that your remarks are well organized and supported and your delivery is smooth. Researchers have determined that the highest level of speech anxiety occurs just before speaking, the second highest level at the time the assignment is announced and explained, and the lowest level during the time you spend preparing your speech.[9] You should take advantage of this relatively low-stress time to think through the problems that would tend to make you nervous during the actual speech. For example, if your anxiety is based on a fear of forgetting what you are going to say, make sure that your note cards are complete and effective, and that you have practiced your speech thoroughly (we'll go into speech practice in more detail in a moment). If, on the other hand, your great fear is "sounding stupid," then getting started early with lots of research and advanced thinking is the key to relieving your speech anxiety.

TYPES OF DELIVERY

There are four basic types of delivery—extemporaneous, impromptu, manuscript, and memorized. Each type creates a different impression and is appropriate under different conditions. Any speech may incorporate more than one of these types of delivery. For purposes of discussion, however, it is best to consider them separately.

Extemporaneous

An **extemporaneous speech** is planned in advance but presented in a direct, spontaneous manner. Extemporaneous speeches are conversational in tone, which means that they give the audience members the impression that you are talking to them, directly and honestly. Extemporaneous speeches *are* carefully prepared, but they are prepared in such a way that they create what actors call "the illusion of the first time"—in other words, the audience hears your remarks as though they were brand new. This style of speaking is generally accepted to be the most effective, especially for a college class. In a classroom, you generally speak before a small audience (five to fifty people) made up of people with diverse backgrounds. Spontaneity is essential with this type of audience, but so is careful message planning. Extemporaneous speaking allows you to benefit from both careful planning and spontaneous delivery.

Extemporaneous speaking is also the most common type of delivery in the "outside" world. Most of those involved in communication-oriented careers find that the majority of their public speaking is done before audiences who, in terms of size and diversity of interests represented, resemble those found in a college classroom. Professional public speakers recognize the advisability of both careful planning and spontaneity with such an audience.

CULTURAL IDIOM

"for the record": word-for-word documentation

spur-of-the-moment: occurring without warning

off the top of one's head: with little time to plan or think about

Patrick Henry: a gifted orator

wrap it up: finish

A speech presented extemporaneously will be researched, organized, and practiced in advance, but the exact wording of the entire speech will not be memorized or otherwise predetermined. Because you speak from only brief, unobtrusive notes, you are able to move and maintain eye contact with your audience. In fact, one of the keys to successful extemporaneous speaking is to avoid your notes as much as possible, and only refer to them to get yourself back on track if you feel a memory lapse coming on, or to make sure you've covered all your subpoints before moving on to your next main point. Because extemporaneous speaking creates a casual, less-than-formal atmosphere, it can seem normal to stop occasionally and say, "Let me just make sure I've mentioned everything I wanted to tell you about this."

The extemporaneous speech does have some disadvantages. It is difficult to keep exact time limits, to be exact in wording, or to be grammatically perfect with an extemporaneous speech. Therefore, if you are speaking as part of a radio or television broadcast or if your speech will be reproduced "for the record," you might want to use a manuscript or memorize your speech. Also, an extemporaneous speech requires time to prepare. On spur-of-the-moment speaking occasions, you will need to deliver an impromptu speech.

Impromptu

An **impromptu speech** is given off the top of one's head, without preparation. An impromptu speech is often given in an emergency, such as when a scheduled speaker becomes ill and you are suddenly called upon. Lack of preparation is the main problem with impromptu speeches, but there are some advantages to this style of speaking. It is by definition spontaneous. It is the delivery style necessary for informal talks, group discussions, and comments on others' speeches. It also can be an effective training aid; it can teach you to think on your feet and organize your thoughts quickly. To take full advantage of an impromptu speaking opportunity, remember the following points:

1. Take advantage of the time between being called on to speak and actually speaking. Even if you have only a minute, you can still scribble a few brief notes to protect against mental blocks.
2. Don't be afraid to be original; you don't have to remember what every other expert says about your topic—what do *you* say about it? Review your personal experiences and use them. If nothing else, consider questions such as *Who? What? When? Where? How?* and formulate a plan to answer one or more of them.
3. Observe what is going on around you, and respond to it. If there were other speakers, you might agree or disagree with what they said. You can comment on the audience and the occasion, too, as well as on your topic.
4. Keep a positive attitude. Remember that audience expectations are low. Audience members know you have not prepared in advance, and they don't expect you to be Patrick Henry.
5. Finally, and perhaps most important, keep your comments brief. Especially do not prolong your conclusion. If you have said everything you want to say or everything you can remember, wrap it up as neatly as possible and sit down. If you forgot something, it probably wasn't important anyway. If it was, the audience will ask you about it afterward.

It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.

Mark Twain

Manuscript

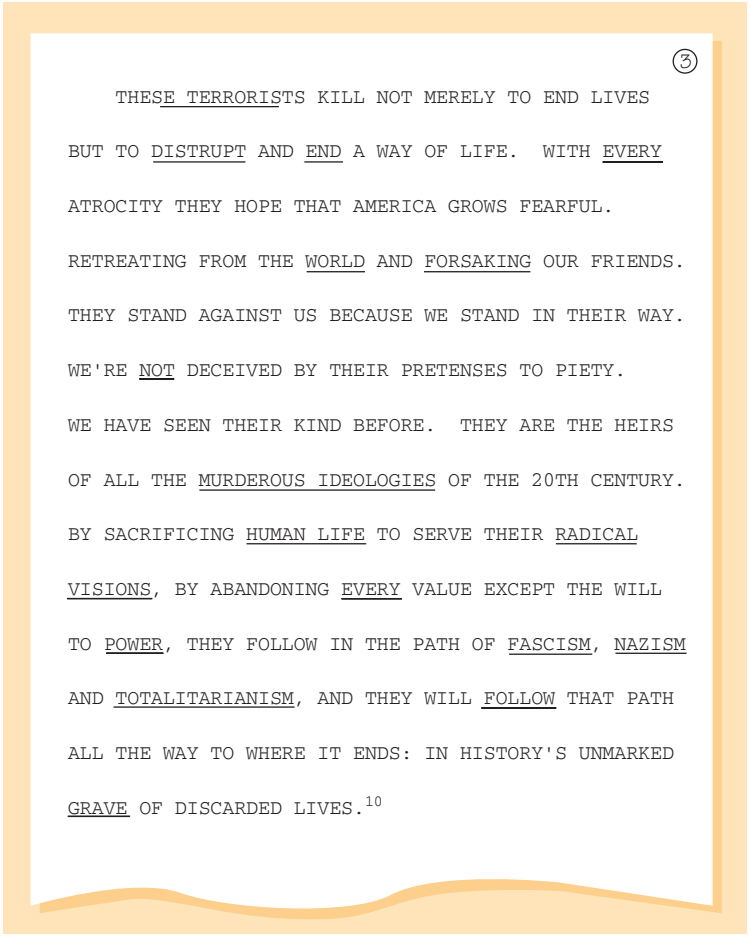
Good results
Are seldom led to
When people feel
They're being read to.

Charles Osgood

Manuscript speeches are read word for word from a prepared text. They are necessary when you are speaking for the record, as when speaking at legal proceedings or when presenting scientific findings. The greatest disadvantage of a manuscript speech is the lack of spontaneity that may result. Manuscript readers have even been known, to their extreme embarrassment, to read their directions by mistake: "and so, let me say in conclusion, look at the audience with great sincerity . . . Oops!"

Manuscript speeches are difficult and cumbersome, but they are sometimes necessary. If you find occasion to use one, here are some guidelines:

1. When writing the speech, recognize the differences between written messages and speeches. Speeches are usually less formal, more repetitive, and more personal than written messages.[11] They use more adverbs, adjectives, and circumlocutions such as "well," and "as you can see." As one expert points out, "Speeches use more words per square thought than well-written essays or reports."[12] So when you write a manuscript speech, write like you talk, not like you're writing a term paper.



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THESE TERRORISTS KILL NOT MERELY TO END LIVES BUT TO DISTRUPT AND END A WAY OF LIFE. WITH EVERY ATROCITY THEY HOPE THAT AMERICA GROWS FEARFUL. RETREATING FROM THE WORLD AND FORSAKING OUR FRIENDS. THEY STAND AGAINST US BECAUSE WE STAND IN THEIR WAY. WE'RE NOT DECEIVED BY THEIR PRETENSES TO PIETY. WE HAVE SEEN THEIR KIND BEFORE. THEY ARE THE HEIRS OF ALL THE MURDEROUS IDEOLOGIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY. BY SACRIFICING HUMAN LIFE TO SERVE THEIR RADICAL VISIONS, BY ABANDONING EVERY VALUE EXCEPT THE WILL TO POWER, THEY FOLLOW IN THE PATH OF FASCISM, NAZISM AND TOTALITARIANISM, AND THEY WILL FOLLOW THAT PATH ALL THE WAY TO WHERE IT ENDS: IN HISTORY'S UNMARKED GRAVE OF DISCARDED LIVES.[10]

Figure 12-1 Part of a Sample Page from a Manuscript Speech (Reduced)

2. Use short paragraphs. They are easier to return to after establishing eye contact with your audience.
3. Print out the manuscript triple spaced, in capital letters, in 14-point font or larger. Underline the words you want to emphasize.
4. Use stiff paper so that it won't fold up or fly away during the speech. Print on only one side, and number the pages by hand with large, circled numbers.
5. Rehearse until you can "read" whole lines without looking at the manuscript.
6. Take your time, vary your speed, and try to concentrate on ideas rather than words.

Memorized

Memorized speeches—those learned by heart—are the most difficult and often the least effective. They often seem excessively formal. However, like manuscript speeches, they may be necessary on special occasions. They are used in oratory contests, and they are used as training devices for memory. They are also used in some political situations. For example, in televised debates between presidential candidates, the candidates are usually allowed to make prepared speeches, but they are not allowed to use notes. Thus, they have to memorize precise, for-the-record wording, and make it sound natural.

The legendary frontiersman Davy Crockett once gave an object lesson on the benefits and hazards of memorized speeches. When he was running for Congress, Crockett always extemporized, adapting to his audience, but his opponent always gave the same memorized speech. So for one debate Crocket memorized his opponent's entire speech and delivered it first, leaving his adversary with nothing to say.[13]

There is only one guideline for a memorized speech: Practice. The speech won't be effective until you have practiced it until you can present it with that "illusion of the first time" that we mentioned previously.

PRACTICING THE SPEECH

In most cases, a delivery that sounds smooth and natural is the result of extensive practice. After you choose the appropriate delivery type for the speech you are giving, the best way to make sure that you are on your way to an effective delivery is to practice your speech repeatedly and systematically. One way to do that is to go through some or all of the following steps:

1. First, present the speech to yourself. "Talk through" the entire speech, including your examples and forms of support (don't just say, "This is where I present my statistics" or "This is where I explain about photosynthesis").
2. Tape-record the speech, and listen to it. Because we hear our own voices partially through our cranial bone structure, we are sometimes surprised at what we sound like to others. Videotaping has been proven to be an especially effective tool for rehearsals, giving you an idea of what you look like, as well as sound like.[14]
3. Present the speech in front of a small group of friends or relatives.
4. Present the speech to at least one listener in the room in which you will present the final speech (or, if that room is not available, a similar room). Have your listeners critique your speech according to the guidelines that follow.

Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.

Basketball coach John Wooden

GUIDELINES FOR DELIVERY

The best way to consider guidelines for delivery is through an examination of the nonverbal aspects of presenting a speech. As you read in Chapter 5, nonverbal behavior can change, or even contradict, the meaning of the words a speaker utters. If audience members want to interpret how you *feel* about something, they are likely to trust your nonverbal communication more than the words you speak. If you tell them, "It's great to be here today," but you stand before them slouched over with your hands in your pockets and an expression on your face like you're about to be shot, they are likely to discount what you say. This might cause your audience members to react negatively to your speech, and their negative reaction might make you even more nervous. This cycle of speaker and audience reinforcing each other's feelings can work *for* you, though, if you approach a subject with genuine enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is shown through both the visual and auditory aspects of your delivery.

CULTURAL IDIOM

flashy: showy, gaudy

Visual Aspects of Delivery

Visual aspects of delivery include appearance, movement, posture, facial expression, and eye contact.

APPEARANCE Appearance is not a presentation variable as much as a preparation variable. Some communication consultants suggest new clothes, new glasses, and new hairstyles for their clients. In case you consider any of these, be forewarned that you should be attractive to your audience but not flashy. Research suggests that audiences like speakers who are similar to them, but they prefer the similarity to be shown conservatively.[15] Fashionable dressers might not like someone dressed in dowdy, old-fashioned clothes, but they would also have problems with someone dressed in fashions that are too avant-garde. Speakers, it seems, are perceived to be more credible when they look businesslike.

MOVEMENT Movement is an important visual aspect of delivery. The way you walk to the front of your audience, for example, will express your confidence and enthusiasm. And after you begin speaking, nervous energy can cause your body to shake and twitch, and that can be distressing both to you and to your audience. One way to control *involuntary* movement is to move *voluntarily* when you feel the need to move. Don't feel that you have to stand in one spot or that all your gestures need to be carefully planned. Simply get involved in your message, and let your involvement create the motivation for your movement. That way, when you move, you will emphasize what you are saying in the same way you would emphasize it if you were talking to a group of friends. If you move voluntarily, you will use up the same energy that would otherwise cause you to move involuntarily.

Movement can also help you maintain contact with *all* members of your audience. Those closest to you will feel the greatest contact. This creates what is known as the "action zone" in the typical classroom, within the area of the front and center of the room. Movement enables you to extend this action zone, to include in it people who would otherwise remain uninvolved. Without overdoing it, you should feel free to move toward, away, or from side to side in front of your audience.

Words represent your intellect. The sound, gesture and movement represent your feeling.

Patricia Fripp

CULTURAL IDIOM

squared off: evenly aligned

deadpan: an expressionless face

squarely: directly

Remember: Move with the understanding that it will add to the meaning of the words you use. It is difficult to bang your fist on a podium or take a step without conveying emphasis. Make the emphasis natural by allowing your message to create your motivation to move.

POSTURE Generally speaking, good posture means standing with your spine relatively straight, your shoulders relatively squared off, and your feet angled out to keep your body from falling over sideways. In other words, rather than standing at military attention, you should be comfortably erect.

Of course, you shouldn't get *too* comfortable. There are speakers who are effective even though they sprawl on tabletops and slouch against blackboards, but their effectiveness is usually in spite of their posture rather than because of it. Sometimes speakers are so awesome in stature or reputation that they need an informal posture to encourage their audience to relax. In that case, sloppy posture is more or less justified. But because awesomeness is not usually a problem for beginning speakers, good posture should be the rule.

Good posture can help you control nervousness by allowing your breathing apparatus to work properly; when your brain receives enough oxygen, it's easier for you to think clearly. Good posture will also help you get a positive audience reaction because standing up straight makes you more visible. It also increases your audience contact because the audience members will feel that you are interested enough in them to stand formally, yet relaxed enough to be at ease with them.

Once you make good eye contact with a person in the audience, they will feel you are talking to them for the rest of the speech.

Ken Blanchard

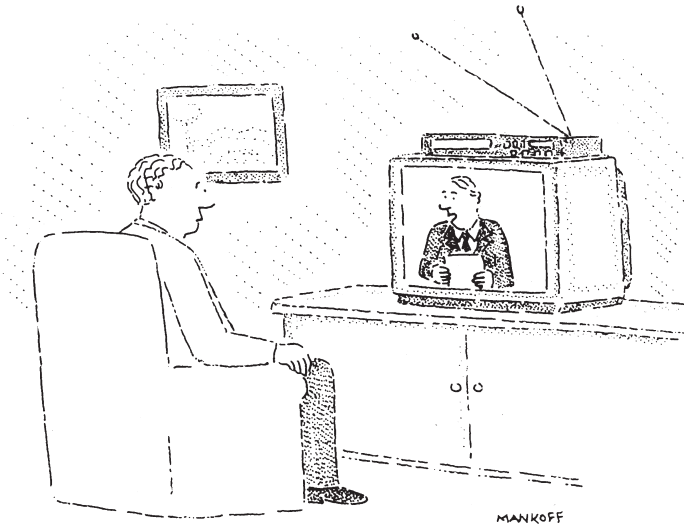
FACIAL EXPRESSION The expression on your face can be more meaningful to an audience than the words you say. Try it yourself with a mirror. Say, "You're a terrific audience," for example, with a smirk, with a warm smile, with a deadpan expression, and then with a scowl. It just doesn't mean the same thing. Remember also that it is just about impossible to control facial expressions from the outside. Like your movement, your facial expressions will reflect your involvement with your message. Don't try to fake it. Just get involved in your message, and your face will take care of itself.

EYE CONTACT Eye contact is perhaps the most important nonverbal facet of delivery. Eye contact not only increases your direct contact with your audience, but also can be used to help you control your nervousness. Direct eye contact is a form of reality testing. The most frightening aspect of speaking is the unknown. How will the audience react? What will it think? Direct eye contact allows you to test your perception of your audience as you speak. Usually, especially in a college class, you will find that your audience is more "with" you than you think. By deliberately establishing contact with any apparently bored audience members, you might find that they *are* interested; they just aren't showing that interest because they don't think anyone is looking.

To maintain eye contact, you could try to meet the eyes of each member of your audience squarely at least once during any given presentation. After you have made definite eye contact, move on to another audience member. You can

learn to do this quickly, so you can visually latch on to every member of a good-sized class in a relatively short time.

The characteristics of appearance, movement, posture, facial expression, and eye contact are visual, nonverbal facets of delivery. Now consider the *auditory* nonverbal messages that you might send during a presentation.



"And now a correction: Portions of last night's story on diving mules which were read with an air of ironic detachment should actually have been presented with earnest concern."

Auditory Aspects of Delivery

As you read in Chapter 5, your paralanguage—the way you use your voice—says a good deal about you, especially about your sincerity and enthusiasm. In addition, using your voice well can help you control your nervousness. It's another cycle: Controlling your vocal characteristics will decrease your nervousness, which will enable you to control your voice even more. But this cycle can also work in the opposite direction. If your voice is out of control, your nerves will probably be in the same state. Controlling your voice is mostly a matter of recognizing and using appropriate *volume, rate, pitch,* and *articulation.*

Many a pair of curious ears had been lured by that well-timed pause.

Li Ang

VOLUME The loudness of your voice is determined by the amount of air you push past the vocal folds in your throat. The key to controlling volume, then, is controlling the amount of air you use. The key to determining the *right* volume is audience contact. Your delivery should be loud enough so that your audience members can hear everything you say but not so loud that they feel you are talking to someone in the next room. Too much volume is seldom the problem for beginning speakers. Usually they either are not loud enough or have a tendency to fade off at the end of a thought. Sometimes, when they lose faith in an idea in midsentence, they compromise by mumbling the end of the sentence so that it isn't quite coherent.

One contemporary speaker who has been criticized for inappropriate volume is Senator Ted Kennedy. One researcher points out that "Kennedy tended to shout when an audience was small or uninterested or when he sensed he was losing them. Thus, his volume was often inappropriate to the time and place."[16]

RATE Your speed in speaking is called your **rate.** There is a range of personal differences in speaking rate. Daniel Webster, for example, is said to have spoken at around 90 words per minute, whereas one actor who is known for his fast-talking commercials speaks at about 250. Normal speaking speed, however, is between 120 and 150 words per minute. If you talk much more slowly than that, you may tend to lull your audience to sleep. Faster speaking rates are stereotypically associated with speaker competence,[17] but if you speak too rapidly, you will tend to be unintelligible. Once again, your involvement in your message is the key to achieving an effective rate.

PITCH The highness or lowness of your voice—**pitch**—is controlled by the frequency at which your vocal folds vibrate as you push air through them. Because

taut vocal folds vibrate at a greater frequency, pitch is influenced by muscular tension. This explains why nervous speakers have a tendency occasionally to "squeak," whereas relaxed speakers seem to be more in control. Pitch will tend to follow rate and volume. As you speed up or become louder, your pitch will have a tendency to rise. If your range in pitch is too narrow, your voice will have a singsong quality. If it is too wide, you may sound overly dramatic. You should control your pitch so that your listeners believe you are talking *with* them rather than performing in front of them. Once again, your involvement in your message should take care of this naturally for you.

When considering volume, rate, and pitch, keep *emphasis* in mind. You have to use a variety of vocal characteristics to maintain audience interest, but remember that a change in volume, pitch, or rate will result in emphasis. If you pause or speed up, your rate will suggest emphasis. Words you whisper or scream will be emphasized by their volume. One student provided an example of how volume can be used to emphasize an idea. He was speaking on the way possessions like cars communicate things about their owners. "For example," he said, with normal volume, "a Cadillac says, 'I've got money!' but a Rolls-Royce says, '*I'VE GOT MONEY!*'" He blared out those last three words with such force the podium shook.

ARTICULATION The final auditory nonverbal behavior, articulation, is perhaps the most important. For our purposes here, **articulation** means pronouncing all the parts of all the necessary words and nothing else.

It is not our purpose to condemn regional or ethnic dialects within this discussion. It is true that a considerable amount of research suggests that regional dialects can cause negative impressions,[18] but our purpose here is to suggest *careful,* not standardized, articulation. Incorrect articulation is usually nothing more than careless articulation. It is caused by (1) leaving off parts of words (deletion), (2) replacing parts of words (substitution), (3) adding parts to words (addition), or (4) overlapping two or more words (slurring).

Deletion The most common mistake in articulation is **deletion,** or leaving off part of a word. As you are thinking the complete word, it is often difficult to recognize that you are saying only part of it. The most common deletions occur at the ends of words, especially *-ing* words. *Going, doing,* and *stopping* become *goin', doin',* and *stoppin'.* Parts of words can be left off in the middle, too, as in *terr'iss* for *terrorist, Innernet* for *Internet,* and *asst* for *asked.*

Substitution **Substitution** takes place when you replace part of a word with an incorrect sound. The ending *-th* is often replaced at the end of a word with a single *t,* as when *with* becomes *wit.* The *th-* sound is also a problem at the beginning of words, as *this, that,* and *those* have a tendency to become *dis, dat,* and *dose.* (This tendency is especially prevalent in many parts of the northeastern United States.)

A vessel is known by the sound, whether it be cracked or not.

Demosthenes

Addition The articulation problem of **addition** is caused by adding extra parts to words, such as *incentative* instead of *incentive, athalete* instead of *athlete,* and *orientated* instead of *oriented.* Sometimes this type of addition is caused by incorrect word choice, as when *irregardless* is used for *regardless.*

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

A COMPENDIUM OF AMERICAN DIALECTS

The following is a short glossary of examples of regionalized pronunciation (with apologies to all residents who find them exaggerated).

Appalachian Hill Country
Bile To bring water to 212 degrees
Cowcumber Vittle you make pickles out of
Hern Not his'n
Tard Exhausted

Bawlamerese (Spoken around Baltimore)
Arn What you do with an arnin board
Blow Opposite of above
Pleece Two or more po-leece
Torst Tourist

Boston
Back The outer covering of a tree trunk
Had licka Hard liquor
Moa Opposite of less
Pahk To leave your car somewhere, as in "Pahk the cah in Haavaad Yahd"

Noo Yorkese
Huh Opposite of him
Mel pew? May I help you?
Reg you la caw fee Coffee with milk and sugar
Pock A place with trees and muggers

Philadelphia
Fluffya The name of the city
Mayan Opposite of yours
Pork A wooded recreational area
Tail What you use to dry off with after a shower

Southern
Abode A plank of wood
Bidness Such as, "Mistah Cottah's paynut bidness"
Shurf Local law enforcement officer
Watt The color of the Watt House in Wushinton

Texas
Ah stay Iced tea
Bayer A beverage made from hops
Pars A town in Texas. Also, the capital of France
Awful Tar Famous tall structure in Pars, France

Other interesting regionalisms can be found at the Slanguistics Web site, www.slanguage.com.

Another type of addition is the use of "tag questions," such as *you know?* or *you see?* or *right?* at the end of sentences. To have every other sentence punctuated with one of these barely audible superfluous phrases can be annoying.

Probably the worst type of addition, or at least the most common, is the use of *uh* and *anda* between words. *Anda* is often stuck between two words when *and* isn't even needed. If you find yourself doing that, you might want just to pause or swallow instead.[19]

Slurring **Slurring** is caused by trying to say two or more words at once—or at least overlapping the end of one word with the beginning of the next. Word pairs ending with *of* are the worst offenders in this category. *Sort of* becomes *sorta, kind of* becomes *kinda,* and *because of* becomes *becausa.* Word combinations ending with *to* are often slurred, as when *want to* becomes *wanna.* Sometimes even more than two words are blended together, as when *that is the way* becomes *thatsaway.* Careful articulation means using your lips, teeth, tongue, and jaw to bite off your words, cleanly and separately, one at a time.

Mend your speech a little, lest you may mar your fortune.

Shakespeare
King Lear

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

HISTORIC SPEECHES ON THE WEB

"Streaming technology" enables you to listen to audio programming and watch video programming over the World Wide Web. This means that you can hear how speeches from history—at least twentieth-century history, since recording technology has been available—actually sounded. You can hear how speakers handled auditory nonverbal characteristics such as volume, rate, pitch, and articulation. When video clips are available, you can even observe how they handled the visual aspects of delivery discussed in this chapter.

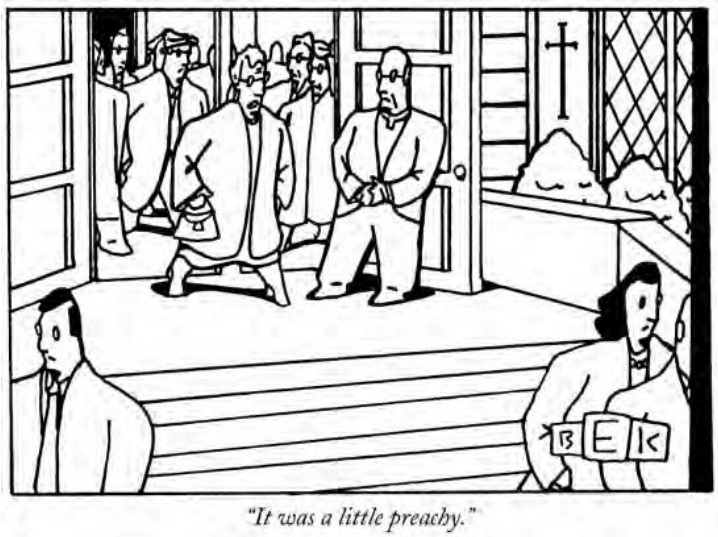
PBS has a site devoted to the world's great speeches at www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/timeline/. You can hear speeches such as Franklin D. Roosevelt's "War Message" (1941), Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" (1963), John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech (1962), Nixon's "Checkers Speech" (1952), and General Douglas MacArthur's "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech (1951).

The History Channel has a similar site at www.historychannel.com/speeches/, featuring a vast collection drawn from the most famous broadcasts and recordings of the twentieth century, organized into various categories, including War and Diplomacy (you can hear Hitler, following his occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938, proclaim that "We now have arms to such an extent as the world has never seen before"); Science and Technology (with Amelia Earhart celebrating her solo trans-Atlantic flight in 1932); and Arts, Entertainment, and Culture (with Lou Gehrig saying farewell to baseball in 1939 and Gloria Steinem addressing the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971).

You'll need a player loaded onto your computer, such as RealPlayer from RealNetworks or Windows Media Player from Microsoft, which is part of Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser. If you don't have a player, the software can be downloaded from the Web free of charge (www.real.com or www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/players.aspx).

OFFERING CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

In your public speaking class, you will do well to remember that everyone else is experiencing the same type of anxiety that you are. Your criticism of a classmate's speech is extremely important, but it can also be a sensitive area for that classmate. You should strive to make this criticism constructive, which means that it will be designed to help the speaker improve. To be constructive, the criticism has to be both positive and substantive.



"It was a little preachy."

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When we say that criticism has to be positive, we mean that you should present it with the positive attitude mentioned earlier. The easiest way to do that is to point out what is *right* about the speech as well as what is *wrong* about it. In fact, negative criticism unaccompanied by positive criticism is often useless because the speaker might become defensive and block out your criticism completely. It is a good idea, therefore, to offer your positive criticism first and then tactfully offer your suggestions for improvement, using the various sug-

gestions for creating a positive communication climate that were discussed in Chapter 7 (pages 232–235). For example, rather than saying, "Your ideas about the psychological aspects of diabetes were completely unclear and unsupported," you might say, "I found your explanation of the physical aspects of diabetes to be clearly stated and well backed up with details and examples. However, your explanation of the psychological aspects of the disease left me a little confused. It might be my own fault, but it just did not seem to be as well supported as the rest of your speech."

When we say that criticism has to be substantive, we mean two things: First, you need to criticize *what* was said as well as *how* it was said. Do not concentrate on delivery traits to the point where you lose track of the speaker's ideas. Second, you need to be specific. Rather than saying, "I liked this" or "I didn't like that," you should provide a detailed explanation of your reasons for liking or disliking parts of the speech.

SUMMARY

One of the most serious delivery problems is debilitative (as opposed to facilitative) stage fright. Sources of debilitative stage fright include irrational thinking, which might include a belief in one or more of the following fallacies: the fallacy of catastrophic failure (something is going to ruin this presentation), the fallacy of perfection (a good speaker never does anything wrong), the fallacy of absolute approval (*everyone* has to like you), and the fallacy of overgeneralization (you *always* mess up speeches). There are several methods of overcoming speech anxiety. The first is to remember that nervousness is natural, and use it to your advantage. The others include being rational, receiver oriented, positive, and prepared.

There are four types of delivery: extemporaneous, impromptu, manuscript, and memorized. In each type, the speaker must be concerned with both visual and auditory aspects of the presentation. Visual aspects include appearance, movement, posture, facial expression, and eye contact. Auditory aspects include volume, rate, pitch, and articulation. The four most common articulation problems are deletion, substitution, addition, and slurring of word sounds.

Effective delivery is aided through the constructive criticism of speeches presented in class. Your criticism should include positive as well as negative aspects of the speaker's behavior. It should also be substantive, which means that it should address what was said as well as how it was said, and it should be specific in terms of what you liked and didn't like about the speech.

KEY TERMS

addition *398*
articulation *398*
debilitative stage fright *388*
deletion *398*
extemporaneous speech *391*
facilitative stage fright *388*
fallacy of approval *389*
fallacy of catastrophic failure *389*
fallacy of overgeneralization *390*
fallacy of perfection *389*
impromptu speech *392*
irrational thinking *389*
manuscript speeches *393*
memorized speeches *394*
pitch *397*
rate *397*
slurring *399*
substitution *398*
visualization *391*

ACTIVITIES

1. **Stage Fright: A Personal Analysis** To analyze your own reaction to stage fright, think back to your last public speech, and rate yourself on how rational, receiver oriented, positive, and prepared you were. How did these attributes affect your anxiety level?

2. **Types of Delivery** Identify at least one speech you have seen presented using the four types of delivery: extemporaneous, impromptu, manuscript, or memorized. For this speech, decide whether the type of delivery was effective for the topic, speaker, and situation. Explain why or why not. If the speech was not effective, suggest a more appropriate type.
3. **Articulation Exercises** Tongue twisters can be used to practice careful articulation out loud. Try these two classics:
   - She sells seashells down by the seashore.
   - Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

   Now make up some of your own and try them out. Make twisters for both consonant sounds ("Frank's friendly face flushed furiously") and vowel sounds ("Oliver oiled the old annoying oddity").

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Print Resources

For a more detailed list of readings about effectively presenting your message, see the CD-ROM that came with this book, and the *Understanding Human Communication* Web site at www.oup.com/us/uhc.

Ayers, Joe, and Tim Hopf. *Coping with Speech Anxiety.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993.

A catalog and explanation of various "intervention procedures" that help people cope with communication anxiety, including rational-emotive therapy, visualization, systematic desensitization, rhetoritherapy, and anxiety reduction workshops.

Bremmer, Jan, and Herman Roodenburg, eds. *A Cultural History of Gesture.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Examines, in a historical/cultural analysis, why certain body movements mean what they do today. For example, Homer promoted the John Wayne walk in ancient Greece by constantly referring to heroes with "long strides."

Glenn, Ethel C., Phillip Glenn, and Sandra Forman. *Your Voice and Articulation,* 4th ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

A comprehensive discussion of the anatomy and physiology of the human voice. Extensive vocal exercises are included for pitch, volume, rate, and "vocal color." Chapter 2 is devoted to dialects.

Hahner, Jeffrey C., Martin A. Sokoloff, and Sandra L. Salisch. *Speaking Clearly: Improving Voice and Diction.* New York: McGraw Hill, 2002.

This text comes with a pronunciation guide on CD.

Lee, Charlotte, and Timothy Gura. *Oral Interpretation,* 10th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

A collection of prose, drama, and poetry pieces especially designed for oral presentation. See especially Chapter 3, "Voice Development for Oral Interpretation," and Chapter 4, "Use of the Body in Oral Interpretation."

Wells, Lynn K. *The Articulate Voice,* 4th ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2004.

Provides basic information on voice production and techniques for improvement.

Feature Films

For descriptions of each film below and descriptions of other movies that illustrate nonverbal communication, see the CD-ROM that came with this book, and the *Understanding Human Communication* Web site at www.oup.com/us/uhc.

The most interesting resource films for this chapter are those that portray characters whose personal delivery styles contribute to their success or failure. For example:

Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy (2004). Rated PG-13.

Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) is the top-rated anchorman in San Diego in the 1970s. Although he's extremely slick, with every word and gesture carefully orchestrated, his lack of honesty would make him less effective in a public speaking situation than the rankest amateur who truly cared about what he or she was saying.

As Good as It Gets (1997). Rated PG-13.

Jack Nicholson portrays a character with a slew of mental tics who manages to control his communication anxiety enough to win Helen Hunt.

Broadcast News (1987). Rated R.

This inside look at television news production shows how stage fright, in this case in front of the camera, changes the career of the character played by Albert Brooks. A smooth delivery makes the career for another character, this one played by William Hurt.

Contact (1998). Rated PG.

Based on a novel by the late Carl Sagan, starring Jodie Foster, directed by Robert Zemeckis. The title has multiple meanings—the main one being a scientist's contact with extraterrestrial life, but other meanings concern her contact with people, contact with God, and, of interest to us here, contact with a number of audiences, including a pitch session before a foundation board, testimony before Congress, and a lecture to a group of school children.

Four Weddings and a Funeral (1995). Rated PG.

Hugh Grant's breakthrough film is a catalog of social events that also happen to be speaking events. Delivery styles alter the effectiveness of the speeches considerably. For example, Grant "roasts" the groom at the first wedding with great success. At the second wedding one of his friends tries to imitate his style and fails miserably.

Saving Private Ryan (1998). Rated R.

Tom Hanks's nerves are shot, but he still manages a speech that rallies his men for a mission no one believes in at first.