FOURTH EDITION

INVITATION TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

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CENGAGE Learning

Invitation to Public Speaking, Fourth Edition
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Printed in the United States of America
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 14 13 12 11 10

Why Speak in Public?

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IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL LEARN

- About the power of ethical public speaking
- About the importance of acting ethically as a public speaker
- About the influence of culture on speaking styles
- What makes public speaking different from other kinds of communication
- The most common reasons for nervousness associated with giving a speech
- Six techniques for reducing speech-related nervousness

Rafael Suanes/MCT/Landov

Have you ever been moved by the words of a public speaker? If so, you are not alone. Most of us have left at least one public speech or lecture feeling different about the world, about the issues that concern us, and even about ourselves.

This book was designed to get you started as a public speaker. It will help you successfully and ethically add your voice to the many public conversations and debates of our democratic society. In these pages, you will learn about a range of settings where public speaking occurs and a variety of reasons for speaking. The chapters that follow break down the components of the public speaking process into discrete steps, which you will follow in crafting your own speeches. As you gain confidence in using these techniques, you can adapt them to your real-life speaking experiences at work and in your community. You'll find that you will speak in any number of instances to provide instructions, explain procedures, share information, encourage or influence decisions, and more.

Public speaking is a learned skill that gets more rewarding as our experience with it grows. No one was born a public speaker. Every speaker had to learn how to give effective speeches—even renowned speakers such as Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and the many others you

will read about in this text. The more you practice this new skill, the more quickly you will feel you are a competent speaker. With care and diligence, you will find that you can add your own voice to the public dialogue in positive ways.

This chapter introduces you to the power of ethical public speaking and the differences between public speaking and other forms of communication. It invites you to consider the opportunities you will have to speak publicly and to recognize the importance of learning the basic skills necessary to do so successfully and effectively. When we consider the power these actions have to shape lives, we begin to gain a sense of the challenges, responsibilities, and thoughtfulness that go into designing, delivering, and listening to effective public speeches.

The Power of Ethical Public Speaking

When you speak publicly, you have the power to influence others. With every speech you give, you make choices about the kind of influence you will have. All of us are familiar with hostile public arguments and debates. We are used to politicians taking partisan stances on issues and "doing battle" with their "opponents." Such debates turn social policy questions into "wars," as groups position themselves on either side of the "dispute," offering "*the* solution" while negating the views of the "other" side. We even watch, read about, or listen to people engaging in hostile or threatening exchanges over their differences.

Angry opposition may be a common style of public speaking today, but there are other ways to influence people when you give speeches. As you've watched and listened to combative exchanges, you may have heard some call for more civility in public exchanges. The word *civility* comes from a root word meaning "to be a member of a household." In ancient Greece, *civility* referred to displays of temperance, justice, wisdom, and courage. Over time, the definition has changed only slightly, and in public speaking, **civility** has come to mean care and concern for others, the thoughtful use of words and language, and the flexibility to see the many sides of an issue. To be civil is to listen to the ideas and reasons of others and to give "the world a chance to explain itself."[1] To be uncivil is to show little respect for others, to be unwilling to consider their ideas and reasons, and to be unwilling to take responsibility for the effect of one's words, language, and behaviors on others.

Deborah Tannen, author of *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue,* offers one of the most compelling descriptions of many people's views about the incivility that characterizes much of our present-day public debates.[2] She explains that in an argument culture, individuals tend to approach people and situations with a me-against-you frame of mind. Since they see each issue, event, or situation as a contest, they begin with the idea that the best way to discuss any topic is by portraying it through opposing positions, rallying to one side of the cause, and attacking the other side. Although conflict and disagreement are familiar parts of most people's lives, the seemingly automatic nature of this response is what makes the argument culture so common today.

MICHAEL BRYANT/MCT/Landov

Even skilled speakers like President Barack Obama had to learn how to give effective speeches. Here the President speaks at his inauguration on January 20, 2009, an event that affected the entire nation. Even if you didn't hear his speech, do you think you have been influenced by it? In what way?

Good to Know!

civility: Care and concern for others, the thoughtful use of words and language, and the flexibility to see the many sides of an issue.

Chapter 1

Tannen and others concerned with the argument culture recognize that there are times when strong opposition and verbal attack are called for.[3] Nevertheless, this form of communication isn't the only way people can discuss issues, offer solutions, or resolve differences. We can view public speaking not only as engaging in a public argument but also as participating in a public dialogue.

A dialogue is a civil exchange of ideas and opinions between two people or a small group of people. The **public dialogue** is the *ethical* and *civil* exchange of ideas and opinions among communities about topics that affect the public. To participate in the public dialogue is to offer perspectives, share facts, raise questions, and engage others publicly in stimulating discussions.[4] When we enter the public dialogue, we become *active and ethical citizens* who participate in our nation's democratic process and consider the needs of others in our communities as well as our own needs. The ethical dimension of our participation in the

Public Speaking and Service Learning: Engaging Community

As part of his public speaking class at Colorado State University, Connor Mcinerney was required to do a service learning project. He chose to do his project at W.O.L.F. (Wolves Offered Love & Friendship), a nonprofit sanctuary dedicated to saving homeless wolves and wolf-dogs. In this account of his service learning experience, he explains how he believes service work is a valuable way to enter the public dialogue because it stimulates empathy and provides motivation for people to speak for a cause.

The W.O.L.F. sanctuary not only helps animals that have been abandoned but also helps the people who work and volunteer, thereby giving them a sense of connection to the broader public dialogue. Making a lasting difference in this world seems like a nearly impossible task. But my service has shown me that one voice, one helping hand, does make a difference. With the current situation our country is in, I feel W.O.L.F. is an organization that offers a great starting place for people who want to make such a difference. Working with the wolves and being outdoors promoted some soul-searching and thinking that would not likely have happened to me in any other situation—it caused me to think about myself and my views in more complex ways. Through this time of personal reflection, I have dedicated

myself to spending more time speaking on behalf of these animals who cannot speak for themselves. Because humans have put Colorado wolves into their current situation, I feel that it is partly my responsibility to better their chance of survival and speak on behalf of their right to live in this area. My service to W.O.L.F motivates me to be informed and to speak proudly on behalf of their cause.

"MY SERVICE TO W.O.L.F MOTIVATES ME TO PROUDLY SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THEIR CAUSE."

Tips for Incorporating Service Learning into Public Speaking

• Service learning can help you find an issue that concerns, motivates, or angers you. You can use that energy to fuel your inspiration to speak out about the issue. You can also use it as motivation to complete all steps of the speechmaking process, such as the research process.

• By getting involved in your community, you can be part of positive change. Your speeches in class can help you begin that process.

• Realize that delivering your speech is a concrete way of getting involved in your community—through your speech, you're educating and motivating yourself and your audience.

Good to Know!

public dialogue: Ethical and civil exchange of ideas and opinions among communities about topics that affect the public.

Why Speak in Public?

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Many reform efforts proposed by the U.S. government have been a matter of public debate recently, such as proposals to reform health care, immigration laws, and the financial system. These complex, far-reaching efforts have sparked passionate and sometimes contentious dialogue. How difficult do you think it would be to respond civilly to an audience that doesn't seem open to your topic? What could you do to make your audience receptive to your views?

AP Photo/John Bazemore

Practicing the Public Dialogue

1.1

Choose a Civil, Ethical Approach to Public Speaking

Make a list of five topics you might use for a speech in this class. How does each topic contribute to the public dialogue? Now identify how you might discuss each of these topics in a civil, ethical way. For example, would it be more ethical to approach one of your topics from a two-sided perspective and another from a multisided perspective? Why do you think so? Save these as possible topics for your in-class speeches.

Online Resources

CourseMate To learn more about what the public dialogue is and how your participation in this unending conversation can help shape community, access **Web Connect 1.1: Public Dialogue Consortium** online via your CourseMate for *Invitation to Public Speaking*. The Public Dialogue Consortium believes that public communication powerfully influences the world we live in and can positively affect the lives of everyday people.

public dialogue becomes apparent when we participate in the global dialogue, speaking about issues that affect the entire world, such as human rights, hunger, access to medical care, and the environment. To be an **ethical public speaker**, you must consider the moral impact of your ideas and arguments on others when you enter the public dialogue.

Giving a speech is a natural way to enter the public dialogue because it gives us a chance to clearly state our own perspectives and to hear other people's perspectives. In this sense, giving a speech can be like participating in an ongoing conversation. Kenneth Burke describes this conversation as follows:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a lively discussion, a discussion too passionate for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer them; another perspective is shared. The hour grows late; you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.[5]

Throughout this book, you will encounter the power of public speaking. As you engage with this power yourself, you should always strive to give speeches that help clarify issues and stimulate thinking even as you inform, persuade, or invite others to consider a perspective.

Good to Know!

ethical public speaker: Speaker who considers the moral impact of his or her ideas and arguments on others when involved in the public dialogue.

Although you may have strong views on issues, a civil and ethical approach to public speaking often is the most powerful way to present those views.

Culture and Speaking Style

Culture has a powerful effect on communication. Whether the culture derives from our nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, work environment, peer group, or even gender, we can't ignore its effect on communication. When we give or listen to speeches, we bring our cultural styles with us. Consider a few examples of ways that culture influences public speaking:

> The traditional West African storyteller, called the *griot*, weaves a story with song and dance, and enlivens a tale with all sorts of sound effects. He or she changes the pitch to suit the characters and the action and adds all kinds of popping, clicking, clapping sounds to dramatize the events of the story. The members of the audience respond like a chorus. They interpose comments at convenient intervals, add their own sound effects, and sing the song of the tale along with the griot.[6]

> To this day, poets are held in the highest esteem in Arab societies. The Arab poet performs important political and social functions. In battle, the poet's tongue is as effective as is the bravery of the Arab people. In peace, the poet might prove a menace to public order with fiery harangues. Poems can arouse a tribe to action in the same manner as the tirade of a demagogue in a modern political campaign. Poetry frequently functions in a political context to motivate action, and, as such, it is accorded as much weight as a scholarly dissertation.[7]

> The late Texas governor Ann Richards's speaking style [was] dominated by the use of inductive and experiential reasoning, folk wisdom, and concrete examples and stories as the basis for political values and judgments. A favorite line she use[d] [was], "Tell it so my Mama in Waco can understand it." Her accessible style…encourage[d] audience participation and reduce[d] distance between the speaker and audience.[8]

These examples come from cultures that may be different from your own or may be familiar to you. What they suggest is that the ways we approach a public speech often reflect our cultural backgrounds.

Research on cultural styles of communication helps explain some of these differences. In general, many white males, for example, are comfortable with the direct, competitive style of interaction found in public presentations. Because white males have held more public offices and positions of power in the United States historically, it makes sense that their preferred style of communication has become the norm for public speaking. However, there are many other communication styles. African American men, for example, tend to be more comfortable with a complex style of speaking that may be competitive but is more subtle, indirect or exaggerated, intense, poetic, rhythmic, and lyrical. Hispanic or Latino males usually reject the competitive style, favoring a more elegant, expressive, or intense narrative form of public communication. Similarly, Arab American males tend to use an emotional and poetic style (poets often respond to and interpret political events in Middle Eastern countries and rely on rhythm and the sounds of words to express their ideas).[9]

Other research suggests that in most Native American cultures, framing an issue from a two-sided perspective is rare. Many Native American cultures welcome multiple perspectives and discourage competition, preferring cooperation when discussing important matters. In addition, a more circular and flexible style

Why Speak in Public?

The elder is a well-respected storyteller in Native American culture. Is storytelling a style of speaking familiar to you? What style, or combinations of styles, of speaking do you think you'd like to use in a speech?

of presentation is common, as is the use of stories, humor, and teasing to explain ideas or teach beliefs. In many Native American cultures as well as some Asian and Asian American cultures, direct eye contact is a sign of disrespect, and publicly proving that someone else is wrong is considered a serious insult.[10]

The research on styles of speaking specific to women is slight. We do know that, in general, African American and Hispanic or Latina women may use a style of speech similar to the lyrical, rhythmic, or poetic style used by the males of their cultures, but it may be more collaborative than adversarial. White and Asian American women seem to share this sense of comfort with collaboration but do not often incorporate the poetic or lyrical forms into their speaking. In general, we also know that women from many different cultural backgrounds tend to incorporate a personal tone and use personal experiences and anecdotes alongside concrete examples as evidence; they establish a connection and common ground with their audiences in their public speeches.[11]

In reading about these differences, you may have recognized your own culture's influence on your style of communication. These differences suggest there is more than one way to approach public speaking. Public speaking can occur when we argue with others or take sides on an issue. It can take place when we connect, collaborate, and share stories or humor with our audience. It also happens when speakers use various styles of language or delivery. To enter the public dialogue is to recognize the many different styles of speaking and to use those that fit you and the audience best.

What Is Ethical Public Speaking?

Every day, we are bombarded with information from computers, televisions, radios, newspapers, magazines, movies, billboards, and logos on clothing and cars. Bosses, teachers, friends, and family also fill our days with words, sounds, symbols, and conversations. Researchers estimate that we spend as much as 70 to 80 percent of the day listening to others communicate. In fact, so much communication crosses our paths every day that this era has been called the *information* age. Where does public speaking fit into this environment? Consider the different sources of communication in which we can engage:

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Intrapersonal communication: Communication with ourselves via the dialogue that goes on in our heads.

Interpersonal communication: Communication with other people that ranges from the highly personal to the highly impersonal. Interpersonal communication allows us to establish, maintain, and disengage from relationships with other people.

Group communication: Communication among members of a team or a collective about topics such as goals, strategies, and conflict.

Mass communication: Communication generated by media organizations that is designed to reach large audiences. This type of communication is transmitted via television, the Internet, radio, print media, and even the entertainment industry.

Public communication: Communication in which one person gives a speech to other people, most often in a public setting. This speech has predetermined goals and is about a topic that affects a larger community. In public speaking, one person—called the *speaker*—is responsible for selecting a topic and focus for the speech, organizing his or her ideas, and practicing his or her delivery. The speaker is also responsible for acting ethically and for responding to audience questions and feedback.

Unlike casual conversations with friends and family, public speaking contains a structure and purpose that add a level of responsibility not found in most other everyday interactions. Similarly, the ability of the audience to respond directly sets public speaking apart from mass communication. And unlike private conversations with oneself or with friends, public speaking is directed at specific groups of people and is designed to be shared with those outside the immediate audience.

From these definitions, we can see that public speaking is unique because the responsibility for the organization, delivery, and flow of communication falls mostly on one person. However, if we think of public speaking as participating ethically in the public dialogue, additional differences between public speaking and other forms of communication emerge.

Jon Parker Lee / Alamy

Tim Hall/Digital Vision/Getty Images

Public Speaking Creates a Community

We often think of public speaking as an individual act. We imagine one person standing in front of a group of people presenting information to them. We forget that public speaking occurs because individuals belong to a community and share social relationships. We speak publicly because we recognize this connection. When we share ideas and information and consider questions and possibilities with others, we

How does the communication in the photo on the top differ from that in the photo on the bottom? How does the communication in both of these photos differ from intrapersonal, group, or mass communication?

Good to Know!

intrapersonal communication: Communication with ourselves via the dialogue that goes on in our heads.
interpersonal communication: Communication with other people that ranges from the highly personal to the highly impersonal.
group communication: Communication among members of a team or a collective about topics such as goals, strategies, and conflict.
mass communication: Communication generated by media organizations that is designed to reach large audiences.
public communication: Communication in which one person gives a speech to other people, most often in a public setting.

are creating a civil community. We recognize we are "members of a household," and even if we disagree with members of that household (our audience), we acknowledge that we are connected to them. We create a community when we speak because we are talking about topics that affect us and each member of the audience.

At times, we may forget our connections to others and think our interests and needs are not important to society. However, we are members of a larger social community, and when we make our voices heard, we recognize the need to stimulate the public dialogue, to answer the claims or statements of those who have spoken before us, and to offer our audience ideas for consideration and discussion.

Public Speaking Is Audience Centered

Public speaking also stands apart from other forms of communication because speakers recognize the central role of their audience. Speakers speak to audiences, and without them, we are not engaged in public speaking. Moreover, in public speaking, the makeup of the audience directly influences the speaker's message. Consider the following scenarios:

> Su Lin's older brother was recently almost hit by a car while riding his bike across town. Upset by motorists' lack of awareness, Su Lin wants to speak out at the next city council meeting to argue for motorist education programs.

> Gretchen's brother recently had a near miss while riding his bike across town. Upset by motorists' lack of awareness, Gretchen has decided to give a speech on motorist safety in her public speaking course.

> Arturo rides his bicycle to work every day and has persuaded many of his coworkers to do the same. He recently had a near miss with a distracted motorist, and he wants to speak to his coworkers about what they can do to stay safe while riding to work.

The audiences in these three scenarios dictate the choices each speaker will make. Each of the audiences—the city council, the public speaking class, and the other cyclists—has different positions, beliefs, values, and needs regarding cyclist safety. City councils have financial limitations, time constraints, and voter preferences that Su Lin will need to consider. Gretchen's classmates, unless they are cyclists, may not readily see the relevance of her concerns and may also resent any efforts to curb their driving habits. At Arturo's workplace, the other cyclists probably also worry about their own vulnerability and wonder whether riding to work is really worth the risk.

These three examples suggest that public speaking is distinctly **audience centered**, or considerate of the positions, beliefs, values, and needs of an audience. To be audience centered is to keep your audience in your mind during every step of the public speaking process, including your research, organization, and presentation.

Public speaking is also audience centered because speakers "listen" to their audiences during speeches. They monitor audience *feedback*, the verbal and nonverbal signals an audience gives a speaker. Audience feedback often indicates whether listeners understand, have interest in, and are receptive to the speaker's ideas. This feedback assists the speaker in many ways. It helps the speaker know when to slow down, explain something more carefully, or even tell the audience

Good to Know!

audience centered: Considerate of the positions, beliefs, values, and needs of an audience.

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that she or he will return to an issue in a question-and-answer session at the close of the speech. Audience feedback assists the speaker in creating a connection of mutual respect with the audience.

Public speaking differs from other forms of communication not only because it is done in front of an audience but also because of the ways the speaker relates the ideas of the speech to the audience.

Public Speaking Encourages Ethical Dialogue

A final difference between public speaking and other kinds of communication is that public speaking sets the stage for the ongoing conversation Kenneth Burke described earlier in this chapter. For this conversation to be meaningful, the speaker must present ideas ethically, with fairness and honesty. This ethical aspect of speaking means that the speaker is responsible for framing the conversation, or dialogue, honestly and for laying the foundation for future discussions. Public speaking encourages ethical dialogue because speakers want the people who hear the speech to engage others—and perhaps even the speaker—in a conversation about the topic or issue after the speech is given. Public speaking encourages this ethical dialogue because the speaker is interested in presenting ideas fairly, in discussing issues openly, and in hearing more about them from the audience.

Ethical Moment

CAN BREAKING THE LAW BE ETHICAL?

On April 12, 1963, civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. and fellow activists were arrested for intentionally disobeying an Alabama Supreme Court injunction against public demonstrations. While in solitary confinement that day, King read a letter published in the *Birmingham News* by eight white Birmingham clergymen who asked the activists to work through the courts for the change they sought rather than protesting in the streets. In their letter, the clergy accused King and other civil rights advocates of "failing to negotiate," "using extreme measures," and "choosing an inappropriate time to act."

King responded with his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which explained his unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with unwilling merchants and economic leaders of Birmingham, his conviction that "one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws," and his unwillingness to wait any longer for freedom. In his letter, King made the point that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and went on to suggest that "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality,

tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

AP Images

What Do You Think?

1. Do you think King acted ethically when he broke the law by disobeying the Alabama Supreme Court injunction? Why or why not?

2. Do you think the Birmingham clergy were correct in labeling King and other civil rights advocates as extremist and unwilling to negotiate? Why or why not?

3. Do you think King was correct when he wrote that we are "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality"? What might be the ethical implications of this claim? How does this idea relate to the discussions about public dialogue in this chapter?

Why Speak in Public?

A Model of the Public Speaking Process

Consider the following components of the public speaking process as it has been discussed thus far (Figure 1.1 can help you visualize this process):

Practicing the Public Dialogue

1.2

Consider the Unique Aspects of Public Speaking

Choose one of the five speech topics you identified in Practicing the Public Dialogue Activity 1.1. Think about giving a speech on this topic in class.

- What are two ways your speech could create a sense of community with your audience?
- What are two ways you could stay audience centered while speaking about this topic?
- What are two ways your cultural background might affect your speaking style when giving a speech about this topic?
- What are two ways your speech could encourage dialogue with your in-class audience or with your campus community?

Save this topic and analysis to possibly use for an in-class speech later in the course.

Online Resources

CourseMate You can learn more about how to analyze an audience and stay audience centered by accessing **Web Connect 1.2: Thinking about Your Audience** online via your CourseMate for *Invitation to Public Speaking*. In addition, watch a video clip of a student speaker, Mike Piel, as he makes a relevant connection with his audience and remains audience centered. As you watch Mike speak, consider the strategies he uses to communicate the importance of his topic to his audience. What does Mike say to connect his topic to his audience?

Speaker: A person who stimulates public dialogue by delivering an oral message. The speaker researches the topic of the speech, organizes the material that results from the research, presents the message, and manages discussion after or, in some cases, during a speech. Throughout this process, the speaker is civil, considering the needs and characteristics of the audience.

Message: The information conveyed by the speaker to the audience. Messages can be verbal or nonverbal. For example, a speaker giving a speech about his recent experiences in the military would use words to describe those experiences and facial expressions and gestures to convey the emotional aspects of those experiences. Most of our messages are intentional, but sometimes, we send an unintentional message, such as an unplanned pause, a sigh, or a frown that conveys an idea or a feeling we had not planned to communicate. When we speak, we convey messages by **encoding**, or translating ideas and feelings into words, sounds, and gestures. When we receive the message, we **decode** it, or translate words, sounds, and gestures into ideas and feelings in an attempt to understand the message.

Audience: The complex and varied group of people the speaker addresses. Because of the ethical and audience-centered nature of public speaking, the speaker must consider the positions, beliefs, values, and needs of the audience throughout the design and delivery of a speech.

Channel: The means by which the message is conveyed. A message can be conveyed through spoken words, vocal tone and gestures, and visual aids. The channel might include technology like a microphone, a CD-ROM, a video, or PowerPoint slides.

Noise: Anything that interferes with understanding the message being communicated. Noise may be external or internal. External noise, interference outside the speaker or audience, might be construction work going on outside the classroom window or a microphone that doesn't work in a large lecture hall. Internal noise, interference within the speaker or audience, might be a headache that affects one's concentration or cultural differences that make it hard to understand a message.

Good to Know!

speaker: Person who stimulates public dialogue by delivering an oral message. **message:** Information conveyed by the speaker to the audience. **encoding:** Translating ideas and feelings into words, sounds, and gestures. **decoding:** Translating words, sounds, and gestures into ideas and feelings in an attempt to understand the message. **audience:** Complex and varied group of people the speaker addresses. **channel:** Means by which the message is conveyed. **noise:** Anything that interferes with understanding the message being communicated.

Figure 1.1

A model of the public speaking process
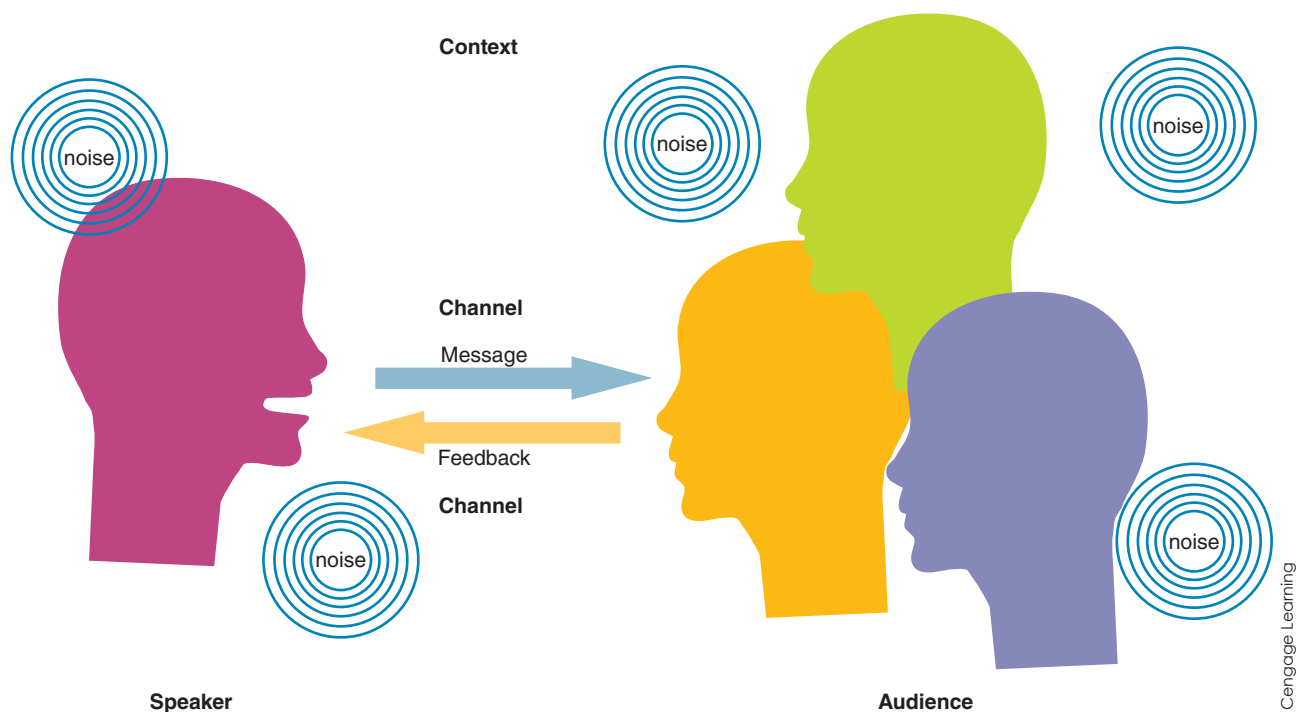
Feedback: The verbal and nonverbal signals the audience gives the speaker. Feedback from an audience indicates to the speaker the need to slow down, clarify, respond to questions, alter delivery, and the like.

Context: The environment or situation in which a speech occurs. The context includes components such as the time of day and the place the speech is given, the audience's expectations about the speech, and the traditions associated with a speech. For example, a commemorative speech would likely be given in a formal setting, such as during a banquet or at a wedding reception. A speech given as part of a service learning assignment might be given in a very informal setting, such as in your classroom or at the agency itself.

Although we describe each of these components separately, they are interconnected. Notice that the speaker is both a "speaker" and a "listener," sending a message but also attending to feedback from the audience. The audience members also have a key role, reducing external and internal noise whenever possible and listening to the message so they can contribute to the discussion that may occur when the speech is finished.

Building Your Confidence as a Public Speaker

Even the most experienced speakers get a little nervous before they give a speech, so it is normal that you might feel a bit nervous, too. One reason we become anxious is that we care about our topic and our performance. We want to perform well and deliver a successful speech. Another reason we might be nervous before a speech is because we fear the unknown; we anticipate the speaking event and imagine that it will be stressful long before we actually give the speech. These are

Good to Know!

feedback: Verbal and nonverbal signals an audience gives a speaker. **context:** Environment or situation in which a speech occurs.

also normal, and it is helpful to know that there are ways to build your confidence as a speaker and reduce some of the nervousness your might feel.

Our nervousness before a speech is often called **communication apprehension**, "the level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons."[12] Communication apprehension can take two forms. People who are apprehensive about communicating with others in any situation are said to have **trait anxiety**. People who are apprehensive about communicating with others in a particular situation are said to have **state, or situational, anxiety**. To help reduce your nervousness, take a moment to consider whether you are trait anxious or state anxious in communication situations. Do you fear all kinds of interactions or only certain kinds? Most of us experience some level of state anxiety about some communication events, such as asking a boss for a raise, verbally evaluating another's performance, or introducing ourselves to a group of strangers. This is quite normal.

Most people also experience some level of state anxiety about public speaking. This is called *public speaking anxiety (PSA)*, the anxiety we feel when we learn we have to give a speech or take a public speaking course.[13] You can build your confidence and reduce some of your PSA by following the tips provided in this section. However, if you are extraordinarily nervous about giving speeches, see your instructor for special assistance about your fears.

Knowing why we become nervous before a speech can help us build our confidence. Research suggests that most people's state anxiety about public speaking exists for six reasons. Many people are state anxious because public speaking is

- *Novel:* We don't do it regularly and lack necessary skills as a result.
- *Done in formal settings:* Our behaviors when giving a speech are more prescribed and rigid than usual.
- *Often done from a subordinate position:* An instructor or boss sets the rules for giving a speech, and the audience acts as a critic.
- *Conspicuous or obvious:* The speaker stands apart from the audience.
- *Done in front of an audience that is unfamiliar:* Most people are more comfortable talking with people they know. Also, we fear that audiences won't be interested in what we have to say.
- A *unique situation in which the degree of attention paid to the speaker is quite noticeable:* Audience members either stare at us or ignore us, so we become unusually self-focused.[14]

It helps to know that research also suggests people are usually nervous only about specific aspects of public speaking. When people ranked what they fear while giving a speech, here's what they said:[15]

Trembling or shaking	80%
Mind going blank	74%
Doing or saying something embarrassing	64%
Being unable to continue talking	63%
Not making sense	59%
Sounding foolish	59%

Good to Know!

communication apprehension: Level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons. **trait anxiety:** Apprehension about communicating with others in any situation. **state or situational anxiety:** Apprehension about communicating with others in a particular situation.

Chapter 1

When we combine this research, a pattern emerges that helps us understand our nervousness. Because public speaking is novel and usually done in a formal setting, our nervousness can make us shake or tremble. Then, when the spotlight is on us as the speaker, we fear our minds will go blank, we will say something embarrassing, or we will be unable to continue talking. Finally, we often don't know our audience well, which can make us fear evaluation, not making sense, or sounding foolish more than we ordinarily would. As you can see, some of our nervousness is legitimate. Even so, we can get past it and build our confidence as speakers.

The suggestions offered here should help you build your confidence and turn your nervous energy to your advantage.

Public Speaking and Service Learning: Engaging Community

Samantha Kroll, a public speaking student at Colorado State University, did her service learning project at KRFC 88.9 FM, a local community radio station. She was nervous about the experience prior to starting at the station. But after some brief training, she found the service enjoyable and exciting because of her freedom to choose topics that interested her.

At first, I completely dreaded working a whole fifteen hours of community service throughout the duration of the semester. But after I started working at the station, two hours a week was really not that big a commitment—plus it was fun!

I chose to work with a radio station because I thought it would improve my public speaking skills and get me out of my comfort zone. When I first came to the studio, I did not know exactly what to expect. I thought they would have tasks that needed to be done and they would assign them to us, maybe give us a script they had already written and approved for us to read. That was probably the main reason I was nervous—fear of the unknown. I was surprised to realize how much freedom they gave me! I had the freedom to report on topics that I was personally interested in, and they expected me to write my own scripts. On my first day, I was trained for a few hours, and then they put me to work. That first day, I wrote my own script by myself and recorded it. My 30-second segment was aired that following

"THAT WAS PROBABLY THE MAIN REASON I WAS NERVOUS— FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN."

Wednesday. The best part about it was that my anxiety lessened for two reasons: I asked the experienced volunteers for advice, and I felt empowered because I was speaking my own words.

Overall, my experience at the radio station has been so much fun—I have learned important skills and stepped out of my comfort zone. My initial apprehension has turned into a pleasurable challenge. I still get nervous when I go on the air, just as I do when I am giving a speech in class. But I now know that with a bit of guidance and a whole lot of guts, public speaking is not that frightening, especially if I am speaking about something that I care about. I wouldn't be surprised if I spent over 15 hours volunteering at the radio station this semester.

Tips for Incorporating Service Learning into Public Speaking
- Everyone gets nervous speaking, and it helps to realize that being fearful of public speaking is completely normal.
- As you volunteer, ask successful speakers (such as DJs, pastors, teachers, parents) for their tips on how to reduce nervousness. You might be surprised at how down-to-earth and helpful their answers are.
- Take time to fine-tune your script or speech, and be proud to perform your own work.

Why Speak in Public?

Do Your Research

One way to build your confidence before giving a speech is to prepare as well as you can.[16] Careful preparation will help you feel more confident about what you will say (and what others will think) and ease fears about drawing a blank or not being able to answer a question. Speakers who research their topics thoroughly before they speak feel prepared. As a result, they tend to be much more relaxed and effective during their presentations.

Practice Your Speech

You can build your confidence and reduce the nervousness associated with the formality of a speech by practicing. And the more times you practice, the more confident you can become. Here is an example of how this can be done.

Randy was terrified to give his first speech. His instructor suggested a solution he reluctantly agreed to try. Feeling a little silly, Randy began by practicing his speech in his head. Then, when no one else was home, he began to present his speech out loud and alone in his room. He then stood in front of a mirror and delivered his speech to his own reflection. After several horrifying attempts, he began to feel more comfortable. Soon after, he began to trust his speaking ability enough to deliver his speech to his older sister, whom he trusted to be kind and constructive. First, he asked her to look interested, even if she wasn't. After doing this a few times, he asked her to give him honest nonverbal feedback. Then he asked her to share her suggestions and comments verbally. Finally, he practiced once more in the clothing he planned to wear and delivered his speech in his kitchen, which he arranged so it resembled, as closely as possible, his classroom.

When speakers practice their speech before they give it, they become more familiar with the process of speaking and the formality of the situation. As they gain comfort by practicing alone, they can move to rehearsals before an audience. They also have time to make changes in their presentation and to smooth out the rough spots before they actually give the speech. This practice is part of a process known as **systematic desensitization**, a technique for reducing anxiety that involves teaching your body to feel calm and relaxed rather than fearful during your speeches. This technique can help you give successful speeches and build your confidence, thus breaking the cycle of fear associated with public speaking. Talk to your instructor if you'd like to learn more about this technique.[17]

Even experienced performers get nervous when they speak in public. After Reese Witherspoon won an Oscar for her role as June Carter in Walk the Line, *she revealed that one of her biggest challenges in the role was talking and singing in front of a large group of people.*

GARY HERSHORN/Reuters /Landov

Have Realistic Expectations

A third way to build your confidence is to set realistic expectations about your delivery. Very few speakers sound or look like professional performers. When real people give real speeches, they sound like real people who are invested in their topic and speech. So rather than worry about delivering a flawless performance, adjust your expectations to a more realistic level.

Good to Know!

systematic desensitization: Technique for reducing anxiety that involves teaching your body to feel calm and relaxed rather than fearful during your speeches.

Remember, speakers pause, cough, rely on their notes for prompts, occasionally say "um," and even exhibit physical signs of nervousness, such as blushing or sweating. As we give more speeches, these "flaws" either go away, become less noticeable, or we learn to manage them effectively. Here are a few realistic expectations for beginning speakers:

- Take a calming breath before you begin your speech.
- Remember your introduction.
- Strike a balance between using your notes and making eye contact with your audience.
- Make eye contact with more than one person.
- Gesture naturally rather than hold on to the podium.
- Deliver your conclusion the way you practiced it.

Practice Visualization and Affirmations

Sometimes, we increase our nervousness by imagining a worse-case scenario for the speech, and these images often stay in our minds. We've set up what is called a self-fulfilling prophecy: If you see yourself doing poorly in your mind before your speech, you set yourself up to do so in the speech. There are two ways to turn this negative dynamic around and build your confidence as a speaker: visualization and affirmations.

Visualization. Visualization is a process in which you construct a mental image of yourself giving a successful speech. Research on the benefits of visualization suggests that one session of visualization (about fifteen minutes) has a significant positive effect on communication apprehension.[18] The techniques of visualization are used by a wide range of people—athletes, performers, executives—and can range from elaborate to quite simple processes. For public speakers, the most effective process works like this.

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can sit in a relaxed position for approximately fifteen minutes. Close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply through your nose, feeling relaxation flow through your body. In great detail, visualize the morning of the day you are to give your speech.

You get up filled with confidence and energy, and you wear the perfect clothing for your speech. You drive, walk, or ride to campus filled with this same positive, confident energy. As you enter the classroom, you see yourself relaxed, interacting with your classmates, full of confidence because you have thoroughly prepared for your speech. Your classmates are friendly and cordial in their greetings and conversations with you. You are *absolutely* sure of your material and your ability to present that material in the way you would like.

Next, visualize yourself beginning your speech. You see yourself approaching the place in your classroom from which you will speak. You are sure of yourself,

Ryan McVay /Getty images

Athletes commonly use visualization techniques to help reduce their nervousness. What images do you use, or would you use, when you visualize yourself giving a successful speech?

Good to Know!

visualization: Process in which you construct a mental image of yourself giving a successful speech.

eager to begin, and positive in your abilities as a speaker. You know you are organized and ready to use all your visual aids with ease. Now you see yourself presenting your speech. Your introduction is wonderful. Your transitions are smooth and interesting. Your main points are articulated brilliantly. Your evidence is presented elegantly. Your organization is perfect. Take as much time as you can in visualizing this part of your process. Be as specific and positive as you can.

Visualize the end of the speech: It could not have gone better. You are relaxed and confident, the audience is eager to ask questions, and you respond to the questions with the same talents as you gave your speech. As you return to your seat, you are filled with energy and appreciation for the job well done. You are ready for the next events of your day, and you accomplish them with success and confidence.

Now take a deep breath and return to the present. Breathe in, hold it, and release it. Do this several times as you return to the present. Take as much time as you need to make this transition.[19]

Research on visualization for public speakers suggests that the more detail we give to our visualizations (what shoes we wear, exactly how we feel as we see ourselves, imagining the specifics of our speech), the more effective the technique is in building our confidence and reducing apprehension. Visualization has a significant effect on building our confidence because it systematically replaces negative images with positive images.

Affirmations. Speakers sometimes undermine their confidence through negative self-talk; they listen to the harsh judgments many people carry within themselves. When we tell ourselves, "I'm no good at this," "I know I'll embarrass myself," or "Other people are far more talented than I am," we engage in negative self-talk. We judge ourselves as inferior or less competent than others. Although it is natural to evaluate our own performances critically (that's how we motivate ourselves to improve), negative self-talk in public speaking situations often is unhelpful. When our internal voices tell us we can't succeed, our communication apprehension only increases.[20]

To build your confidence, however, and counter the negative self-talk that might be going on in your head before a speech, try the following technique. For every negative assessment you hear yourself give, replace it with an honest assessment reframed to be positive. This technique, sometimes called **cognitive restructuring**, is a process that builds confidence because it replaces negative thoughts with positive thoughts called affirmations.[21] **Affirmations** are positive, motivating statements. They are very helpful in turning our immobilizing self-doubts into realistic assessments and options. Consider the following examples:

Practicing the Public Dialogue

1.3

Build your Confidence about Giving a Speech

With another member of your class, make a list of what makes each of you feel nervous about public speaking. Now sort this list into categories that reflect your view of yourselves as speakers, your audience, the process of developing your speech and presentational aids, and delivering your speeches. Identify which aspect or aspects of the public speaking process generate the most anxiety for each of you. Discuss which techniques for easing public speaking anxiety presented in this chapter might work best for each of you.

Online Resources

CourseMate To access a good website about managing your nervousness about speaking in class, use your CourseMate for *Invitation to Public Speaking* to access **Web Connect 1.3: Overcome Speech Anxiety in Your Public Speaking Class**. This helpful set of tips was written specifically for students taking a public speaking class. To explore a few ways you can reduce your nervousness by making connections with your audience, access **Web Connect 1.4: Connecting with the Audience**.

Good to Know!

cognitive restructuring: Process that helps reduce anxiety by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones, called affirmations.
affirmations: Positive, motivating statements that replace negative self-talk.

Negative	Positive
I'll never find an interesting topic.	I can find an interesting topic. I am an interesting person with resources. I have creative ideas.
I don't know how to organize this material.	I can find a way to present this effectively. I have a good sense of organization. I can get help if I need it.
I know I'll get up there and make a fool of myself.	I am capable of giving a wonderful speech. I know lots of strategies to do so.
I'll forget what I want to say.	I'll remember what I want to say, and I'll have notes to help me.
I'm too scared to look at my audience.	I'll make eye contact with at least five people in the audience.
I'm scared to death!	I care about my performance and will do very well.
I'll be the worst in the class!	I'll give my speech well and am looking forward to a fine presentation. We are all learning how to do this.

Positive affirmations build confidence because they reframe negative energy and evaluations and shed light on your anxieties. To say you're terrified is immobilizing, but to say you care about your performance gives you room to continue to develop your speech. It is also a more accurate description of what is going on inside. Affirmations can assist you in minimizing the impact of your internal judgments and, along with visualization, can help build your confidence about public speaking.

Connect with Your Audience

A final way to build your confidence is to connect with your audience—getting to know them in class or gathering information about them before a more formal speaking situation. As you prepare your speech, identify what you know about them, the ways you are similar to your audience, and the ways you might be different. The similarities may be as general as living in the same town or working for the same company or as specific as sharing the same views on issues. Whatever the level of comparison, finding out about your audience reminds you that we all share many aspects of our daily lives. This helps you see that, despite differences, we do share similar views and experiences.

You can also build your confidence by being a good member of the audience when others are speaking. Although this might seem unusual, ask yourself the following questions: When you are listening to a speech, do you make eye contact with the speaker? Do you sit with an attentive and alert posture, taking notes or showing interest in the presentation? Do you ask relevant questions of the speaker when the speech is over or offer constructive comments if you have the opportunity to evaluate his or her performance? Speakers who fail to behave as engaged and interested audience members often fear the very same response to their speeches.

One way to overcome this fear of disrespectful audiences is to behave as an audience member as you would want others to behave when you speak. Doing so helps establish rapport (if you are kind to a speaker, she or he likely will respond similarly to you). It also helps you learn about how to put together and deliver an effective speech.

The solutions offered in this section may help you reduce some of the speech anxiety so common to beginning public speakers. Preparing, practicing, being realistic, visualizing and affirming, finding connections, and modeling appropriate audience behavior are options that even experienced public speakers use to build their confidence. Learning to relax while giving speeches enhances your ability to contribute to the public dialogue.

Civic Engagement in Action

"WHAT'S YOUR ORANGE-BAND?"

At lunch one day in 2003, a group of friends at James Madison University decided to try to engage students, faculty, staff, and administrators in a meaningful discussion about one important issue: the war in Iraq. They didn't want a rally, protest, or debate, "just a community-wide conversation." For one week, the students passed out simple bands of orange fabric that could be tied to a backpack or jacket to symbolize a desire to talk about the war. They wanted to spark the question "What's your OrangeBand?" and invite conversation about the war.

Five weeks later, more than 2,000 students, professors, and community members had chosen to wear OrangeBands, attend forums, and discuss their views. Dialogue soon turned to a number of other core issues, and the question became "What's your OrangeBand today?" In 2004, the nonprofit OrangeBand Initiative, Inc., was formed, and by 2010, OrangeBand had coordinated dozens of forums and several action campaigns designed to facilitate conversations on a wide range of topics, and inspired more than 10,000 OrangeBand wearers.

The organizers think OrangeBand taps into three things that people are hungry for:

- **Civil discourse (respectful conversation).** There is desire out there to talk about issues we care about with other people and to try to learn from them when we disagree rather than dismiss and disrespect them.
- **Social capital (community).** OrangeBand is not just about having a conversation with someone but also about feeling connected to them. The "relationship building aspect of a quality conversation on an important topic" is just as important as the conversation itself.

Evan Dyson/AP Photo

- **Civic engagement (citizenship).** Whether we call it getting involved, citizenship, or civic responsibility, OrangeBand taps into a desire to participate in democracy. When OrangeBand conversations start up, talking quickly turns to taking action.

OrangeBand chapters or groups are springing up across the nation, and the organization has only one rule: "to be successful in providing a neutral space for dialogue, the organization must remain neutral itself. We vigorously work to protect this political impartiality by inviting people of diverse perspectives to participate on staff and in our forums." OrangeBand is "not interested in advocating for any particular stance"; rather, the goal is to "generate a better understanding of why a person thinks" what she or he thinks.[22]

You Can Get Involved

CourseMate To learn more about OrangeBand and to get involved, access **Web Connect 1.5: The OrangeBand Initiative** and **Web Connect 1.6: What's Your OrangeBand?** online at your CourseMate for *Invitation to Public Speaking*. And to think more about topics you can address as a public speaker in your community and how you can go about sparking a dialogue, access **Web Connect 1.7: Convening Public Dialogue**.

Chapter Summary

Public speaking is unique.

- Public speaking has a structure, purpose, and role that are different from the other types of communication we engage in regularly: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and mass communication.
- Public speaking places a lot of responsibility on the speaker, seeks to address issues that affect the larger community, and relies heavily on one speaker to convey a message. It also creates community, is audience centered, and encourages ethical and civil dialogue in ways that other types of communication do not.
- The model of the public speaking process highlights the role of the speaker and explains the message, audience, and channel as well as the influence of noise and feedback.

Public speaking is powerful.

- Speeches have the power to influence people and to shape actions and decisions. The ideas expressed in speeches enter and shape the public dialogue for years to come.
- The public dialogue is the open and honest discussion that occurs among groups of people about topics that affect those groups. It allows speakers to offer perspectives, share facts, raise questions, and engage others in stimulating discussions. When we join that dialogue, we rely on and respond to these earlier speakers.

Culture influences public speaking style.

- Your speaking style is shaped by your culture as well as your gender.

- As you enter the public dialogue, you will be exposed to speaking styles different from your own. This range of styles is essential to the health of the public dialogue, and understanding these differences assists you in responding civilly to others.

Civil, ethical speakers participate in the public dialogue productively.

- Participating in this dialogue civilly means you must display care, respect, thoughtfulness, and flexibility.
- Participating in this dialogue ethically means you must consider the moral impact of your ideas on your audience and contribute to the public dialogue in productive ways.

Several methods can help build your confidence about public speaking.

- Research your speech topic thoroughly so you feel confident about the material and are prepared to answer questions.
- Practice your speech to work out any problems with it and to feel comfortable giving it in front of an audience.
- Have realistic expectations about your delivery so you don't feel you have to give a perfect presentation.
- Visualize yourself giving a successful speech, and replace any negative self-talk with positive affirmations.
- Find points of connection with your audience. Model good behavior when you are an audience member so you establish rapport with the people who may be members of your audience.

Invitation to Public Speaking Online

CourseMate Now that you have read Chapter 1, use your Speech Communication CourseMate for *Invitation to Public Speaking* for quick access to the electronic resources that accompany this text. These resources include

- **Study tools** that will help you assess your learning and prepare for exams (*digital glossary, key term flash cards, review quizzes*).
- **Activities and assignments** that will help you hone your knowledge and build your public speaking skills throughout the course (*Practicing the Public Dialogue activities, review questions*).

- **Media resources** that will help you explore public speaking concepts online (*Web Connect links, Enhanced eBook*), develop your speech outlines (*Speech Builder Express 3.0*), watch and critique videos of sample speeches (*Interactive Video Activities*), upload your speech videos for peer reviewing and critique other students' speeches (*Speech Studio online speech review tool*), and download chapter review so you can study when and where you'd like (*Audio Study Tools*).

This chapter's key concepts and review questions are also featured in this end-of-chapter section.

Why Speak in Public?

Key Concepts

affirmations (16)
audience (10)
audience centered (8)
channel (10)
civility (2)
cognitive restructuring (16)
communication apprehension (12)
context (11)
decoding (10)

encoding (10)
ethical public speaker (4)
feedback (11)
group communication (7)
interpersonal communication (7)
intrapersonal communication (7)
mass communication (7)
message (10)

noise (10)
public communication (7)
public dialogue (3)
speaker (10)
state, or situational, anxiety (12)
systematic desensitization (14)
trait anxiety (12)
visualization (15)

Review Questions

1. Who are the most compelling speakers you have encountered? Why did they speak: Did they decide, were they asked, or was it required? What issues did they discuss? How do these issues relate to the public dialogue discussed in this chapter? What made these speakers such strong presenters?

2. This chapter presented Deborah Tannen's notion of the argument culture. What is your perception of this culture? Have you been exposed to public communication as an argument? What were your reactions to this kind of interaction? If the people engaged in this interaction were to communicate civilly, what specifically would change?

3. Make a list of issues you find interesting and have followed for some time. Who spoke publicly on these issues? If you don't know who gave speeches on the issues, spend time in the library and on the Internet finding several speeches. How do these speeches affect your own positions on these issues? How did this activity shape your perception of the unending conversation discussed in this chapter?

4. What cultural or gender influences do you think will become (or already are) a part of your speaking style? Are these similar to those discussed in this chapter? If they are different, identify the differences and how they affect communication. Discuss this topic in your public speaking class so that you and your classmates begin with a recognition of the differences you will encounter as you all give speeches.

5. Set aside fifteen minutes of alone time the day before your first speech. Take time to visualize that speech as the process is described in this chapter. Go through each step carefully and in detail. Do not rush or overlook any aspect of the speech process. After you give your speech, compare having visualized the speech and your level of nervousness to a situation in which you were nervous but did not visualize. Was the visualization helpful in reducing your nervousness? Why or why not?

6. Either alone or with a friend, list or discuss the negative self-talk you use to describe your ability to give speeches. Identify the specific negative phrases you use and turn them into positive affirmations. Be realistic in reframing your negative self-talk into positive self-talk using the examples in this chapter as a guide.

7. As you listen to other students give their speeches, see if you can find similarities and differences between them and you. This will help you find points of connection with your audience, one of the techniques for reducing your nervousness before a speech. It will also help you stay audience centered.

8. When you are assigned your first speech, check out Speech Studio to see other students' first speeches. Or record your speech and upload it to Speech Studio. Ask your peers for their feedback. What feedback could you use to help improve your speech before you give it in class? ☑Studio

Chapter 1

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 11

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5. Paul L. Soper, *Basic Public Speaking*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 151. Soper also cites Ambrose Bierce as suggesting, with regard to too high a pitch, that positive is "being mistaken at the top of one's voice." See Soper, *Basic Public Speaking*, p. 150.

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8. See, for example, Stephanie Martin and Lyn Darnley, *The Teaching Voice* (San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group, 1996), p. 60; Patsy Rodenburg, *The Need for Words: Voice and the Text,* New York: Routledge, 2001; Linda Gates, *Voice for Performance* (New York: Applause, 2000); Richard Dowis, *The Lost Art of the Great Speech: How to Write One, How to Deliver It* (New York: American Management Association, 2000).

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18. See, for example, Peter E. Bull, *Posture and Gesture* (New York: Pergamon, 1987).

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Chapter 13

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Chapter 14

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Chapter 16

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17. See Palmer, *Taking Humor Seriously*; Joseph Alan Ullian, "Joking at Work," *Journal of Communication* 26 (1976): 129–133.

18. Victor Raskin, *Semantic Mechanism of Humor* (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1985).

19. Sylvia Simmons, *How to Be the Life of the Podium: Openers, Closers and Everything in Between to Keep Them Listening* (New York: AMACOM, 1991).