

Successful Decisions

AN ACTIVITY FOR CRITICAL REFLECTION



Mike is taking a First-Year Experience course that requires him to make an oral presentation. Although his class is small and he has gotten to know many of his classmates, he is terrified at the thought of making this speech. The date for his speech is two weeks away, and he needs to get moving, but he seems to be immobilized by his fears of speaking in front of a group.

Mike's fear of making oral presentations goes back to the eighth grade, when one of his teachers required him and his peers to make a speech. Mike didn't prepare very well. When it was his time to present, he panicked and forgot his speech. His classmates laughed at him, and his teacher rebuked him in front of his peers. He was humiliated! Mike has hated making presentations since that day, and has avoided speaking in front of a group at all costs. He has built this bad event up in his mind until he cannot face the thought that this could happen again.

The time has come for him to get over this fear and move on. He knows that he has to overcome this fear because he will be making presentations all through college and later when he goes to work.

What suggestions would you make to Mike to help him focus on getting this task done and being able to get up and make this presentation? What advice would you give him for getting over his fears?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Practice eye sweep. Begin by looking at your audience on the left side of the room and gradually move your eyes around the room so everyone feels they are being addressed.
- Don't indicate in any way that you can't wait for this to be over. If you show that you want it to be over, your audience will want it to be over, too!
- Watch your timing! Don't ramble around after you have made your points. Stick to your outline.
- Don't concentrate on the evaluation. If you have prepared and do your best, you will be evaluated fairly.
- Enjoy yourself. The more you act like you are enjoy doing this, the quicker you will actually begin to have fun speaking. "Fake it 'til you make it!"

"The trouble with talking too fast is that you might say something you haven't thought about yet."

—Ann Landers

SPEAKING BEYOND THE LECTERN

Why Is Informal Communication Important to Success?

There will be times in your life when you are required to communicate orally with others beyond the lectern. It may be that you are required to lead a meeting via teleconference, introduce a speaker at a conference, or simply answer the telephone at your company. While these situations may not seem as significant as a "formal speech," have no doubt that speaking to one customer on the telephone can be as important as speaking to one thousand people at the lectern. Consider the following informal speaking situations and tips and how they can impact your career.

DID YOU *Know?*



DR. MARTIN Luther King, Jr. was only in his early thirties and pastor of a small Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama, when he was

thrust into the national spotlight as a leader of protests against segregation.

He is considered one of the most powerful, effective, and persuasive speakers in American history. His oratory skills helped wake up a nation, and indeed the world, to the injustices, inequities, and discrimination against people of color. His words helped change the direction of this nation.

The movements and marches he led brought significant changes in the fabric of American life through his courage and selfless devotion. He was arrested over twenty times, traveled 6,000,000 miles, and spoke over 2500 times wherever there was injustice or protest. His ability to prepare and deliver powerful speeches, along with his bravery and personal sacrifice, changed the world.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King had four children, all of whom are involved in different aspects of civil rights. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize at the age of 35, the youngest man to ever receive the award.

Introducing a Speaker

At some time in your career, you will most likely be asked to introduce a speaker. Often instructors have students introduce peers and guest speakers for classes or conferences, so it is important to know how to do it right. People who introduce speakers frequently have not even read the biography and present a stumbling, bumbling, rambling introduction that discredits the speaker along with the introducer. Providing a strong, carefully crafted introduction sets the stage for the speaker and establishes his or her credibility with the audience, along with your own. Your job is to prepare the audience and to excite them about the speaker's remarks. So how do you effectively introduce a speaker?

- Put excitement in your voice and show your enthusiasm for the speaker.
- Memorize the opening lines so you can look at your audience.
- Tell the audience the general topic of the presentation.
- Give them some clues as to why this is important to them.
- Share with the audience why this particular speaker is highly qualified to deliver this speech.
- Be sure you know how to pronounce the speaker's name and any other difficult words in the introduction.
- Tell enough about the speaker's credentials to persuade the audience of his or her credibility, but don't bore them with every detail.
- If you know personal things about the speaker that might be interesting, you might share one or two of those. For example, you might say, "Dr. Morgan has just returned from his tenth trip to China, where he completed his landmark study on rapidly developing Chinese tourism, so he brings us first-hand information on the Chinese tourists bound for the US." Or you might say, "Mrs. Smith is an accomplished researcher on the topic of ADHD, but her greatest accomplishments, according to Mrs. Smith, are her three grandchildren."
- Wait at the lectern and shake hands with the presenter, which indicates you are turning the program over to the speaker.

Making the Pitch and Selling Your Ideas and Opinions

Have you ever known your idea and opinion was the right one, but you were so ineffective in presenting it that no one listened? Having a good idea is one thing—getting it accepted is something else altogether. You may not like it, but you are being judged right along with your ideas. Your personal brand is on display, so it is important that you prepare and use the right voice and the right strategy to get your ideas heard. Selling ideas is an active sport—not passive. It includes informative, demonstrative, and persuasive techniques. You have to tell and show to convince.

Your voice can add "money in the bank" to your career, and it can be a great tool in expressing your ideas and opinions and getting them accepted. One of the ways you sell your ideas and opinions is with your speaking voice, so you need to check your *voice appeal*. Your researched idea, your voice, and your complementary body language are your best tools for selling your personal ideas because together they have a powerful effect on people. If you have a pleasant, appealing voice that is pitched low, you will likely have people listen to you. On the other hand, if you use a loud, squeaky, monotonous, nasal tone, people will be turned off. If you use the right tone, modulation, and inflection, coupled with sincere, honest body language, you are much more likely to persuade someone that you have a good idea. Your voice, your gestures, and your facial expressions become your tools for success. Study the following checklist below to help sell your ideas.

- Know what you are selling. If you don't believe in your product or idea, no one else will believe it.
- Don't just talk. This is your opportunity to **perform** and grab positive attention for yourself.
- Express your main points up front. Don't lose your audience with too much superfluous information that puts them to sleep.
- Find a hook that grabs their attention. What do they already know and like? How can you attach your idea to something they already understand and embrace?
- When you are selling a new idea, you are trying to confirm what they already believe, not prove them wrong. No one likes to be wrong!
- Use a pleasant and well-modulated tone of voice that shows confidence and excitement for your idea or product.
- Use simple language that everyone understands. Avoid jargon.
- Avoid nasal, whining, croaky, or otherwise unpleasant tones.
- Speak with confidence and own what you are saying.
- Express your ideas boldly, demonstrating a professional image.
- Be sure your body language matches your voice quality and enthusiasm.
- Ask for something when you get to the end of your presentation. If you don't want them to do something, why are you talking and trying to persuade them?

Telephone Etiquette

Everyone knows how to answer and talk on the telephone. Right? **Wrong!** Of course, everyone can talk on the phone, but many people make a poor impression for a variety of reasons. Since you probably spend a great deal of time on the telephone, you need to pay special attention to how you are being perceived. The most important thing to remember is this: We communicate 8 percent of our message with our words, 35 percent with our tone of voice, and 57 percent with our body language. When you are on the phone, you lose your most important communication tool, your body language! All you have going for you are your words, your tone of voice, and your fluency. In person, you might say something that is sarcastic in a kidding way and the other person probably wouldn't be offended. On the phone, however, the person can't see your wink that indicates this is a joke, and the same message might become offensive. Study the following tips for making a good impression on the telephone.

1. Put a smile in your voice even when you answer the phone, and use a pleasant, congenial tone of voice; identify yourself clearly. Remember, your voice and your words are all you have to make a good impression on the telephone.
2. Remember that you are representing your personal brand when you answer the phone. The objective is to make a good impression. A very important thing for you to remember is this: your personal, outgoing message is a positive or negative reflection on you and your brand. "What up?!!!" might be funny to your friends, but a professional caller or employer would find this immature.
3. Avoid speaking too loud or too soft. Do not slur your words.
4. Do not eat, drink, or chew gum while talking on the telephone. This is rude behavior, and it makes a very poor impression.
5. If you are working and you answer the phone, address the caller properly. Call the person by his or her name and title if appropriate. For example, you might say, "Good morning, Dr. Manning."
6. Listen very carefully to what the caller is saying. If you are taking a message, repeat information if necessary, such as return phone numbers, amounts of money, or addresses.



What does your personal outgoing phone message say about you?

from ORDINARY to

Extraordinary



Dr. Wayne A. Jones, Assistant Professor and Thurgood Marshall Pathways Fellow—Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA

I come from a fine family. My mother is a retired social worker, college professor, and community activist, and my father is a retired Presbyterian minister and college professor. They provided a safe, structured environment and always encouraged me to do well. Clearly, I had the foundation to do well in school. However, I have not always followed my parents' advice to look out for my best interests. This was especially true for my senior year in high school. The outcome was that I did not graduate. So at 18, I started working and got my own apartment, and things were OK. At least, so I thought.

I have always been interested in anything that has wheels on it. If it has wheels, I want to drive it! I drove a school bus for a few years, and then I drove an ambulance. Additionally, I had a part-time job driving a taxi. One day, however, I saw our local bookmobile and I wanted to drive it, as it was different from anything that I had previously operated. I applied to do so, but found out that I had to have a high school diploma to be able to drive the bookmobile. At 19, this became my reason for going back to get a GED. Now, I could master driving yet another "thing" with wheels. It was not, however, as exciting as I thought it would be.

With my GED in hand, my parents encouraged me to begin my college studies. Subsequently, I enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University. After only one year, I decided that

college was not for me. I did not return for a third semester. In 1975, I began working for the police department in Chesterfield, VA. I was only the second African American police officer on the force. I held this position for four years.

My desire for wheels was still with me. I left the police department and began working for The Virginia Overland Transportation Company as a safety supervisor/bus driver. A short time later, I was promoted to operations manager. With this experience under my belt, I went to work for a larger bus company in Richmond, VA, driving a city transit bus.

I left the second bus company after a year to drive for a local construction company. This work, however, turned out to be very "seasonal," and I found myself frequently without income. This company also operated trash trucks, so I asked to be allowed to drive one of their trash trucks so that I could have a steady income and overtime, too. So, there I was in my early 30s, without a college degree, driving either a dump truck or trash truck. There was not a lot to look forward to.

My grandmother called me one day and asked me why I didn't go back to college. "You are far from dumb," I remember her telling me. I tried to explain to her that I was making decent money and I really liked the company I was working for and would not quit my job. I told her that if I went back to college part time, it would take me at least eight years to get a bachelor's degree. "I'll be too old by then," I told her.

7. If you answer the phone and the caller is upset or irate, remain calm and keep your voice soft. Do not meet anger with anger. If you are at work, try to solve the problem to the caller's satisfaction or excuse yourself and get a supervisor who has the authority to make the right decision.
8. If you have a job, do not engage in personal calls at work. If you have to make a personal call, make it quick. Tell your friends not to call you at work.
9. Give your undivided attention to the caller. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by others around you. If someone tries to talk to you while you are on the phone, excuse yourself from the caller for a moment and inform the other person that you are on an important call and cannot talk now.

She posed a question to me, the answer to which was a turning point in my life. "Son," she asked, "how old will you be in eight years if you do not go back to college?" That was my wake-up call. I enrolled at John Tyler Community College with no idea of what I wanted to become. The start of my second semester would bring a devastating event, as my grandmother died unexpectedly of cardiac arrest. Her final gift to me was her wonderful words of wisdom.

So, there I was, working full time, going to college full time, attending classes several nights a week, and studying on the nights when I did not have classes. One night, I received another phone call that changed my life again. My parents called me and told me that they wanted to talk with me about my education. To my surprise, they asked me to quit work and concentrate on my studies. "Grandma had a vision," my mother told me.

"She knew that you were going to do great things." They told me that if I quit, they would help with my bills until I finished college. I agreed to take their help.

I transferred from John Tyler Community College and enrolled again at Virginia Commonwealth University. I completed my Bachelor's degree. My GPA was not great upon graduation. I took the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and scored very badly. I was turned down for the graduate program in public administration. I was now 35. I met with the chair of the department and said to him, "Just give me a chance, I know I can do this." After some conversation, he agreed to give me that opportunity. I completed my Masters of Public Administration in only 18 months. Then, I applied to the doctoral program in public administration at VCU. The chairman of the doctoral program reviewed my GRE scores and basically told me that based upon them I should not have been able to obtain a Master's degree. I then applied to

the doctoral program in higher education administration at The George Washington University for their Ph.D. program. They accepted me provisionally. However, I again rose to the occasion, and only five years later, I graduated with a 3.85 GPA. My dissertation won the *Outstanding Dissertation of the Year Award* in 2000 from the George Washington University chapter of Phi Delta Kappa.

While working on my Master's degree, I obtained a position as adult day coordinator for a local non-profit agency. Eventually, I would become the agency's executive director. It was during this time that the thought of becoming a college professor came to mind. I saw an ad in the local newspaper for an adjunct teaching position at Richard Bland College instructing a class of advance placement high school students in United States government. It was through this part-time

position that I found the love of my life—teaching. I later applied to become a full-time faculty member at Virginia State University, and today, I teach freshman studies and public administration classes.

It may seem like a lifetime to an outsider, but in a few years, I managed to go from driving a trash truck to being a university professor. With hard work, dedication, and help from those around you, you too can change your life and find your dream job. I wish you much luck in your search.

In just a few short years, I went from driving a trash truck to being a university professor.

EXTRAORDINARY REFLECTION

Dr. Jones was brave enough to take an enormous risk, quit his full-time job, accept help, and reach his goals. Who do you have in your life that you can depend upon for support (maybe not monetary support, but crucial support of your goals, dreams, and educational plans)? Why?

10. Avoid leaving long-winded messages that someone has to wade through. If you want your message to be acted on, make it clear and brief. Let the person know exactly how to reach you. Speak your telephone number slowly and repeat it once.

Developing a Powerful Telepresence

Teleconferencing with people on programs such as Skype, WebEx, or Go-to-Meeting has become quite common in recent years. Chances are, you are already using a telepresence program to talk with friends and relatives around the country, and perhaps around the world. In case you have not yet used one of the many programs available, you need to know that teleconferencing



allows you to do everything from participating in a remote job interview to sharing photos with your friends. Use the following tips to improve your teleconferencing techniques:

- Since your friends and perhaps coworkers or even an interviewer can see you, you need to take a little more care with your personal appearance before signing on. Hair, grooming, makeup, and dress are important when using this technology.
- If this is an important event, such as an interview, you need to be sure to have good lighting in the room. You should angle your webcam to a position that allows you to look directly into it.
- If you are participating in a telepresence session, such as an interview, be sure the background in the room is appropriate. Your desk should be orderly and no offensive photos or posters should be visible.
- If interviewing, you want to avoid clothes with bright colors, because the lighting can make your skin look weird. Avoid busy patterns.
- If you have agreed on a time to meet, respect the other person's time by being online at the prescribed time.
- Be sure the camera is not angled to pick up a lot of extraneous movement in the background. Background noise and movements are very distracting.
- Try to sit still and not wiggle around too much in your chair, because it is distracting. Look directly into the camera when speaking.
- Use your normal speaking voice. It is not necessary to shout or talk slower than usual.

Video conferences are used frequently in the business world today, as well as in private homes. They are a great way to save time and money, and they are a really cool way to communicate with friends and family.



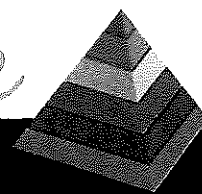
REFLECTIONS ON ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

As you learn to speak well, you will be following a tradition that has been practiced by scholars for thousands of years. Effective speechmaking principles can be traced to Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and Quintilian. By learning to construct and deliver your own presentations, you are becoming accomplished in skills that will serve you well all your life.

Learning to present effective presentations will help you succeed in every class you take. While you further hone your communications abilities, you will want to practice the following points:

- Use a logical organization pattern.
- Speak on subjects that you know.
- Always rehearse aloud and often.
- Take every opportunity to speak in public.
- Use a keyword outline.
- Analyze the audience and relate to them.
- Learn to use technology and visual aids to complement your presentations.

Knowledge in Bloom



IDENTIFYING PROBLEM SPEAKING SKILLS AND DEVISING A PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

Utilizes Levels 1–6 of the Taxonomy (See Bloom's Taxonomy at the front of this text)

Process: The exercise will require you to use critical thinking and research skills to design a plan for improving your speaking skills and abilities.

Using the list below, identify those problems that you think you have in delivering presentations by circling the number beside the problem. Add additional problems using the blank lines.

1. Extreme anxiety about speaking in front of a group.
2. Not being able to identify a good topic.
3. Inability to narrow the topic to a manageable scope.
4. Fear of speaking without writing out every word and reading it.
5. Inability to write a compelling, interesting introduction.
6. Ineffective use of audiovisual aids.

7. Ineffective use of PowerPoint or Prezi.
8. Not being able to relate to my audience.
9. Presenting in a rambling, disjointed manner.
10. Inability to finish strongly using a summary and powerful ending.
11. Anxiety in using a telepresence program
12. Unfamiliarity with introducing a speaker
13. _____
14. _____

Now, choose the top three problem areas that seem to give you the most trouble. In the space below, summarize why you think you have problems with these areas.

Problem One:

Problem Two:

Problem Three:

Now, research these three areas using the Internet or other references and decide on a plan as to how you can overcome these three major problems by applying knowledge you have uncovered through your research.

When you have designed your plan for overcoming these three problem areas, practice the techniques you discovered and create a simulated environment as though you are presenting to a group or using a telepresence program.

SQ3R MASTERY STUDY SHEET

EXAMPLE QUESTION (FROM PAGE 279)

List two ways that speaking in a digital world differs from typical speaking settings.

ANSWER:**EXAMPLE QUESTION (FROM PAGE 286)**

Contrast effective PowerPoint slides with ineffective slides.

ANSWER:**AUTHOR QUESTION (FROM PAGE 280)**

Discuss two factors of audience demographics.

ANSWER:**AUTHOR QUESTION (FROM PAGE 282)**

Discuss two means by which you could write an effective introduction.

ANSWER:**AUTHOR QUESTION (FROM PAGE 283)**

Discuss two means by which you could write an effective conclusion.

ANSWER:**AUTHOR QUESTION (FROM PAGE 284)**

Name three important steps in writing an informative speech.

ANSWER:**AUTHOR QUESTION (FROM PAGE 288)**

How can you reduce speaking anxiety?

ANSWER:**YOUR QUESTION (FROM PAGE ____)****ANSWER:****YOUR QUESTION (FROM PAGE ____)****ANSWER:****YOUR QUESTION (FROM PAGE ____)****ANSWER:****YOUR QUESTION (FROM PAGE ____)****ANSWER:****YOUR QUESTION (FROM PAGE ____)****ANSWER:**

Finally, after answering these questions, recite this chapter's major points in your mind. Consider the following general questions to help you master this material.

- What is it about?
- What does it mean?
- What is the most important thing you learned? Why?
- What are the key points to remember?