

LECTURE 13 TYPES OF SPEECHES

Learning Outcomes



After studying the material of this lesson you should be able to:

1. Explain the characteristics of an informative and persuasive speeches
2. Understand the types of informative and persuasive speeches.
3. Use supporting materials effectively in your speeches.
4. Analyze ethical persuasion.
5. Build credibility as a speaker.
6. Create the informative and persuasive messages

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

Informative Speaking: in this type of speaking frequently whether you realize it or not. Sometimes it is formal, as when you give a report in class. At other times, it is more casual, as when you tell a friend how to prepare your favorite dish. The main objective of this chapter is to give you the skills you need to enhance all of your informative speaking.

Types of Informative Speaking

There are several types of informative speaking. The primary types have to do with the content and purpose of the speech.

By Content

Informative speeches are generally categorized according to their content, and include the following types:

- a. **Speeches about Objects:** This type of informative speech is about anything that is tangible (that is, capable of being seen or touched). Speeches about objects might include an appreciation of the Grand Canyon (or any other natural wonder) or a demonstration of the newest Smartphone (or any other product).
- b. **Speeches about Processes:** A process is any series of actions that leads to a specific result. If you spoke on the process of aging, the process of learning to juggle, or the process of breaking into a social networking business, you would be giving this type of speech.
- c. **Speeches about Events:** You would be giving this type of informative speech if your topic dealt with anything notable that happened, was happening, or might happen: an upcoming protest against hydraulic fracturing ("fracki"), for example, or the prospects of your favorite baseball team winning the national championship.
- d. **Speeches about Concepts:** Concepts include intangible ideas, such as beliefs, theories, ideas, and principles. If you gave an informative speech about post-modernism, vegetarianism, or any other "ism," you would be giving this type of speech. Other topics would include everything from New Age religions to theories about extraterrestrial life to rules for making millions of dollars.

By Purpose

We also distinguish among types of informative speeches depending on the speaker's purpose. We ask, "Does the speaker seek to describe, explain, or instruct?"

- a. **Descriptions:** A speech of description is the most straightforward type of informative speech. You might introduce a new product like a wearable computer to a group of customers, or you might describe what a career in nursing would be like. Whatever its topic, a descriptive speech uses details to create a "word picture" of the essential factors that make that thing what it is.
- b. **Explanations:** Explanations clarify ideas and concepts that are already known but not understood by an audience. For example, your audience members might already know that a U.S. national debt exists, but they might be baffled by the reasons why it has become so large. Explanations often deal with the question of why or how. Why do we have to wait until the age of 21 to drink legally? How did China evolve from an impoverished economy to a world power in a single generation? Why did tuition need to be increased this semester?
- c. **Instructions:** Instructions teach something to the audience in a logical, step-by-step manner. They are the basis of training programs and orientations. They often deal with the question of how to. This type of speech sometimes features a demonstration or a visual aid. Thus, if you were giving instructions on "how to promote your career via social networking sites," you might demonstrate by showing the social media profile of successful people. For instructions on "how to perform CPR," you could use a volunteer or a dummy.

Informative Versus Persuasive Topics

There are many similarities between an informative and a persuasive speech. In an informative speech, for example, you are constantly trying to "persuade" your audience to listen, understand, and remember. In a persuasive speech, you "inform" your audience about your arguments, your evidence, and so on. However, two basic characteristics differentiate an informative topic from a persuasive topic.

Type of Topic

An Informative Topic Tends to Be Noncontroversial: In an informative speech, you generally do not present information that your audience is likely to disagree with. Again, this is a matter of degree. For example, you might want to give a purely informative talk on the differences between hospital births and home-based midwife births by simply describing what the practitioners of each method believe and do. By contrast, a talk either boosting or criticizing one method over the other would clearly be persuasive. The noncontroversial nature of informative speaking does not mean that your speech topic should be uninteresting to your audience; rather, it means that your approach to it should not engender conflict. You could speak about the animal

rights movement, for example, by explaining the points of view of both sides in an interesting but objective manner.

Speech Purpose

The Informative Speaker Does Not Intend to Change Audience Attitudes: The informative speaker does seek a response (such as attention and interest) from the listener and does try to make the topic important to the audience. But the speaker's primary intent is not to change attitudes or to make the audience members feel differently about the topic. For example, an informative speaker might explain how a microwave oven works but will not try to "sell" a specific brand of oven to the audience. The speaker's intent is best expressed in a specific informative purpose statement, which brings us to the first of our techniques of informative speaking.

Techniques of Informative Speaking

The techniques of informative speaking are based on a number of principles of human communication in general, and public speaking specifically, that we have discussed in earlier chapters. The most important principles to apply to informative speaking include those that help an audience understand and care about your speech. Let's look at how these principles apply to specific techniques.

Define a Specific Informative Purpose

Define a Specific Informative Purpose: A complete statement of the objective of a speech, worded to stress audience. As lecture 12 explained, any good speech must be based on a purpose statement knowledge and/or ability that is, audience oriented, precise, and attainable. When you are preparing an informative speech, it is especially important to define in advance, for yourself, a clear informative purpose. An informative purpose statement will generally be worded to stress audience knowledge, ability, or both:

- i. After listening to my speech, my audience will be able to recall the three most important questions to ask when shopping for a Smartphone.
- ii. After listening to my speech, my audience will be able to identify the four reasons that online memes go viral.
- iii. After listening to my speech, my audience will be able to discuss the pros and cons of using drones in warfare.

Create Information Hunger

Start with simple information before Create Information Hunger moving to more complex ideas. An effective informative speech creates information hunger: a reason for your audience members to want to listen to and learn from your speech. To do so, you can use the analysis of communication functions discussed in Lecture 1 as a guide. You read there that communication of all types helps us meet our physical needs, identity needs, social needs, and practical needs. In informative speaking, you could tap into your audience members' physical needs by relating your topic to their survival or to the improvement of their living

for examples, if you gave a speech on food (eating it, cooking it, or shopping for it), you would be dealing with that basic physical need.

Make It Easy to Listen

Keep in mind the complex nature of listening, discussed in the lecture on listening, and make it easy for your audience members to hear, pay attention, understand, and remember. This means first that you should speak clearly and with enough volume to be heard by all your listeners. It also means that as you put your speech together, you should take into consideration techniques that recognize the way human beings process information:

- a. **Limit the Amount of Information You Present**
- b. **Use Familiar Information to Increase Understanding of the Unfamiliar**
Move your audience members from familiar information (on the basis of your audience analysis) to your newer information. For example, if you are giving a speech about how the stock market works, you could compare the daily activity of a broker with that of a salesperson in a retail store, or you could compare the idea of capital growth (a new concept to some listeners) with interest earned in a savings account (a more familiar concept).

Use Clear, Simple Language

Another technique for effective informative speaking is to use clear language, which persuasive intent can often help clear the means using precise, simple wording and avoiding jargon. As you plan your speech, consult online dictionaries such as Dictionary.com to make sure you are selecting precise vocabulary. Remember that picking the right word seldom means using word that is unfamiliar to your audience; in fact, just the opposite is true. Along with simple, precise vocabulary, you should also strive for direct, short sentence structure.

Use a Clear Organization and Structure

Because of the way humans process information (that is, in a limited number of chunks at any one time), organization is extremely important in an informative speech. Rules for structure may be mere suggestions for other types of speeches, but for informative speeches they are ironclad. Lecture 12 discusses some of these rules:

- Limit your speech to three to five main points.
- Divide, coordinate, and order those main points.
- Use a strong introduction that previews your ideas.
- Use a conclusion that reviews your ideas and makes them memorable.
- Use transitions, internal summaries, and internal previews.

The repetition that is inherent in strong organization will help your audience members understand and remember those points. This will be especially true if you use a well-organized introduction, body, and conclusion. Use a Clear Organization and Structure: **The Introduction**-The following principles of organization from lecture 12 become especially important in the introduction of an informative speech: 1. Establish the importance of your topic to your audience. 2. Preview the thesis, the one central idea you want your audience to remember. 3. Preview your main points. **The Body**-In the body of an informative speech, the

following organizational your speeches more principles take on special importance: effectively? 1. Limit your division of main points to three to five sub points. vocal citation A simple, concise, spoken statement of the source of your 2. Use transitions, internal summaries, and internal previews. 3. Order your points in the way that they will be easiest to understand and remember. **The Conclusion**-Organizational principles are also important in the conclusion of an informative speech: 1. Review your main points. 2. Remind your audience members of the importance of your topic to them. 3. Provide your audience with a memory aid.

Using Supporting Material Effectively

Emphasizing Important Points

One specific principle of informative speaking is to stress the important points in your speech through repetition and the use of signposts. **Repetition** is one of the age-old rules of learning. Human beings are more likely to comprehend information that is stated more than once. This is especially true in a speaking situation, because, unlike a written paper, your audience members cannot go back to reread something they have missed. If their minds have wandered the first time you say something, they just might pick it up the second time. Of course, simply repeating something in the same words might bore the audience members who actually are paying attention, so effective speakers learn to say the same thing in more than one way. You just have to use your best judgment to make sure that you have stated the point enough that your audience members get it without repeating it so often that they want to give it back. **Signposts** Another way to emphasize important material is by using signposts: words or phrases that emphasize the importance of what you are about to say. You can state, simply enough, "What I'm about to say is important," or you can use some variation of that statement: "But listen to this ... "or "The most important thing to remember is ...," or "The three keys to this situation are ..." and so on.

Generating Audience Involvement

Audience involvement is the level of commitment and attention that listeners devote to a speech. Educational psychologists have long known that the best way to teach people something is to have them do it; social psychologists have added to this rule by proving, in many studies, that involvement in a message increases audience comprehension of, and agreement with, that message. **Techniques of Informative Speaking** There are many ways to encourage audience involvement in your speech. One way is by following the rules for good delivery by maintaining enthusiasm, energy, eye contact, and so on. Other ways include personalizing your speech, using audience participation, using volunteers, and having a question-and-answer period.

Using Visual Aids

Visual aids are graphic devices used in a speech to illustrate or support ideas. Although they can be used in any type of speech, they are especially important in informative speeches. For

example, they can be extremely useful when you want to show how things look (photos of your trek to Nepal or the effects of malnutrition) or how things work (a demonstration of a new ski binding or a diagram of how seawater is made drinkable). Visual aids can also show how things relate to one another (a graph showing the relationships among gender, education, and income).

Types of Visual Aids: There is a wide variety of types of visual aids.

I. Visual Aids

A. Types: Benefits and Drawbacks

1. Objects
2. Models: Objects and Models Sometimes the most effective visual aid is the actual thing you are talking about. Models are scaled representations of the object you are discussing and are used when that object is too large
3. Diagrams do not try to show everything but just those parts of a thing that the audience most needs to be aware of and understand. Blueprints and architectural plans are common types of diagrams, as are maps and organizational charts. A diagram is most appropriate when you need to simplify a complex object or phenomenon and make it more understandable to the audience. Graphs/Charts: *word and number charts, pie charts, bar and column charts, or line charts.*
4. Tables
5. Photographs
6. Drawings

Media: Simple to Complex Technology; Media for the presentation of visual aids include digital projectors with presentation software, chalkboards, whiteboards, flip pads, and handouts.

Using Presentation Software

Using Presentation Software Several specialized programs exist just to produce visual aids. Among the most popular of these programs are Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple's Keynote, and Prezi. In its simplest form, presentation software lets you build an effective slide show out of your basic outline. You can choose color-coordinated backgrounds and consistent formatting that match the tone and purpose of your presentation. Most presentation software programs contain a clip art library that allows you to choose images to accompany your words. They also allow you to import images from outside sources and to build your own charts.

7. Video Excerpts: DVDs, YouTube, and Visual Power
8. Projection Equipment: Blowing It Up
9. PowerPoint: Computer-Assisted Presentations

Alternative Media for Presenting Graphics

Alternative Media for Presenting Graphics When a projector is unavailable, a variety of materials can be used to present visual aids such as Chalkboards, Whiteboards, and Polymer Marking Surfaces. The major advantage of these write-as-you-go media is their spontaneity. With them you can create your visual aid as you speak, including items generated from

audience responses. Along with the odor of whiteboard markers and the squeaking of chalk, a major disadvantage of these media is the difficulty of preparing visual aids on them in advance, especially if several speeches are scheduled in the same room at the same hour. Flip Pads and Poster Board Flip pads are like oversized writing tablets attached to a portable easel. Flip pads enable you to combine the spontaneity of the chalkboard (you can write on them as you go) with portability, which enables you to prepare.

10. Chalkboard and Whiteboard: All Dinosaurs Aren't Extinct
11. Poster Board: Simplicity Itself
12. Handouts: An Old Standby

Rules for Using Visual Aids

It's easy to see that each type of visual aid and each medium for its presentation have their own advantages and disadvantages. No matter which type you use, however, there are a few rules to follow. **Simplicity** Keep your visual aids simple. Your goal is to clarify, not confuse. Use only key words or phrases, not sentences. The \"rule of seven\" states that each exhibit you use should contain no more than seven lines of text, each with no more than seven words. **Keep all printing horizontal.** Omit all nonessential details. **Size** Visual aids should be large enough for your entire audience to see them at one time but portable enough for you to get them out of the way when they no longer pertain to the point you are making. **Attractiveness** Visual aids should be visually interesting and as neat as possible. If you don't have the necessary artistic or computer skills, try to get help from a friend or at the computer or audiovisual center on your campus. **Appropriateness** Visuals must be appropriate to all the components of the speaking situation-you, your audience, and your topic-and they must emphasize the point you are trying to make. Don't make the mistake of using a visual aid that looks good but has only a weak link to the point you want to make-such as showing a map of a city transit system while talking about the condition of the individual cars. **Reliability** You must be in control of your visual aid at all times. Test all electronic media (projectors, computers, and so on) in advance, preferably in the room where you will speak **Just to be safe, have non-electronic backups ready in case of disaster.**

- A. Guidelines: Aids Not Distractions
 1. Keep Aids Simple
 2. Make Aids Visible
 3. Make Aids Neat, Attractive, and Accurate
 4. Don't Block Audience's View
 5. Keep Aids Close to You
 6. Put Aid Out of Sight When Not in Use
 7. Practice with Aids
 8. Don't Circulate Your Aids
 9. Don't Talk in the Dark
 10. Anticipate Problems

PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

How persuasion works and how to accomplish it successfully are complex topics. Our understanding of persuasion begins with classical wisdom and extends to the latest psychological research. We begin by looking at what we really mean by the term.

Characteristics of Persuasion

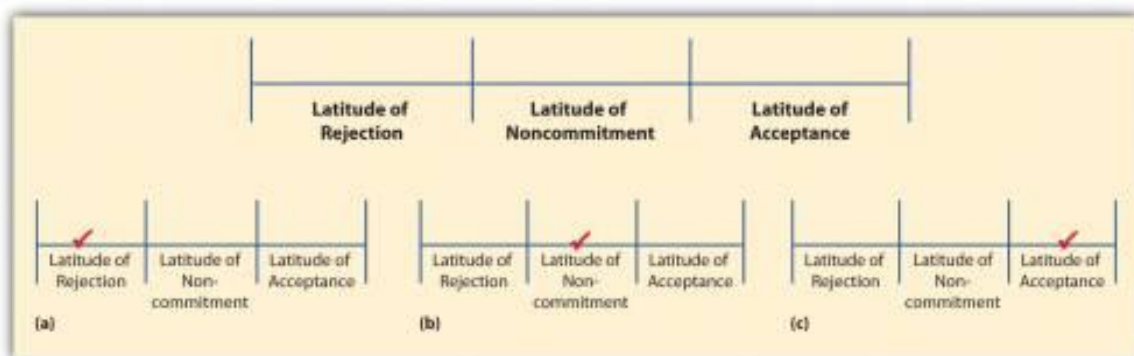
Persuasion is the process of motivating someone, through communication, to change a particular belief, attitude, or behavior.

Persuasion Is Not Coercive

Persuasion is not the same thing as coercion. If you put someone in a headlock and said, "Do this, or I'll choke you," you would be acting coercively. Besides being illegal, this approach would be ineffective. As soon as the authorities came and took you away, the person would stop following your demands. The failure of coercion to achieve lasting results is also apparent in less audience members' circumstances. Children whose parents are coercive often rebel as soon as they can; students who perform from fear of an instructor's threats rarely appreciate the subject matter; and employees who work for abusive and demanding employers are often unproductive and eager to switch jobs as soon as possible.

Persuasion Is Usually Incremental

Attitudes do not normally change instantly or dramatically. Persuasion is a process. When it is successful, it generally succeeds over time, in increments, and usually small increments at that. The realistic speaker, therefore, establishes goals and social judgment theory, statements that expectations that reflect this characteristic of persuasion. Communication scientists explain this characteristic of persuasion through *social judgment theory*. This theory tells us that when members of an audience hear a persuasive appeal, they compare it to opinions that they already hold. The preexisting opinion is called an anchor, but around this anchor there exist what are called latitudes of acceptance, latitudes of rejection, and latitudes of non-commitment. A diagram of any opinion, therefore, might look something like the following:



Source: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-standupspeakout-2/chapter/persuasion-an-overview/>

The statement that best represented the listeners' point of view would be their anchor. Other items that might also seem reasonable to them would make up their latitude of acceptance. Opinions that they would reject would make up their latitude of rejection. Those statements that are left would be the listeners' latitude of noncommitment. Social judgment theory suggests that the best chance of changing audience attitudes would come by presenting an argument based on a position that fell somewhere within the listeners' latitude of

noncommitment—even if this wasn't the position that you ultimately wanted them to accept. If you pushed too hard by arguing a position in your audience's latitude of rejection, your appeals would probably backfire, making your audience more opposed to you than before. --- cultural idiom Persuasion Is Interactive backfire: produce a result opposite
Persuasion Is Interactive

Persuasion is not something you do *to* audience members but rather that it is something you do *with* them. This mutual activity is best seen in an argument between two people, in which openness to opposing arguments is essential to resolution. As one observer has pointed out,

Arguments are not won by shouting down opponents. They are won by changing opponents' minds—something that can happen only if we give opposing arguments a respectful hearing and still persuade their advocates that there is something wrong with those arguments. In the course of this activity, we may well decide that there is something wrong with our own.⁴

Even in public communication, both speaker and audience are active. This might be manifested in the speaker taking an audience survey *before* a speech, a sensitivity to audience reactions *during* a speech, or an open-minded question-and-answer period *after* a speech.

Persuasion Can Be Ethical

There are many ways to define **ethical persuasion**. For our purpose, we will consider it as *communication in the best interest of the audience that does not depend on false or misleading information to change an audience's attitude or behavior*. The best way to appreciate the value of this simple definition is to consider the many strategies listed in Table 14–1 that do not fit it. For example, faking enthusiasm about a speech topic, plagiarizing material from another source and passing it off as your own, and making up statistics to support your case are clearly unethical.

Besides being wrong on moral grounds, unethical attempts at persuasion have a major practical disadvantage: If your deception is uncovered, your credibility will suffer.

TABLE 14-1 **Unethical Communication Behaviors**

- | |
|--|
| 1. Committing Plagiarism |
| a. Claiming someone else's ideas as your own |
| b. Quoting without citing the source |
| 2. Relaying False Information |
| a. Deliberate lying |
| b. Ignorant misstatement |
| c. Deliberate distortion and suppression of material |
| d. Fallacious reasoning to misrepresent truth |

3. Withholding Information; Suppression
 - a. About self (speaker); not disclosing private motives or special interests
 - b. About speech purpose
 - c. About sources (not revealing sources; plagiarism)
 - d. About evidence; omission of certain evidence (card stacking)
 - e. About opposing arguments; presenting only one side
4. Appearing to Be What One Is Not; Insincerity
 - a. In words, saying what one does not mean or believe
 - b. In delivery (for example, feigning enthusiasm)
5. Using Emotional Appeals to Hinder Truth
 - a. Using emotional appeals as a substitute or cover-up for lack of sound reasoning and valid evidence
 - b. Failing to use balanced appeals

Adapted from Mary Klaaren Andersen, "An Analysis of the Treatment of Ethos in Selected Speech Communication Textbooks" (unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1979), pp. 244–247.

Categorizing Persuasive Attempts

Persuasive topics fall into one of three categories, depending on the type of thesis statement (referred to as a "proposition" in persuasion) that you are advancing. The three categories are propositions of fact, propositions of value, and propositions of policy.

PROPOSITIONS OF FACT

Some persuasive messages focus on **propositions of fact**: issues in which there are two or more sides with conflicting evidence, where listeners are required to choose the truth for themselves. Some questions of fact are these:

- i. Caffeine is/is not addictive.
- ii. The United States does/does not give as much foreign aid to undeveloped nations as do other wealthy countries.
- iii. Canada's nationalized health care is more/is less efficient than the U.S. system of health care.

These examples show that many questions of fact can't be settled with a simple "yes" or "no" or with an objective piece of information. Rather, they are open to debate, and answering them requires careful examination and interpretation of evidence, usually collected from a variety of sources. That's why it is possible to debate questions of fact, and that's why these propositions form the basis of persuasive speeches and not informative ones.

PROPOSITIONS OF VALUE

Propositions of value go beyond issues of truth or falsity and explore the worth of some idea, person, or object. Propositions of value include the following:

- Cheerleaders are/are not just as valuable as the athletes on the field.
- The United States is/is not justified in attacking countries that harbor terrorist organizations.

- The use of laboratory animals for scientific experiments is/is not cruel and immoral.

In order to deal with most propositions of value, you will have to explore certain propositions of fact. For example, you won't be able to debate whether the experimental use of animals in research is immoral—a proposition of value—until you have dealt with propositions of fact such as how many animals are used in experiments and whether experts believe they actually suffer.

PROPOSITIONS OF POLICY

Propositions of policy go one step beyond questions of fact or value; they recommend a specific course of action (a “policy”). Some questions of policy are these:

- The Electoral College should/should not be abolished.
- Condoms should/should not be distributed in high schools.
- Genetic engineering of plants and livestock is/is not an appropriate way to increase the food supply.

By Desired Outcome

We can also categorize persuasion according to two major outcomes: convincing and actuating.

CONVINCING

When you set about to **convince** an audience, you want to change the way its members think. When we say that convincing an audience changes the way its members think, we do not mean that you have to swing them from one belief or attitude to a completely different one. Sometimes audience members will already think the way you want them to, but they will not be firmly enough committed to that way of thinking. When that is the case, you reinforce, or strengthen, their opinions. For example, if your audience already believed that the federal budget should be balanced but did not consider the idea important; your job would be to reinforce members' current beliefs.

ACTUATING

When you set about to **actuate** an audience, you want to move its members to a specific behavior. Whereas a speech to convince might move an audience to action based on the ideas you've convinced members of, it won't be any specific action that you have recommended. In a speech to actuate, you do recommend that specific action. There are two types of action you can ask for—adoption or discontinuance. The former asks an audience to engage in a new behavior; the latter asks an audience to stop behaving in an established way.

By Directness of Approach

We can also categorize persuasion according to the directness of approach employed by the speaker.

DIRECT PERSUASION

Direct persuasion does not try to disguise the speaker's persuasive purpose in any way. In

direct persuasion the speaker will make his or her purpose clear, usually by stating it outright early in the speech. This is the best strategy to use with a friendly audience, especially when you are asking for a response that the audience is reasonably likely to give you. Direct persuasion is the kind we hear in most academic situations.

INDIRECT PERSUASION

Indirect persuasion disguises or deemphasizes the speaker's persuasive purpose in some way. The question "Is a season ticket to the symphony worth the money?" (when you intend to prove that it is) is based on indirect persuasion, as is any strategy that does not express the speaker's purpose at the outset.

Indirect persuasion is sometimes easy to spot. A television commercial that shows us attractive young men and women romping in the surf on a beautiful day and then flashes the product name on the screen is pretty indisputably indirect persuasion. Political oratory also is sometimes indirect persuasion, and it is sometimes more difficult to identify as such. A political hopeful might be ostensibly speaking on some great social issue when the real persuasive message is "Please—remember my name, and vote for me in the next election."

In public speaking, indirect persuasion is usually disguised as informative speaking. For example, a supposedly informative speech could be given on AIDS that actually has the intent of persuading audience members to remain celibate before marriage and monogamous after marriage. Indirect persuasion isn't necessarily unethical. In fact, it is probably the best approach to use when your audience is hostile to either you or your topic.

CREATING THE PERSUASIVE MESSAGE

Preparing an effective persuasive speech isn't easy, but it can be made easier by observing a few simple rules. These include the following: Set a clear, persuasive purpose; structure the message carefully; use solid evidence; and avoid fallacies.

Set a Clear, Persuasive Purpose

Remember that your objective in a persuasive speech is to move the audience to a specific, attainable attitude or behavior. In a speech to convince, the purpose statement will probably stress an attitude:

After listening to my speech, my audience members will agree that steps should be taken to save whales from extinction.

In a speech to actuate, the purpose statement will stress behavior:

After listening to my speech, my audience members will sign my petition.

As Lecture 12 explained, your purpose statement should always be specific, attainable, and worded from the audience's point of view. "The purpose of my speech is to save the whales" is not a purpose statement that has been carefully thought out. Your audience members wouldn't be able to jump up and save the whales, even if they were motivated into frenzy. They might, however, be able to support a specific piece of legislation. A clear, specific purpose statement will help you stay on track throughout all the stages of preparation of your persuasive speech. The question you ask is, "Will this help me to get the audience members to think/feel/ behave in the manner I have described in my purpose statement?" If the answer is "yes," you forge ahead.

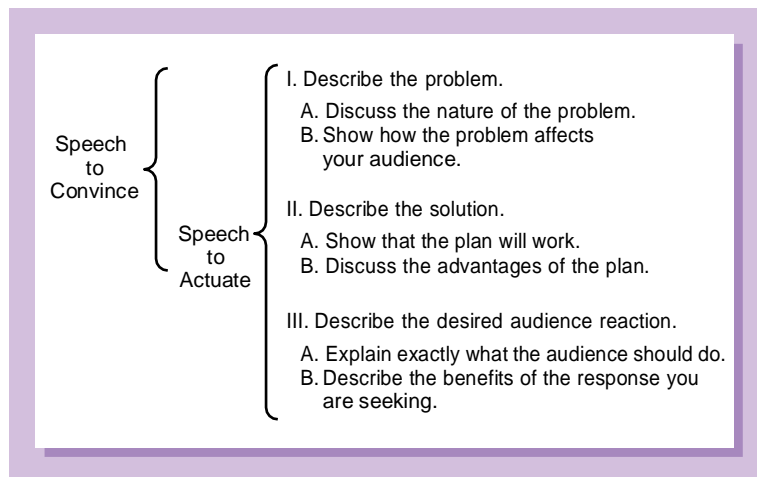


Figure 14-2 Sample Structure for a Persuasive Speech

Structure the Message Carefully

A sample structure of the body of a persuasive speech is outlined in Figure 14–2. With this structure, if your objective is to convince, you concentrate on the first two components: Establishing the problem and describing the solution. If your objective is to actuate, you add the third component, describing the desired audience reaction.

There are, of course, other structures for persuasive speeches. This one can be used as a basic model, however, because it is easily applied to most persuasive topics.

DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM

In order to convince an audience that something needs to be changed, you have to show members that a problem exists. After all, if your listeners don't recognize the problem, they won't find your arguments for a solution very important. An effective description of the problem will answer two questions, either directly or indirectly.

What Is the Nature of the Problem?

Your audience members might not recognize that the topic you are discussing is a problem at all, so your first task is to convince them that there is something wrong with the present state of affairs.

How Does the Problem Affect Your Audience?

It's not enough to prove that a problem exists. Your next challenge is to show your listeners that the problem affects them in some way. This is relatively easy in some cases: the high cost of tuition, the lack of convenient parking near campus, the quality of food in the student center. In other cases, you will need to spell out the impact to your listeners more clearly.

DESCRIBE THE SOLUTION

Your next step in persuading your audience members is to convince them that there is an answer to the problem you have just introduced. To describe your solution, you should answer two questions:

Will the Solution Work?

A skeptical audience might agree with the desirability of your solution but still not believe that it has a chance of succeeding.

What Advantages Will Result from Your Solution?

You need to describe in specific terms how your solution will lead to the desired changes. This is the step where you will paint a vivid picture of the benefits of your proposal.

DESCRIBE THE DESIRED AUDIENCE RESPONSE

When you want to go beyond simply a strategy to convince your audience members and use a strategy to actuate them to follow your solution, you need to describe exactly what you want them to do. This action step, like the previous ones, should answer two questions.

What Can the Audience Do to Put Your Solution into Action?

Make the behavior you are asking your audience members to adopt as clear and simple as possible for them. If you want them to vote in a referendum, tell them when and where to go to vote and how to go about registering, if necessary (some activists even provide transportation). If you're asking them to support a legislative change, don't expect them to write their congressional representative. *You* write the letter or draft a petition, and ask them to sign it. If you're asking for a donation, pass the hat at the conclusion of your speech, or give audience members a stamped, addressed envelope and simple forms that they can return easily.

What Are the Direct Rewards of This Response?

Your solution might be important to society, but your audience members will be most likely to adopt it if you can show that they will get a personal payoff. Show that supporting legislation to reduce acid rain will produce a wide range of benefits from reduced lung damage to healthier forests to longer life for their car's paint.

ADAPT THE MODEL PERSUASIVE STRUCTURE

Describing the problem and the solution makes up the basic structure for any persuasive speech. However, you don't have to analyze too many successful persuasive speeches to realize that the best of them do far more than the basic minimum. One way to augment the basic persuasive structure is to use the organization suggested by Alan Monroe in his Motivated Sequence. In that pattern the problem is broken down into an attention step and a need step, and the solution is broken down into a satisfaction step, a visualization step, and an action step. In another adaptation of the basic model, the speaker will combine the "solution" with the "desired audience response."

Use Solid Evidence

All the forms of support discussed in Lecture 12 can be used to back up your persuasive arguments. Your objective here is not to find supporting material that just clarifies your ideas, but rather to find the perfect example, statistic, definition, analogy, anecdote, or testimony to establish the truth of your claim in the mind of this specific audience.

You choose **evidence** that strongly supports your claim, and you should feel free to use **emotional evidence**, which is supporting material that evokes audience feelings such as fear, anger, sympathy, pride, or reverence. Emotional evidence is an ethical fault only when it is used to obscure the truth (see Table 14-1, page 9-10). It is ethical, however, to use emotion to give impact to a truth.

BUILDING CREDIBILITY AS A SPEAKER

Credibility refers to the believability of a speaker. Credibility isn't an objective quality; rather, it is a perception in the minds of the audience. In a class such as the one you're taking now, students often wonder how they can build their credibility. After all, the members of the class tend to know each other well by the time the speech assignments roll around. This familiarity illustrates why it's important to earn a good reputation before you speak, through your class comments and the general attitude you've shown.

It is also possible for credibility to change during a speaking event. In fact, researchers speak in terms of initial credibility (what you have when you first get up to speak), derived credibility (what you acquire while speaking), and terminal credibility (what you have after you finish speaking). It is not uncommon for a student with low initial credibility to earn increased credibility while speaking and to finish with much higher terminal credibility.

Competence

Competence refers to the speaker's expertise on the topic. Sometimes this competence can come from personal experience that will lead your audience to regard you as an authority on the topic you are discussing. If everyone in the audience knows you've earned big profits in the stock market, they will probably take your investment advice seriously. If you say that you lost twenty-five pounds from a diet-and-exercise program, most audience members will be likely to respect your opinions on weight loss.

The other way to be seen as competent is to be well prepared for speaking. A speech that is well researched, organized, and presented will greatly increase the audience's perception of the speaker's competence. Your personal credibility will therefore be enhanced by the credibility of your evidence, including the sources you cite, the examples you choose, the way you present statistics, the quality of your visual aids, and the precision of your language.

Character

Competence is the first component of being believed by an audience. The second is being trusted, which is a matter of character. *Character* involves the audience's perception of at least two ingredients: honesty and impartiality. You should try to find ways to talk about yourself (without boasting, of course) that demonstrate your integrity. You might describe how much time you spent researching the subject or demonstrate your open-mindedness by telling your audience that you changed your mind after your investigation.

Charisma

Charisma is spoken about in the popular press as an almost indefinable, mystical quality. Even the dictionary defines it as "a special quality of leadership that captures the popular imagination and inspires unswerving allegiance and devotion." Luckily, communication scholars favor a more down-to-earth definition. For them, charisma is the audience's perception of two factors: the speaker's enthusiasm and likability. Whatever the definition, history and research have both shown us that audiences are more likely to be persuaded by a charismatic speaker than by a less charismatic one who delivers the same information.

Enthusiasm is sometimes called "dynamism" by communication scholars. Your enthusiasm will mostly be perceived from how you deliver your remarks, not from what you say. The nonverbal

parts of your speech will show far better than your words that you believe in what you are saying. Is your voice animated and sincere? Do your gestures reflect your enthusiasm? Do your facial expression and eye contact show you care about your audience?



This chapter classified informative speaking based on content (speeches about objects, processes, events, and concepts) and purpose (descriptions, explanations, and instructions). Next, it discussed the differences between informative and persuasive speaking. It then suggested techniques for effective informative speaking. These techniques include using a specific informative purpose that stresses audience knowledge and/or ability; creating information hunger by tapping into audience needs; and making it easy to listen by limiting the amount of information you present, using familiar information to increase understanding of the unfamiliar, and using simple information to build up understanding of complex information. Other techniques include emphasizing important points through repetition and signposts; using clear organization and structure; using effective supporting materials, including visual aids; using clear language (language that uses precise, simple vocabulary and avoids jargon); and involving the audience through audience participation, the use of volunteers, and a question-and-answer period.

Persuasion—the act of moving someone, through communication, toward a belief, attitude, or behavior—can be both worthwhile and ethical. Ethical persuasion requires that the speaker be sincere and honest and avoid such behaviors as plagiarism. It also requires that the persuasion be in the best interest of the audience.

Persuasion can be categorized according to the type of proposition (fact, value, or policy), outcome (convincing or actuating), or approach (direct or indirect). A persuasive strategy is put into effect through the use of several techniques. These include setting a specific, clear persuasive purpose, structuring the message carefully, using solid evidence (including emotional evidence), using careful reasoning, adapting to the audience, and building credibility as a speaker.

A typical structure for a speech to convince requires you to explain what the problem is and then propose a solution. For a speech to actuate, you also have to ask for a desired audience response. The basic three-pronged structure can be adapted to more elaborate persuasive plans, but the basic components will remain a part of any persuasive strategy. For each of these components, you need to analyze the arguments your audience will have against accepting what you say and then answer those arguments. In adapting to your audience, you should establish common ground, organize your speech in such way that you can expect a “yes” response along each step of your persuasive plan, and take special care with a hostile audience. In building credibility, you should keep in mind the audience’s perception of your competence, character, and charisma.

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