

An Overview of Effective Speaking

GETTING STARTED:

- Know your **A.G.E.:**
 - **Audience:** To whom are you speaking? What do they know about your topic? What are their opinions about it? Craft your speech with your specific audience in mind.
 - **Goal:** What is the purpose of your talk? Define your goal (or thesis statement) in 1-2 sentences, and use this goal to guide the development of your presentation.
 - **Environment:** Where will you be speaking? What is the room like? What materials/technology will you need? How will you arrange your notes, visual aids, etc.?
- **Oral vs. Written Discourse:** Effective spoken language is generally more conversational and less complex than written language. When delivering an oral presentation, try using shorter sentences, repeating key ideas and phrases, and interjecting anecdotes, humor, or questions to keep your audience engaged.
- **Practice Oral Drafts:** Find an audience—an Oral Communication Tutor, your best friend, or your pet ferret—and try out your speech. It's important to work on oral drafts of a presentation in the same way that you edit drafts of a paper. Try recording yourself on audio or videotape to understand how your audience sees and hears you.

ANATOMY OF A SPEECH:

Introduction:

- **Attention Getter:** Use a relevant and engaging anecdote, question, survey, statistic, or image to introduce your topic.
- **Audience Relevance:** Why should your audience care about your topic? How does it affect them? Let them know.
- **Road Map:** What is your central argument? What points will you highlight? Preview your speech for the audience.

Main points:

- Use **specific and relevant examples** to support your arguments/ideas.
- Use **clear transitions** to link your ideas together and to keep your audience on track (e.g. "Now that we've taken a brief look at the history of co-ed dorms, I'd like to talk about the state of co-ed dorms here at Stanford.>").
- Use **metaphors and analogies** to make unfamiliar concepts clearer for your audience.

Conclusion:

- **Highlight and review your main points** and your take-home message. What is the most important thing you want your audience to hear?
- **Draw a connection** between your subject and your listeners. Why is your topic important, and why should they care about it?

SUPER SPEAKING STYLE:

- **Eye Contact:** Show your audience that you are confident, interested, and aware by looking directly at them as you speak. Aim for 2-3 seconds of eye contact per person, and try to cover the entire room.
- **Power of the Pause:** Silence is a valuable and underused rhetoric tool. Pausing at the ends of sentences gives your audience time to digest your material and gives you a chance to catch your breath. Pausing before or after a key idea highlights its significance.
- **Breathing is Good:** Nerves can speed up your speaking rate and lead to shallow breathing. If you feel yourself getting anxious, stop and concentrate on breathing deeply. It will help you relax and slow you down.
- **Gestures:** When used purposefully, gestures add energy to a presentation and allow you to highlight key points. Watch out for the two extremes: hyperactive hands and hands-in-pockets syndrome.
- **Posture/Balance:** Standing up straight and balancing your weight not only enhances your authority as a speaker, but also improves your breathing capacity and allows you to project your voice fully.