

# Speaking Techniques

**E**ARLIEST RECORDS of public speaking are the orations of ancient Greeks. Every Greek who participated in court, politics, or social life had to excel at the art of public speaking. Early Greek orators were Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. When Rome supplanted Greece on the world stage, Romans revised Greek public speaking techniques. Under Cicero, the Latin style of public speaking encompassed liberal arts, philosophy, wit, humor, and emotional appeal. As time has passed, oratory has become less ornate and is often the tool of politicians and entertainers.



## Objective:



Define and demonstrate effective public speaking techniques.

## Key Terms:



audience  
channel  
entertain

infomercial  
inform  
message

persuade  
public speaking  
speaker

## Understanding Effective Public Speaking

You will recognize Abraham Lincoln, Adolf Hitler, John F. Kennedy, and Bill Clinton as well-known public speakers as well as significant figures in history. Oratorical skills, undoubtedly, helped advance their careers. In spite of today's world of technology and methods of mass communication, elements of public speaking have remained the same throughout time. The basic elements of public speaking are the speaker, message, and audience.

## PUBLIC SPEAKING

**Public speaking** is the method used to address a large number of people to inform, persuade, and/or entertain. Because people have so much access to information on the Internet,

audiences require well-communicated, interesting content to maintain their interest. For a well-rounded presentation, you will answer questions of the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why” of your topic. The three main elements of public speaking, as in all communication, are the speaker (sender), message, and audience (receiver).

- ◆ The **speaker** is the person who sends a message to inform, persuade, and/or entertain an audience.
- ◆ The **message** is the thought, feeling, or idea the speaker communicates to the audience.
- ◆ The **audience** is the person or group of people who receive the message the speaker sends.

Public speaking can impart information, motivate people to action, and tell a story. Business, large group communication, mass communication, and entertainment are various ways in which public speaking talent is employed. For example, a television reporter gives a weather forecast to inform. A salesperson tries to sell cars in a TV commercial using public speaking to persuade. Also, a comedian engages in public speaking to entertain.

Communication channels vary with the speaker, the message, and the audience. The **channel** is the method or medium used to transmit the message from the speaker to the audience. The speaker’s message and the size of the audience influence the channel selected. Public speaking to an intimate group requires only the speaker’s voice; airwaves are the channel. Someone who speaks to a large audience may broaden the channel to include a microphone and a loudspeaker system. The speaker who addresses a mass audience may use television, radio, or the Internet as the channel.

## SPEAKING PURPOSES

The event may dictate whether the speaker will inform, persuade, or entertain.

### Inform

A speech or presentation designed to **inform** is to impart knowledge to an audience. This is the type of communication involved when a teacher conveys lessons or an exercise trainer presents the correct way to use a new piece of equipment. A public speaker informs the audience by providing the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why” about the topic. In a strict sense, informing an audience should



FIGURE 1. Students in a class respond to a teacher’s lesson.

take place without persuasion or entertainment. However, some elements of persuasion and entertainment are often added purposely or inadvertently.

A television or radio documentary or public service announcement informs the audience about issues, such as ways to find money for college or where to obtain a vaccination against disease. An effective television and radio newscaster simply reports the news informatively, without persuasion or entertainment.

## Persuade

A speech or presentation designed to **persuade** is to attempt to convince the audience by appealing to reason or understanding. A public speaker uses persuasion to move audience members to change their minds about a particular topic or to take the action the speaker advocates. As with other speaking techniques, information and entertainment can be added to a persuasive speech to enhance the message. For instance, in a sermon designed to persuade parishioners to follow rules or precepts, the message may be informative, persuasive, and entertaining.

## Infomercials

A television or radio commercial, usually 30 to 60 seconds long, is intended to sell a product or service by persuasion. A political speech designed to get votes to elect a candidate to office tries to persuade voters to act. An **infomercial** (5- to 10-minute commercial) is designed to persuade a potential buyer to purchase a product or service. Its form varies with the channel used. On television, an infomercial is a long commercial. In print, it is a multi-page advertisement or supplement. On the Internet, an infomercial is a commercial that may include interactive banner ads or Flash media.

Successful infomercials may employ a celebrity, a John Doe spokesperson, or a setting in an exotic environment. Facts, prices, and characteristics of the product or service may be informational, persuasive, or entertaining. The product or service quality and value may be emphasized



## BROADENING AWARENESS...

### AMAZING ASPECTS: Fear of Public Speaking

How do you feel about public speaking? Generally, women fear public speaking more than men. According to a Gallup poll, 40 percent of adults said their greatest fear is speaking in front of an audience. In a similar poll in 1998, 45 percent of adults feared speaking in public. Education affects the percentages. Among college graduates, 24 percent had a fear of public speaking; yet 52 percent of people with a high school degree feared public speaking.

The best way to overcome a fear of public speaking is preparation. Choose a subject of interest. Know your material, and practice your speech. Aim your message to appeal to your audience. Introduce yourself with a smile, take a deep breath, and begin. If making eye contact with your audience makes you nervous, look just over their heads. Focus your attention on the back of the room. Never apologize if you are nervous. Most of the audience will never know it.

by testimonials or product demonstrations. In addition, customer service may be expressed by information about a help desk, toll-free number, or online manuals.

## Entertain

If the purpose of a speech or presentation is to **entertain**, it is to amuse and maintain interest. Entertainment can be valuable as a way to move people to feel lighthearted and happy, providing a diversion from personal responsibilities. An example of someone engaging in public speaking for entertainment is a comedian trying to get people to laugh and enjoy themselves. Typically, a speech designed to entertain would contain neither informative nor persuasive messages. However, as with other types of speeches, elements of information and persuasion may be inserted. Popular public entertainment sources are theater performances of dance, music, and plays; stand-up comedy routines; movies; and television situation comedies.

## Summary:



Public speaking is the method used to address a large number of people. The goals of public speaking are to inform, persuade, and entertain. The three main elements of public speaking are sender, message, and receiver. The sender is the speaker; the receiver is the audience.

Public speaking can impart information, motivate people to action, or tell a story. Communication channels vary. Public speaking to an intimate group requires only the speaker's voice; airwaves are the channel. Someone who speaks to a large audience may broaden the channel to include a microphone and a loudspeaker system. Yet the speaker who addresses a mass audience may use television, radio, or the Internet as the channel.

An effective television and radio newscaster simply reports the news, informing without persuasion or entertainment. A public speaker uses persuasion to move audience members to take action. Someone engaging in public speaking for entertainment is a comedian trying to get people to laugh and enjoy themselves.

## Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are the three elements basic to public speaking and all other forms of communication?
2. Give two examples of each of the three formats of public speaking.
3. How does the channel differ with the size of audiences?
4. What is the difference between a commercial and an infomercial?
5. What professions are likely to blend informative, persuasive, and entertainment formats?

## Expanding Your Knowledge:

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Television and radio commercials are usually 30 to 60 seconds long. Write a commercial. Choose a bike, a favorite food, a computer game, or anything else you can write about to convince people your product will benefit them. Create a tagline to help make your product more memorable. Be informative, persuasive, and entertaining in your sell. Try to be conversational, and emphasize your product name so the buyer can identify it and be stimulated to buy it.

## Web Links:

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### Effective Public Speaking

[http://www.sideroad.com/Public\\_Speaking/effective\\_public\\_speaking.html](http://www.sideroad.com/Public_Speaking/effective_public_speaking.html)

### Phobia

<http://phobiabusters.com/?t=FPSGu>

### Public Speaking

<http://www.amanet.org/training/articles/seven-principles-of-effective-public-speaking.aspx>

### Speech Mastery

<http://www.speechmastery.com/effective-public-speaking.html>