

Supplemental Chapter for *Confidence in Public Speaking, Seventh Edition* (Telecourse Version)

Originally Chapter B in Sixth Edition

First Speech

“Every living sentence which shows a mind at work for itself is to be welcomed.”
--Oliver Wendell Holmes¹

Question Outline

- I. Why do students tend to worry about giving a speech?
- II. What are the six keys to confidence?
- III. What can you talk about in your first speech?
- IV. How do you start the speech, organize the body, and end the speech?
- V. How should you deliver your speech?
- VI. What are some ethical considerations in public speaking?

Introduction

Richard Cornell was given ten minutes of class time to think of some facts about himself that would be interesting to his audience of college sophomores and juniors. He knew that the most often asked questions about a new acquaintance on a residential campus are: “What is your name?” “What year in school are you?” “Where are you from?” “What is your major?” “What do you plan to do with your education?” Richard quickly thought up a brief speech that answered those questions:

My name is Richard Cornell. I was born in Huntington, West Virginia, grew up in rural Southern Ohio and spend a fair amount of time in North Carolina, my favorite place in the world.

I am a junior majoring in Classical Languages (Greek and Latin) and Speech Communication. That may seem like an unusual combination--especially the Greek and Latin--but you will understand when you hear what I plan to do with my life.

My passions include reading, roller-skating, and basketball, but I would say that the most significant thing about me is my plan to spend my life advancing my religious beliefs.²

In just over one hundred words and in less than one minute, Richard revealed seven important facts about himself. He concentrated on information that the audience might want to know by anticipating what questions they might want to ask. He had delivered his first speech to his classmates, and he found that telling his classmates about himself was a satisfying experience.

This chapter provides a brief overview of public speaking with special attention to your first classroom speech. Your first speech will be a success if you learn to conquer the anxiety you feel in this initial public speaking situation. This chapter attempts to shift you away from self-focus to an other-focus, an attention to the message and the audience. The more you concentrate on creating a meaningful message for others, the less you will worry about yourself.

There are many ways to initiate your first experience in public speaking, but one very common assignment is to introduce yourself or another student to the class. This assignment is popular because most students find it a safe, relatively positive experience. Often teachers ask students to interview each other between class meetings, or provide a few minutes of class time for interviewing a classmate or thinking up interesting items about themselves.

Many public speaking classes begin with a brief speech like the one Richard made to give you experience and to provide your audience with some information about you. This chapter is about preparing and delivering that first speech.

The First Speech

If you are a normal human being, you will have some misgivings about your first classroom speech. Whether you have never given a speech before, or if you have given numerous speeches, participated in theater, or performed for audiences, you may be worried about talking to the people in your class. Studies show that most Americans fear public speaking more than they fear death, so you are not alone.

This chapter is designed to guide you through your first public speaking experience with a minimum of worry and anxiety by helping you face your fears, decide what you are going to say, organize your speech, deliver your speech from minimal notes, and open and close your speech appropriately. To begin, you should consider why you might have fears, worry, or anxiety about delivering a brief public speech. You can avoid anxiety in your first presentation if you learn how to conquer your fear with confidence.

Beginning speakers are speaker-centered. That is, they are so worried about themselves that they tend to focus less than they ought to on the message and the audience. Experienced speakers tend to be audience-centered and message-centered. They worry less about themselves and more about whether or not they can effectively communicate their message to a particular audience. You may never completely eliminate concern for the self, and maybe you should not. You will find, however, that over the weeks of this course in public speaking, you will become less concerned with self and more concerned with others and the message you intend to communicate to them.

Remember that in the public speaking classroom, your audience is likely to be highly empathic and supportive. Also remember that your goal is to move from a teething, hand sweating, knee knocking, self-centered speaker to a cool and poised message-centered and audience-centered speaker.

Reducing Your Anxiety

What can you do to reduce the anxiety that you are likely to feel before speaking? What thoughts can you think, what actions can you take, and what precautions can you observe to help you shift attention from yourself to your message and your audience? The following six keys to confidence can help you reduce your fear of public speaking.

Act Confident

Actions often change before attitudes do. You may act as if you like others before you really do. You work with people (an action) as you get to know and like them (an attitude). Sometimes you may be more comfortable when you are acting. You dress up for a party and act in a certain way. You decide that you are going to have fun at a social event, and you act that way.

You can use the same strategy when you speak by thinking of public speaking as acting. You can say to yourself, "I am going to act confident when I speak," and then proceed to act confident even if you are not. It is not much different from acting cool on the street, playing the role of the intellectual in class, or pretending you are a sports hero in a game. You are simply acting as if standing in front of the class does not make you nervous.

Know Your Subject

Your first speech should be about something you know already. It should not require research. In fact, many communication professors ask you to talk about yourself. Whether you speak about some aspect of yourself or some other topic, you will be a better speaker if you choose a subject that you know something about.

When LaMarr Doston had to give his first speech, he could think of nothing about himself that he wanted to share with the class. He was glad that he did not have to do research for the speech, but he was unhappy that he did not know what to say about himself. After two days of worrying about it, LaMarr was in his office at work when he thought of what he was going to say: "I am LaMarr Doston, the Fast Food King."

LaMarr had worked for five different fast-food chains over the years. He worked his way from a mop jockey at one place, to counter server at another, to fry cook at a third, to night shift manager at a fourth, and now morning shift manager at the fifth food chain. LaMarr was good at his work, he was promoted frequently, commended often, and recommended highly. He seemed to know every job there was at a fast-food outlet. He was the Fast Food King.

Care About Your Subject

Amanda Carroll gave an introductory speech, about being adopted and bi-ethnic. Amanda had one African American parent and one European American parent. As a baby, she was put up for adoption in a small Ohio town and raised by European American parents. Amanda was very perceptive. She knew that people wondered about her origins because of her appearance. She satisfied the audience's curiosity and provided an added dimension by discussing the satisfaction of being chosen as a baby by parents who wanted and loved her.

If your teacher wants you to speak on a topic other than yourself, you should make sure that you select one that you know and care about. Do not talk about abortion, gun control or other politically-charged issues unless those are subjects in which you are passionately interested. The more you care about your subject, the more you are going to focus on the message and the audience instead of worrying about yourself.

See Your Classmates as Friends

It would be difficult to think of an audience that is more concerned about your success than your classmates in a beginning public speaking course. Well, maybe your mother or your favorite uncle would care more, but the students in your speech class worry about you so much that if you should falter, they break into a sweat. They care how you do. See them as friends instead of uncaring strangers, and your perceptions will help you feel confident in front of the classroom.

See Yourself as Successful

If you are an inexperienced speaker, you may need to work at thinking positively about your prospects as a public orator. You need to think and then rehearse in your mind how you are going to give your speech. Some people might call this "worrying," but psychologists call it "mental imaging." Whatever you call it, you can use it to help you succeed.

One experiment had basketball players think about and then rehearse mentally how they were going to improve their play. They were compared to players who actually practiced to improve their play. The players who rehearsed in their minds did as well as those who actually practiced. If it can work in basketball, perhaps it can work in public speaking as well. See yourself as successful and you are more likely to *be* successful.

Practice Toward Perfection

Everyone thinks that practicing your speech will be beneficial, especially if you do not practice it so often that it becomes a memorized speech. Practicing your speech under conditions that duplicate your classroom can also help.

Make sure that you take every opportunity to stand in front of the class before class begins and as your classmates leave the room. You need to see what the class looks like before you give your speech. Unless you have been a teacher, a business trainer, or have had other opportunities to speak in front of groups, you do not know what an audience looks like from the front of the room. The more you get accustomed to that sight before you give your speech, the better off you will be.

Most universities have classrooms that are empty some hours during the day or evening. Have some of your friends listen to your speech as you practice it in an empty classroom. The experience will be very close to what you will encounter when you actually give your speech. The practice will make you more confident.

Finally, you should consider some suggestions from students in a beginning speech communication class. When asked what they did to reduce anxiety, they mentioned the following ideas:

Move to the front of the room as if you owned it, and act as if the audience respects you and wants to hear your words.

Begin talking only when you feel comfortable. Look at the people in your audience before you start talking with them--just as you would in a conversation.

Focus on the friendly faces in the audience. Watch the people who smile, who look attentive, and who nod positively. Concentrate on the people who make you feel good about yourself and your speech.

Have your introduction, main points, and conclusion clear in your head. Practice them. The examples and supporting materials come easily when the important points are remembered.

Perhaps this information will come as no surprise to you, but one of the very best ways to overcome anxiety and to increase confidence is to take a course in public speaking. Your teacher will guide you, your classmates will support you, and the assignments will advance your knowledge and skill about public speaking. Teachers and classmates can help you discover your strengths and weaknesses. Repeated performances tend to reduce anxiety. Most of all, you will learn to focus your attention away from your anxiety and toward the message and the audience. You will be so busy communicating your message and monitoring the audience responses that your anxieties will be gone.

Six Keys to Confidence

You can reduce your fear of public speaking if you:

1. Act confident so you look confident.
2. Know your subject so you want to communicate it.
3. Care about your subject so you will focus more on the message than on yourself.
4. See your classmates as friends so you feel their support.
5. See yourself *as* successful so you will *be* successful.
6. Practice toward perfection so your confidence will grow.

What Is the Purpose?

There are three primary purposes for the introductory speech. One purpose is to provide the basis for **credibility**, the audience's perception of you. Think about it, your classmates do not know who or what you are. This brief speech gives them their first chance to see and hear you. It also allows the audience to formulate their first impressions about you by giving hints about whether you are intelligent, cool, attractive, or none of the above.

A second primary purpose of the introductory "**ice breaker**," the first chance to talk to an audience, is to provide you with experience in organizing your thoughts, composing them into a message, and delivering them to an audience. You have an opportunity to read **feedback**, to adjust to how your classmates are responding to your message.

A third primary purpose of the introductory speech is to begin to establish a relationship between you and the audience for your future speeches. It is the rhetorical

equivalent of a handshake in that it establishes how you want to relate to these people. Are you an expert, a well-read researcher, an experienced person, a social critic, or an inquiring mind? The first speech reveals what kind of a relationship you want to have with the audience.

Deciding What You Are Going to Say

As we have mentioned, a common assignment for the first speech in a public speaking class is to either introduce yourself or introduce a classmate. This section concentrates on how to decide what you are going to say if you are given such an assignment.

First, you should think about why this assignment is so common. One reason is that the teacher is moving you from a room full of strangers to a room full of supportive friends. A second reason is that this first speech allows you to begin building your credibility as a speaker by establishing what you are like as a person, by showing the class that you know about something, or by demonstrating your uniqueness. A third reason for the assignment is that it serves as an introductory **audience analysis**. That is, it allows you to find out something about every one of your listeners. You should write down what you learn about your classmates during their introductory speeches, because they are providing valuable information that you can use in every one of your speeches.

Now that you know why communication teachers like this particular assignment so much, you need to think about what you should say. Everybody likes to know your year in school, your major, your hometown, and your plans for the future. This assignment, however, asks you to both focus and expand. You must focus on some aspect of yourself that is unique, and expand on that aspect so your audience will remember you and your message.

Purpose of the First Speech

In your first speech you should:

1. Begin to establish credibility about who you are, what you are, what you know, and what you do.
2. Start to gain experience in organizing thoughts, creating messages, and delivering speeches.
3. Begin to establish a relationship between you and your audience.

Examples of your **uniqueness** might include some of the following:

Your family	Your nationality	Your causes	Your mentor
Your neighborhood	Your hometown	Your religion	Your major
Your work	Your hobbies	Your dislikes	Your group
Your talents	Your travels	Your likes	Your future

One student told her classmates about the effort it took to become a concert pianist; another told about his Native American heritage; another told why he was majoring in mortuary science. All of them focused on one aspect of themselves that helped define

them for the audience and revealed something that would make them credible in the eyes of their classmates.

If your assignment is to introduce another person, a brief interview is needed to reveal what is most interesting about that person. All you need to do is focus on some single aspect and then expand on that aspect for the content of your speech. Deciding what you are going to say is not a difficult matter; it just takes a little time to develop the idea and to expand on it so the audience will remember the point of your speech.

Another alternative is to give a speech based on some aspect of yourself. That is, instead of talking about you as a student or as a person, you could speak about your family, your neighborhood, your job, your experiences, or any number of other topics related to your life. And, naturally, your professor may have some variation on this assignment that gets you on your feet and using your mind in front of your class. Following are some examples of topics about some aspect of yourself:

Family

I am a single mom
Growing up Puerto Rican
One kid among many
An Armenian in America
We are Baptists
Life as an army brat

Job

Fast food, fast buck
I am an auto mechanic
Practicing for the priesthood
Do I want to be a lawyer?
Part-time Patty, underemployed
My favorite job

Neighborhood

Life south of 72nd St.
Growing up in the projects
The smallest town in America
Little Italy
The wrong side of the tracks
Our farm

Experience

I taught exceptional children
Life on the docks
When I lost my job
When I was in the army
Fighting alcohol
My victory over drugs

Now that you have some idea of what to say in a speech about yourself or some aspect of yourself, here is an example of such a speech.

Mary McCarthy

My name is Mary McCarthy. I am twenty-eight years old, and I am the mother of three small children. I am one of many students here who started college at seventeen, dropped out to get married--actually I dropped out to have more fun--and then realized that I was getting nowhere without a degree.

My story about myself is about my work. For the last six years I have worked at a box factory, where we manufacture, fold, and ship boxes all over the country to hold appliances like TVs, video recorders, microwaves, and other middle-sized things.

The people I work with at the factory are like me except that most of them never even went a day to college. They are nice folks, but they never have enough money and

they never will. With six years seniority, I still earn just a little above the minimum wage, and I get only two weeks off per year, when the entire factory closes down in August.

I had one year of fun after I dropped out of college, but I regret that now it will take three times as long to earn my degree because I have to take these courses at night, have to pay a babysitter to take care of the kids, and have to study when I am already tired from work.

Just so you don't get the wrong idea, I do not feel very sorry for myself. I am an upbeat person. I love my kids, tolerate my work, and really like my courses. I am tough and determined to make a better life for myself and my kids. I am Mary McCarthy, and I am proud of it. (audience applause)

Organizing the Content

Once you know what you are going to say, you need to know how to arrange your speech into an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. This section will bring your attention to speech **organization**: starting your speech, expanding the body, and finishing your speech appropriately.

The Introduction

The opening few minutes of a speech are called the **introduction**. Many teachers ask you to place your name on the chalkboard before speaking, so the class will know who you are. This act also saves you the time of saying your name when you begin to speak.

The introduction performs the following functions in a brief speech:

1. Captures audience attention;
2. Focuses audience attention on the topic of your speech; and
3. Forecasts how you are going to cover the topic.

In a speech introducing himself, Mohammed Aref had no trouble capturing the audience's attention. He was wearing an all-white, open-necked gown that went nearly to the floor. He wrote his name on the board and said:

I am from Pakistan, and you can call me Mohammed. I am named after the prophet who founded my religion, Islam. My name translates from Arabic to mean "praise worthy," which is also what I hope Professor Killough will say about this short speech about my appearance. My purpose is to explain to you how my clothing is related to my being a Muslim.

These three sentences, and the speaker's clothing, captured the audience's attention, focused that attention on the topic, and revealed how the speaker would cover the topic all in just half a minute.

The Brief Body

Sometimes the professor will allow the introductory speech to be a one-point speech. That is, instead of the usual three to five main points in the body, the speech has just one point, such as Mohammed's single point about the relationship between his clothing and his religion.

If the speech is about yourself or about a classmate, you need to make sure that the story you tell somehow captures the essence of the person being described. Annie, a middle-aged woman in class, surprised her classmates when she announced that she was proud of her stretch marks, which she called, "those badges of honor that women wear when they have carried babies." She added:

I am proud of my stretch marks because I earned them by carrying Katie, Richard and Mike. Katie is sixteen, looks twenty, and thinks thirty. As the oldest child, she is responsible beyond her years. Richard is twelve, acts eight, and thinks ten. He doesn't know if he is a kid or a young man, but he looks like a kid. Mike, well Mike is seven, acts six, and thinks five because everyone knows that he is the baby of the family, and we all help him stay that way because he is so cute.

She went on to add that her husband's private name for her is "Stretch," because he too is pleased with her as the mother of his children. The speech captured Annie's essence. She even acted as if she was the mother of the class. Her classmates took to calling her "Stretch" and sometimes "Mom," and Annie seemed pleased with both names.

A one-point speech about a general interest topic is a bit different because the "story" about the topic is not personal. Ganas Ratajik, a business student, in an introductory speech about the merger of Time and Warner used information from a book entitled *Master of the Game* by Connie Bruck to compare the founders of the two companies. Ganas called his introductory speech "The Clash of Corporate Cultures." He characterized the two founders like this:

Steve Ross, the founder of Warner, married into money and funeral homes, flirted with the Mafia in his car rental and parking lot businesses, bought into the entertainment industry and built an empire in video, cable, and film. Henry Luce, the founder of Time, Inc., established Time magazine, a journalistic power full of upper class employees, Ivy League WASPs who never blurred advertising and news. Ross's organization was heavily Jewish, included a resident joker, and included many executives who had never graduated from college. Merging the two organizations was like linking a gambling casino with the Episcopal Church!

The contrast of the two founders proved to be an informative and entertaining speech that was closely related to the speaker's interest in business.

The Conclusion

The **conclusion** of a speech almost always provides a quick review of the body and reminds the audience of the speaker's main points.

Mohammed said in his conclusion:

After this, when you see me in my traditional clothes, you will be reminded that I am from Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim country bordering on India. You will, I hope, remember that my name means "praise worthy" and that I was named after the Prophet, the man who founded my religion, Mohammed.

Annie said in her conclusion:

I am a woman. I am a mom. I produced Katie, Richard and Mike. I am proud of my stretch marks because I earned them over twenty-seven months of carrying my most precious creations.

Ganas said in his conclusion:

The marriage of Time and Warner united two very different families, but as often happens when bloodlines blend, the resulting bond has so far proved to be very strong indeed.

A summary ending, telling the audience what you told them, is one common way to end a speech, but it is not the only way. You could also end with a relevant quotation, a challenge to the audience, or a suggestion that the audience has much more to learn about you. When you advance in this book to chapters on other kinds of speeches, you will find many more ideas about how to end your speech. But for a very brief speech, a concluding line or a brief summary works well. Let us turn next to some examples of introductory speeches.

Tammy Rosenberger, a top student in public speaking, gave this brief speech about herself.

An Example of a Speech About Self

I List, I Plan

Who am I? When I was asked this question, I automatically took out a piece of paper and started making a list. I am a sophomore and an interpersonal communication major. I am a member of the Student Alumni Board. But this list isn't who I am, it is what I am.

So, I started another list. I am a native of Hamilton, Ohio. I am a daughter. I am a sister. Again I felt my list was what I am, not who I am.

Then, all of a sudden it hit me: I am a planner. Everything I do I plan. I make "to do" lists like crazy. I find myself feeling absolutely frustrated if things aren't planned. I like order, not chaos.

The groups I join are orderly. In high school I was on the Student Council and the Prom Committee. In college I am on the Student Alumni Board. All of these groups required a great deal of planning.

So, you'll never catch me flying off to France at a moment's notice—unless, of course, the moment has been planned for months.³

Notice that Tammy ended her speech by returning to the central theme that she is a planner.

An Example of a Speech Introducing Another Person

This student's first speech was based on an interview with a classmate. The assignment was to introduce the interviewee to the class. Both the speaker and the student being introduced stood in front of the room so the class could learn to know both of them. The speaker had her name and the title of the speech on the board before she began her speech.

In your first speech you may be assigned to introduce another person.

The Brainy Jock

Good afternoon and welcome to Public Speaking. My assignment today is to introduce you to a classmate I have interviewed. However, before I tell you her name, there are a few things you should know about the credentials of this student.

In high school she was captain of the varsity lacrosse team. She also played varsity field hockey and in her senior year was named top scorer. In addition to athletics, this person was also yearbook editor, a member of S.A.D.D. (Students Against Drunk Drivers), a staff member for the school newspaper, and a morning announcer.

On top of all of these responsibilities, she made excellent grades. She was, and still is, what some of us might call "a brainy jock."

Standing here beside me is this person who is continuing her success here at the university. She participates in various campus activities, is involved in Greek life, and still makes top grades. It is a pleasure for me to introduce you to this talented young woman. Let's hear it for Mindy Lynch.⁴

Delivering Your First Speech

When you deliver your first speech, you should try to be as smooth and poised as you are in conversation. However, you may have to use more formal language than you would use on the street--no profanity, fewer contractions, and words that are both accurate and descriptive--and you may have to speak louder than you would in conversations with a friend, i.e., **project**, for people in the last row to hear. You should also choose words that are simple, direct, and concrete. Instead of saying, "I'm a G-16 supervising internal auditing in a large government operation," say, "I am one of the people who checks your records when the government questions your taxes." Instead of saying, "I am an androgynous individual and a post-modern deconstructionist," say "I am comfortable with male and female behaviors in myself, and like to look critically at our society." In short, be fluid and fluent, use slightly formal language that is direct and concrete, and speak loudly enough for all to hear.

You should also try to deliver the speech without reading it. Many speakers write out their speeches, but they do not bring an entire script to the front of the room. Instead; it is good practice and good form to use a few key words to remind you of what you want to say. Practice the speech a few times using the key words. Do not be concerned about using exactly the same words each time. Focus on getting the message across to your classmates with accuracy and impact. Remember, your purpose is to communicate a message to a specific audience.

Some Suggestions for Your First Speech

Here are some ideas that have been tried in the classroom with success. You might want to get your professor's opinion about using them because experienced teachers have their own ideas about how you should fulfill this assignment.

1. Help the audience get acquainted with you by writing your name on the board, by telling the audience your name (to help them with the pronunciation), and by repeating it once in the speech.
2. Talk about something you care about, and the audience is more likely to care as well.
3. Focus on one or two aspects of your topic that are of interest to the audience instead of revealing everything you know about an issue.
4. Compose your speech as a story to make it easier for you and the audience to remember.
5. Deliver your speech from notecards containing some key words to make your speech flow smoothly without uncomfortable silences.
6. Use simple, concrete words—slightly formal language—to make your message more understandable and inoffensive to the audience.
7. Speak loudly enough for all to hear.
8. Speak slowly enough so students in the class can write down the information they learn about you or your topic.

These suggestions, along with others that you learn from your professor, will help you succeed in your first brief speech.

Ethical Considerations

Although ethics is a topic that will be addressed continuously in this book, it is never too early to learn about the role of ethics in public speaking. Consider the case of Ambrose Gearing, who was giving his first speech in public speaking class.

Ambrose told his classmates that he was the sole surviving child in a family with four children. He told the class that his three siblings had all died at twelve or thirteen years, of age from an inherited disease which he had avoided because he was adopted. The class was touched. He was so sincere and the story so tragic, but after Ambrose got everyone misty-eyed over his being the only surviving child, he revealed that the whole story was a hoax. He made up the story because he could not think of anything to say in his first speech assignment.

The effect was bad for Ambrose. His classmates felt duped, deceived. No matter what he told them after that, the class was unsure that they were hearing the truth. As a result, he had difficulty getting good grades on his speeches.

You can avoid ethical difficulties like the one Ambrose experienced if you know and understand the ten recommendations for public speakers.

Ethics is the study of the moral choices that we make every day. Ambrose made a choice of telling his classmates a big lie about himself that resulted in serious

consequences. Since our ten recommendations are about ethical choices in public speaking, let us examine each briefly for deeper understanding.

The first recommendation says, "You should speak on topics you know about through personal experience, observation, and research." This recommendation is more understandable if you consider its opposite: "Speak on things that you know nothing about." You probably agree that it is best if speakers know what they are talking about, and that there is something morally questionable about a person who speaks glibly about practically anything. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," is the old adage relevant to this point. Our society tends to agree that having wide and deep knowledge about a topic is important if you are going to speak about it.

The second recommendation is that you should speak from your own convictions, your own personal beliefs, and your understanding of an issue. The word *your* is the key word in this guideline. Too many people adopt the convictions of their parents, their friends, or their co-workers. What do you believe in? What, if anything, do you feel strongly about? What is your understanding of an issue? Too often our convictions, beliefs and understandings are derivative; that is, they come from someone else—they are not really ours. You will be an ethical speaker if you speak from your own basis of belief, not that of others.

The third recommendation asks that you strive to understand other points of view about issues by listening to the perspectives of other people. You will spend much more a time listening to the speeches of others than you will spend delivering speeches of your own. Listening can be a learning experience if you open your mind to the views of others. You will also broaden your ethical base as you learn more about the different perspectives on an issue. Usually there is no one point of view that is endorsed by Unitarians, Presbyterians, Republicans, Democrats, the American Medical Association and the Teamsters. Instead, there can be many perspectives that are equally valid considering the point of view of the beholder. To listen well is to learn much.

The fourth recommendation is that you should prepare thoroughly so you know your subject well and feel confident in your knowledge. It is always a good idea to know more about your subject than your audience does. In your first speech this recommendation is relatively easy to follow; you know more about yourself than anyone in the audience does, and if you introduce another person, only the two of you know very much about the subject of the speech. Later this recommendation becomes more important, because you will need deeper knowledge to deliver and answer questions about future speeches.

The fifth recommendation asks that you overcome your own prejudices by exploring other points of view about an issue. You have a right to your own opinion just as other people have a right to theirs, but ordinarily we avoid looking at other points of view. You will be a more effective and intelligent speaker if you know what other people think and if you adjust your own point of view based on your new knowledge.

The sixth recommendation asks that you treat your subject without distortion, exaggeration or deceit. A common problem for speakers is to overstate their case. You believe in some position so strongly that you make it sound like the only possibility by exaggerating the virtues of your position. Less of a problem in your opening speech, this tendency becomes more of a problem when the audience and other speakers have an

opportunity to assess, criticize, and evaluate your claims. No one is one hundred percent objective about a topic or issue, but you need to exercise reasonable care not to distort your position through exaggeration or overstatement.

The seventh recommendation says that you need to use "oral footnotes" to cite your sources. When you use someone else's words or ideas, you give them credit by saying where you found the information. Written footnotes call for complete information about a source. In a speech a shortened form is appropriate. You might say, "According to an article in last week's *Newsweek*..." Or you might say, "On Monday I interviewed Dr. Hobson from the History department about this subject..." In other words, reveal to the audience where you got your information. Violations of this recommendation are considered so serious that most colleges and universities have serious consequences for offenders--an F for the course or expulsion.

The eighth recommendation invites you to respect your opposition. On most controversial issues, multiple points of view are possible, logical arguments can support more than one position, and strong emotions can accompany your view and that of others. Intolerance toward the views of others makes you appear narrow-minded, dogmatic, and even ignorant. It is important to inform yourself by listening to the views of others and by treating the views of others as importantly as your own.

The ninth recommendation focuses on the importance of adapting your speech to the specific audience. The age, maturity, and education of the audience affects language choices. The audience's ability to understand information affects how the speech should be organized. The kind of support or evidence you use depends on the audience's level of sophistication. And the way you deliver the speech depends on the context and the audience's expectations in the particular setting.

The tenth recommendation is that you should always speak with the best interests of the audience in mind. This means that you do not try to manipulate and control the audience; instead, you try to inform and persuade using ethical appeals that do not violate the recommendations cited above. You need to respect your audience as you do your opponents and yourself.

Ten Recommendations for Public Speakers

1. You should speak on topics you know about through personal experience, observation, and research.
2. You should speak from your own convictions, your own personal beliefs, and your own understanding of an issue.
3. You should strive to understand other points of view about issues by listening to the perspectives of other people.
4. You should prepare thoroughly so you are well grounded in the ideas and information you present.
5. You should compensate for your own prejudices by trying to discover what is known about an issue, not just what you want to be known.

6. You should avoid half-truths, misrepresentations, exaggerations, oversimplifications, and other distortions that are tempting when trying to build a convincing case.
7. You should cite sources of information with "oral footnotes" to avoid plagiarism, an offense that can result in expulsion.
8. You should be respectful and open-minded toward those who oppose your ideas.
9. You should organize the speech, select your language, carefully support your ideas, and deliver the speech for a specific audience.
10. You should always speak with the best interests of the audience in mind.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare you for your first speech in the public speaking course. You began by learning that most normal people show signs of fear when they give a speech and that certain steps can be taken to reduce fears and build confidence.

There are six keys to confidence that will help you overcome anxiety about public speaking. Those six keys include acting confident, knowing your subject, caring about your topic, seeing classmates as supporters, seeing yourself as successful, and practicing toward perfection.

You also learned that there are three reasons why communication teachers like to assign a brief "ice breaker" speech early in the course. The first reason is that the speech gives your classmates their first opportunity to judge your credibility and for you to establish your credibility with the class. The second reason is that the first speech provides you with experience in composing, organizing, and delivering a speech as well as responding to feedback from an audience. The third reason for the assignment is that it begins to establish a relationship between you and your listeners, acting as a verbal handshake or introduction between you and the audience.

Next you learned the fundamentals of public speaking: topic selection; organizing the introduction, body, and conclusion; and delivering the speech.

Finally, the chapter concluded with ten recommendations for public speaking that will keep you out of trouble with your audience and campus rules on plagiarism.

Vocabulary

audience analysis Discovering as much as possible about an audience to improve communication in a public speaking situation

body The main section of a speech following the introduction and preceding the conclusion that expands on the main points

conclusion The ending of a speech usually containing a summary of points in the speech

credibility The audience's perceptions of the speaker that help them to decide the value of the speaker's person and message

ethics The study of moral choices that we make every day based on personal codes of conduct, social norms or religious values

feedback The speaker's response to the audience's verbal and nonverbal cues

ice breaker An initial encounter between speaker and audience designed to invite speaker and audience to know each other better

introduction The opening few minutes of a speech in which you gain and maintain attention, relate the topic to the audience, relate yourself as a speaker to the topic, and reveal the organization and development of your speech

organization The composition of the introduction, body, and conclusion of a speech

project Amplifying the voice so that all in the audience can hear the speaker

speaker-centered Worrying so much about yourself that you forget to focus on the message and the audience

uniqueness The ways that you are distinctive from other people; your qualities that cause you to be incomparable to others

Application Exercises

1. Brainstorm with classmates in small groups to explore with each other the kinds of information you would like to hear in an introductory speech. Write down the best ideas for use in your own first speech.
2. Interview a classmate for the purpose of gathering information that can be used in a speech introducing that person. Try to select information that demonstrates the person's uniqueness, develops a theme about him or her, or somehow captures his or her essence.

Application Assignments

1. Following the ideas suggested in this chapter, develop a brief speech about yourself. The speech should introduce you to the audience. Your professor will have some ideas about the nature of this first speech, but some possibilities include basic information about yourself, a story that typifies what you are like as a person, or a central theme about you (e.g., the "stretch marks" speech in this chapter). Focus on some aspect of your uniqueness and expand on it.
3. Following the ideas suggested in this chapter, interview a classmate and compose with him or her a brief speech introducing that person to your class. Your interview has to be focused on capturing the essence of the other person. What do you observe about the person's personality, ambitions, or life story that would help the class quickly capture the nature of this classmate? "The Brainy Jock" speech in this chapter is an example.

Notes

¹ Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Law in Science and Science in Law," address before the New York State Bar Association, January 17, 1899, in *Collected Legal Papers* by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1937), 230-31.

² Richard Cornell, Ohio University, from a speech prepared when he served as a tutor for the Introduction to Human Communication class. Spring 1994.

³ Tammy Rosenberger, Ohio University, from a speech prepared when she served as a tutor for the Introduction to Human Communication class. Spring 1994.

⁴ Mindy Lynch, Ohio University, from a speech prepared when she served as tutor for the Introduction to Human Communication class. Spring 1994.