

# HUMAN COMMUNICATION

FOURTH EDITION



**Make it Smart.  
Keep it Real.**



PEARSON • NELSON • THOMPSON • HARTER

# Human Communication

FOURTH EDITION

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# Dedication

We dedicate this book to our children Emma, Rebekah,  
Benjamin, Kathryn, Christopher, Chip, and Dana.

# From the Authors



(left to right) Judy Pearson, Paul Nelson, Lynn Harter, and Scott Titsworth

## *Dear Colleagues:*

This communication text was written by four teachers with extensive backgrounds in communication fundamentals. One married couple—Pearson and Nelson—has written many editions of communication texts for four decades, and they have served as basic course directors and introductory course teachers at a number of private and public universities. The other married couple—Titsworth and Harter—is much younger but equally involved in introductory courses. Together, this foursome wrote this textbook. Their common love of communication studies, undergraduate instruction, and translation of complex research into useful application drove this enterprise.

*Human Communication* is an introductory college textbook designed to make communication studies immediate and relevant to students. Some communication textbooks rest on rhetorical traditions that extend back over two millennia. Other textbooks mainly cite experimental studies, the results of social science research over the last 45 years. This textbook embraces both approaches: It respects the field's rich rhetorical traditions and practices, and it uses the results of current social science research to enlighten students

about how communication works in personal relationships, interviews, work teams, and public forums.

Because the beginning course is often the only communication course many students take, instructors have ambitious goals for their students. Students are expected to learn about how communication operates in their minds (intrapersonal communication), how communication works on the job (interviews, organizational communication, and work teams), how communication works in dating, courtship, and marriage (interpersonal communication), and how communication works in the one-to-many context (public speaking). While no student will emerge from the course with expertise in these areas, they will learn the fundamentals of human communication, giving them a basis from which to grow and develop into more fully functioning communicators.

*Judy C. Pearson, North Dakota State University*

*Paul Nelson, North Dakota State University*

*Scott Titsworth, Ohio University*

*Lynn Harter, Ohio University*

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# Preface

*Human Communication* is an introductory college textbook designed to make communication studies immediate and relevant to students. This textbook embraces the field's rich rhetorical traditions and practices and presents the results of current research to enlighten students about how communication works in personal relationships, interviews, work teams, and public speaking. Rooted in current scholarship with an eye on practical, everyday communication scenarios, its focus has been to “Make it Smart, Keep it Real.” As teachers we know that this is a time challenged course and we developed this focus to help instructors with their course goals—to help students understand the foundations and latest research/theories of communication as a discipline and to apply them outside the classroom.

## Make it Smart; Keep it Real

Our writing mantra—“Make it Smart; Keep it Real”—reflects our goal of producing a text that strikes a practical balance of definitive content and everyday application. To “make it smart,” we read hundreds of articles from communication journals. To “keep it real,” we show readers how research findings can be applied to a variety of communication



contexts in their everyday lives and provide tools to help them develop the skills to do so effectively.

## Make it Smart

Some highlights of our coverage of recent communication research include the following studies published in 2009 on topics that highlight gender differences, technology and communication, workplace communication skills, language development and MTV.

- A study of which shows that men with tattoos are viewed as more dominant than non-tattooed men while women with tattoos are seen as less healthy than women with them (chapter 4).
- A study linking language development with working memory efficiency that underscores the importance of helping children develop language skills at an early age (chapter 5). Studies that suggest that personal electronics (iPods, Smart Phones, etc.) are potentially diminishing the development of listening and face-to-face communication skills (chapter 5). A study based on recent controversies surrounding the financial crisis of 2009 which shows “honesty” as a key workplace communication skill (chapter 8). A study that describes how MTV's *Real World* is serving as a model for corporations trying to develop interdependence among corporate team members (chapter 9).

## Keep it Real

To keep it real, our text helps students to apply what they learn to everyday communication contexts. It provides tools that encourage students to think intelligently, actively, and critically about communication concepts, findings, and theories and to share their ideas and experiences in class. Every chapter features skill-building and critical thinking activities and 21st century examples that are relevant to students.

**Get Involved**, a new feature, guides students in making connections between basic communication concepts and what is happening in their communities so that they may develop a better understanding





of how they can apply what they learn in class to make a difference. Examples include political involvement and action by students at Illinois State University who helped raise awareness during the 2008 presidential election by registering new voters, a service learning project at Brigham Young University in Hawaii in which students coached Special Olympics contestants, and a discussion of public speaking opportunities in their communities such as at elementary schools and elder care facilities.

**Sizing Things Up**, new to this edition is a series of survey questionnaires that allows students to assess their communication skills and attitudes. After completing the surveys which appear in each chapter, they can compare their results to those of other students during class discussions or use the results as a starting point for understanding their potential strengths.

**Skill Builder** and **Try This** activities call on students to apply their skills to communication challenges.

**Chapter Opening Vignettes:** An abundance of real examples and scenarios offer students effective and realistic models and connect students to issues they may encounter in their everyday lives. Engaging vignettes introduce topics as varied as a discussion of the Dress for Success organization that provides women with suits to wear while job hunting as well as mentoring and other assistance, a young man's experiences with hate groups and hate crimes and his current work with an organization that promotes tolerance, and Michelle Obama's on-campus speech to promote public service.

## Resources for Instructors and Students

The *Online Learning Center Web Site* for *Human Communication* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) provides instructors and students with creative and effective tools that make teaching and learning easier and more engaging. These include the following:

- An updated **Instructor's Manual with Resource Integrator, and Test Bank** (written by the authors) that provides a wealth of teaching strategies, activities, resources, and test items.
- Power Point slides and Professional Resources for instructors.
- **Videos:** An original video series written in the style of a contemporary television drama, *Communicating Everyday* illustrates many of the concepts discussed in the text in a thought-provoking way; 11 full-length speeches and 18 speech excerpts by students are included in the *Public Speaking* videos.
- **Self-quizzes with feedback.** To prepare for exams, students can take a practice test for each chapter consisting of 15 multiple-choice and five true/false questions.
- **Key-Term Flashcards with audio.** Students can prepare for quizzes and exams by reviewing the key terms in each chapter.
- **Power Point Tutorial.** For building confidence in public speaking and managing speech assignments, students can use this tutorial to learn the rules of design and receive tips on implementation when working with presentation software.
- **Outline Tutor**—This interactive program and outlining template shows the various parts of an outline and makes it easy for users to insert appropriate content into the parts.
- **Business Documents Templates.** Because so many students either work while attending college, or soon expect to pursue a career, these templates provide a set of forms for creating professional cover letters, résumés, agendas, and memos.
- **Animations.** Written by the authors, these animations bring important communication topics and concepts to life.

## Tegrity Campus

Tegrity Campus is a service that makes class time available all the time by automatically capturing

every lecture in a searchable format for students to review when they study and complete assignments. With a simple one-click start and stop process, you capture all computer screens and corresponding audio. Students replay any part of any class with easy-to-use browser-based viewing on a PC or Mac.

Educators know that the more students can see, hear, and experience class resources, the better they learn. With Tegrity Campus, students quickly recall key moments by using Tegrity Campus's unique search feature. This search helps students efficiently find what they need, when they need it, across an entire semester of class recordings. Help turn all your students' study time into learning moments immediately supported by your lecture.

To learn more about Tegrity, watch a 2-minute Flash demo at <http://tegritycampus.mhhe.com>.



## CourseSmart



CourseSmart is a new way for faculty to find and review eTextbooks. It's also a great option for students who are interested in accessing their course materials digitally and saving money. CourseSmart offers thousands of the most commonly adopted textbooks across hundreds of courses from a wide variety of higher education publishers. It is the only place for faculty to review and compare the full text of a textbook online, providing immediate access without the environmental impact of requesting a print exam copy. At CourseSmart, students can save up to 50% off the cost of a print book, reduce their impact on the environment, and gain access to powerful web tools for learning including full text search, notes and highlighting, and email tools for sharing notes between classmates.

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. State reasons why the study of communication is essential.
2. Define communication.
3. Name the components of communication.
4. Explain some principles of communication.
5. Explain the ways in which intrapersonal, interpersonal, public, and mass communication differ from each other.
6. Define communication competence.
7. Name some of the tenets of the National Communication Association Credo on Ethics.



# INTRODUCTION TO



**In this chapter you will learn about the importance of communication in your everyday life.** You will find that communication is the foundation on which your personal, social, and professional life is built. You will also learn about communication on a deeper level, including the terms, processes, and contexts of communication.

# HUMAN COMMUNICATION

**One of the keys to good communication** is connecting with the person to whom you are speaking. Few politicians have a greater ability to connect with their audience than U.S. President Barack Obama. Each speech he gives attempts to—and often succeeds in—addressing his audience’s feelings, hopes, and dreams. For example, when the president addressed the American Medical Association about the need for health-care reform in June 2009, he spoke directly to his audience of doctors and showed that he understood their thoughts and concerns: “Our costly health-care system is unsustainable for doctors like Michael Kahn in New Hampshire, who, as he puts it, spends 20 percent of each day supervising a staff explaining insurance problems to patients, completing authorization forms, writing appeal letters—a routine that he calls disruptive and distracting, giving him less time to do what he became a doctor to do and actually care for his patients.” His audience applauded and roared in approval.

The president also connects his own feelings with those of his audience, another hallmark of effective communication. In the same speech he said, “I need your help, doctors, because to most Americans you are the health-care system. The fact is Americans—and I include myself and Michelle and our kids in this—we just do what you tell us to do. That’s what we do. We listen to you, we trust you. And that’s why I will listen to you and work with you to pursue reform that works for you.” Because Obama looked at the problems of the health-care system from his audience’s point of view, he was able to involve the doctors in his cause.

All politicians seek to connect with their constituents by offering programs and ideas that speak to their needs, hopes, and dreams. If President Obama succeeds in reaching his audience more directly and more often than others do, perhaps it is because he understands the principles of good communication. (For the full text of this speech, go to [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov).)

*President Obama’s speech to the AMA shows that communication is the foundation on which personal success is built. In this chapter, you will learn about communication on a deeper level, including the terms, processes, and contexts of communication.*

*President Obama’s speech illustrates many of the key principles of communication: He begins with his audience’s beliefs and experiences and involves his listeners by tying his thoughts and beliefs to theirs. As an example of public communication, the AMA speech demonstrates the President’s skill at adapting his message to his audience. The relational message of the AMA speech was a tacit request to the audience to support the Administration’s plans for health-care reform. The speech’s complex message included its immediate context—an address to a national convention—and the wider context that included many individuals’ and groups’ actions, words, and opinions for and against reform. All of these elements come together to create effective communication.*

Source [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-the-Annual-Conference-of-the-American-Medical-Association/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-the-Annual-Conference-of-the-American-Medical-Association/).

## Communication Is Essential

Studying communication is essential for you. Communication is central to your life. Effective communication can help you solve problems in your professional life and improve relationships in your personal life. Communication experts believe that poor communication is at the root of many problems and that effective communication is one solution to these problems.

Communication is consequential. Understanding the theory, research, and application of communication will make a significant difference in your life and in the lives of people around the world. The world changed on September 11, 2001, and people became far more aware of the importance of communication principles—particularly intercultural communication principles. Communication principles and practices can resolve disputes among nations as well as among friends and family. Effective communication may not solve all the world's problems, but better communication practices can help us solve or avoid many problems.

Communication is ubiquitous. You cannot avoid communication, and you will engage in communication nearly every minute of every day of your life. Communication plays a major role in nearly every aspect of your life.

Regardless of your interests and goals, the ability to communicate effectively will enhance and enrich your life. But learning *how* to communicate is just as important as learning *about* communication. Studying communication comprehensively offers at least seven advantages:

1. *Studying communication can improve the way you see yourself.* Communication is “vital to the development of the whole person” (Morreale, Osborn, & Pearson, 2000, p. 4). As we will see in chapter 2, most of our self-knowledge comes from the communicative experience. As we engage in thought (*intrapersonal* communication) and in interactions with significant other people (*interpersonal* communication), we learn about ourselves. People who are naive about the communication process and the development of self-awareness, self-concept, and self-efficacy may not see themselves accurately or may be unaware of their own self-development. Knowing how communication affects self-perception can lead to greater awareness and appreciation of the self.

Learning communication skills can improve the way you see yourself in a second way. As you learn how to communicate effectively in a variety of situations—from interpersonal relationships to public speeches—your self-confidence will increase. In a study based on the responses from 344 students at a large public university, students who completed a communication course perceived their communication competence to be greater in the classroom, at work, and in social settings. Most dramatic were their perceived improvements in feeling confident about themselves, feeling comfortable with others' perceptions of them, reasoning with people, and using language appropriately (Ford & Wolvin, 1993). In short, your success in interacting with other people in social situations and your achievements in professional settings will lead to more positive feelings about yourself.

2. *Studying communication can improve the way others see you.* In chapter 2 we will discuss self-presentation, identity management, and locus of control. You will learn that you can to a considerable extent control your own behavior, which will lead to positive outcomes with others. You will find that your interactions can be smoother and that you can achieve your goals more easily as you manage the impression you make on others.



You can improve the way others see you a second way. Generally, people like communicating with others who can communicate well. Compare your interactions with someone who stumbles over words, falls silent, interrupts, and uses inappropriate language to express thoughts to your interactions with someone who has a good vocabulary, listens when you speak, reveals appropriate personal information, and smoothly exchanges talk turns with you. Which person do you prefer? Most of us prefer competent communicators. As you become increasingly competent, you will find that others seek you out for conversations, for assistance, and for advice.

3. *Studying communication can increase what you know about human relationships.* The field of communication includes learning about how people relate to each other and about what type of communication is appropriate for a given situation. Most people value human relationships and find great comfort in friendships, family relationships, and community relationships. Within these relationships we learn about trust, intimacy, and reciprocity.

Human relationships are vital to each of us. Human babies thrive when they are touched and when they hear sounds; similarly, adults who engage in human relationships appear to be more successful and satisfied than do those who are isolated. Human relationships serve a variety of functions. They provide us with affection (receiving and providing warmth and friendliness), inclusion (experiencing feelings that we belong and providing others with messages that they belong), pleasure (sharing happiness and fun), escape (providing diversion), and control (managing our lives and influencing others) (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988).

We learn about the complexity of human relationships as we study communication. We learn, first, that other people in relationships are vastly different from each other. We learn that they may be receptive or dismissive toward us. We learn that they may behave as if they are superior or inferior to us. We learn that they might be approachable or highly formal. People are clearly not interchangeable with each other.

We also learn that our interactions with others may be helpful or harmful. Communicators can share personal information that builds trust and rapport. The same personal information can be used outside the relationship to humiliate or shame the other person. While some relationships enhance social support, others are riddled with deception and conflict. Interactions are not neutral.

We learn that people coconstruct the reality of the relationship. Families, for example, love to tell stories of experiences they have had when on vacation, when moving across the country, or when some particularly positive or negative event occurred. Indeed, they often take turns “telling the story.” Couples, too, create and tell stories of their lives. Couples’ stories may be positive as the couple emphasizes their feelings of belongingness and their identity as a couple. On the other end of the spectrum, stories may be highly negative as people deceive others with information that allows them to cover up criminal acts such as drug use, child abuse, or murder.

Human relationships are complex. As you study communication, you will clarify the variables involved in relationships—the people, the verbal and nonverbal cues provided, the effect of time, the nature of the relationship, and the goals of the participants. You will be far better equipped to engage in relationships with an understanding of the communication process.

People who have communication skills also experience greater relational satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006). If you receive training in communication skills, you are more likely to report greater relationship satisfaction than do those who do not



To see how interpersonal communication and conflict are related, view the “Opposites Attract” video clip on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

receive such training (Ireland, Sanders, & Markie-Dodds, 2003). The link between communication skills and life satisfaction is strong. The connection holds true in health contexts (Dutta-Bergman, 2005), including situations in which family members are experiencing life-threatening illnesses (Manne et al., 2006).

4. *Studying communication can teach you important life skills.* Studying communication involves learning important skills that everyone will use at some point in his or her life, such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, team building, media literacy, and public speaking. Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, and Loudon (1999) analyzed dozens of studies and concluded that “communication instruction improves the critical thinking ability of the participants.” Our visual literacy is improved as we understand the technical and artistic aspects of the visual communication medium (Metallinos, 1992).

Studying communication early in your college career can enhance your success throughout college. Consider the centrality of oral communication to all of your college classes. You regularly are called on to answer questions in class, to provide reports, to offer explanations, and to make presentations. In addition, your oral and written work both depend on your ability to think critically and creatively, to solve problems, and to make decisions. Most likely, you will be engaged in group projects in which skills such as team building and conflict resolution will be central. These same skills will be essential throughout your life.



5. *Studying communication can help you exercise your constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech.* Few nations have a bill of rights that invites people to convey their opinions and ideas, yet freedom of speech is essential to a democratic form of government. Being a practicing citizen in a democratic society means knowing about current issues and being able to speak about them in conversations, in speeches, and through the mass media; it also involves being able to critically examine messages from others.

Our understanding of communication shapes our political lives. Mass communication and communication technology have sharply altered the political process. Today many more people have the opportunity to receive information than ever before. Through the mass media, people in remote locations are as well informed as those in large urban centers. The public agenda is largely set through the media. Pressing problems are given immediate attention. Blumer (1983) notes, “At a time when so many forces—volatility, apathy, skepticism, a sense of powerlessness, and intensified group hostility—appear to be undermining political stability, media organizations have become pivotal to the conduct of human affairs.”

While some people may feel more enfranchised by the common denominator of the media, others feel more alienated as they become increasingly passive in the process. Whereas face-to-face town meetings were the focus of democratic decision making in times past, today people receive answers to questions, solutions to problems, and decisions about important matters from the media. Many feel powerless and anonymous.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans began to rediscover and recognize the value of a democratic form of government. At the



same time, they recognized how vulnerable they were to people who did not endorse basic democratic principles. Americans also learned that terrorist dictators could use the media as easily as could those who came from more reasonable and more democratic ideologies.

The study and understanding of communication processes is profoundly political. Hart (1993) opines that “those who teach public address and media studies teach that social power can be shifted and public visions exalted if people learn to think well and speak well” (p. 102). Paraphrasing the ancient Greek rhetorician Isocrates, Hart notes, “To become eloquent is to activate one’s humanity, to apply the imagination, and to solve the practical problems of human living” (p. 101). Freedom goes to the articulate.

You have the opportunity to be a fully functioning member of a democratic society. You also have the additional burden of understanding the media and other information technologies. Studying communication will help you learn how to speak effectively, analyze arguments, synthesize large quantities of information, and critically consume information from a variety of sources. The future of our society depends on such mastery.

6. *Studying communication can help you succeed professionally.* A look at the job postings in any newspaper will give you an immediate understanding of the importance of improving your knowledge and practice of communication. The employment section of a newspaper or Internet posting has entries like these:

- “We need a results-oriented, seasoned professional who is a good communicator and innovator” reads one posting for a marketing manager.
- Another posting, this one for a marketing analyst, reads, “You should be creative, inquisitive, and a good communicator both in writing and orally.”
- A posting for a training specialist calls for “excellent presentation, verbal, and written communication skills, with ability to interact with all levels within organization.”

As a person educated in communication, you will be able to gain a more desirable job (Bardwell, 1997; Cockrum, 1994; Peterson, 1997; Ugbah & Evuleocha, 1992). You may believe that some professions are enhanced by communication skills but that many are not. Professionals in fields such as accounting, auditing, banking, counseling, engineering, industrial hygiene, information science, public relations, and sales have all written about the importance of oral communication skills (Hanzevack & McKean, 1991; Horton & Brown, 1990; LaBar, 1994; Messmer, 1997; Nisberg, 1996; Ridley, 1996; Simkin, 1996). More recently, professionals in the computer industry (Coopersmith, 2006; Glen, 2006), genetics and science (Bubela, 2006), farming and ranching (Harper, 2006), education (Lavin Colky & Young, 2006), and midwifery (Nicholls & Webb, 2006) have stressed the importance of communication skills to potential employees. The variety of these careers suggests that communication skills are important across the board.

Communication skills are important in your first contact with a prospective employer. By studying communication, your interviewing skills will be enhanced. Further, personnel interviewers note that oral communication skills, in general, significantly affect hiring decisions (Peterson, 1997). One survey showed that personnel managers identified effective speaking and listening as the most important factors in hiring people (Curtis, Winsor, & Stephens, 1989). In another survey, employers identified the most important skills for college graduates as oral

## SIZING *things* UP!

Throughout the book you will learn about a variety of communication skills, theories, and concepts. When scholars do research on these topics they must find a way to assess or measure specific things, which they typically call variables. For instance, researchers might use a survey to measure how effective people are at communicating in personal relationships. The “Sizing Things Up” feature allows you to learn about your own communication skills and attitudes using similar tools. After completing surveys in each chapter you can compare your results to those of other students, or simply use your results as a starting point for understanding your own potential strengths. Importantly, these surveys are only useful as very rough guesses about some of your tendencies. You should not interpret your personal results as definitive or stable over time.

communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and analytical abilities (Collins & Oberman, 1994).

Employers view your written and oral communication competencies and your ability to listen and analyze messages as essential job skills (Bubela, 2006; Cooper-smith, 2006; Glen, 2006; Harper, 2006; Lavin Colky & Young, 2006; Maes, Weldy, & Icenogle, 1997; Nicholls & Webb, 2006; Parnell, 1996; Winsor, Curtis, & Stephens, 1997). Similarly, college graduates perceive communication coursework as essential (Pearson, Sorenson, & Nelson, 1981). In short, communication competence is important.

Communication skills are important not only at the beginning of your career but throughout the work life span. Dauphinais (1997) observes that communication skills can increase upward mobility in one’s career. Business executives note the importance of communication competence (Argenti & Forman, 1998; Reinsch & Shelby, 1996). Finally, communication skills are among the top priorities for entrepreneurs.

Communication skills have become even more critical to employers over time (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). What communication skills are employers seeking? Clearly, listening skills are one of the most important components of communication (Edwards, Peterson, & Davies, 2006; Mlynek, 2006; Nichols, 2006), and you will learn about listening in chapter 5. Speaking clearly, succinctly, and persuasively is crucial to many jobs including sales jobs (Nichols, 2006), and we cover these topics in chapters 3, 13, and 15. An ability to work in teams or groups is vital (Cano & Cano, 2006; Houssami & Sainsbury, 2006; Miller, 2006), and you will learn about this in chapter 9. Employers are also seeking interpersonal skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1995), which we will consider in chapter 6. Public speaking skills, covered in chapters 11–15, are important in most professions because of the requirement that employees give talks and presentations (Bates, 2004). Finally, employers seek employees with strong written communication skills (Gray, Emerson, & MacKay, 2005). You will have an opportunity to improve your writing skills as you prepare outlines and manuscripts for public speeches, which we also cover in chapters 11–15.

7. *Studying communication can help you navigate an increasingly diverse world. As you stroll through a mall, deposit money in a bank, go to a movie, or work at your job, odds are that about one in every five people you come into*

## e-note

## The National Communication Association

The discipline, or academic study, of communication traces its roots to the ancient Greek and Roman eras. As an association, communication first emerged in 1914 when a small group of teachers of speech broke away from a larger group of teachers of English. The National Communication Association (NCA), as it is known today, has approximately 8,000 members and provides a variety of services to educators and practitioners in the communication discipline. Find the NCA on the web at [www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org). Learn about one or two features of the organization that you can share with the class. Would you benefit by being a member of this organization? What can you learn about the study of communication from the website?

contact with will speak English as a second language. According to the 2005 American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 20% of respondents speak a language other than English in their home. The increasingly diverse population of the United States means that multilingual communication encounters are, for most of us, the norm rather than the exception. Learning how to communicate in today's world, whether English is your first language or not, requires an understanding of communication and culture and how those two concepts are related.



As you develop an understanding of basic communication concepts and learn how to apply those concepts in everyday interactions, you will be better equipped to bridge language and cultural barriers. As you progress through this book, you will learn a number of specific skills that promote effective interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and online communication. Most chapters include advice on how you can adapt specific skills during interactions with people whose first language is not English.

## Communication: The Process of Using Messages to Generate Meaning

Now that you have considered why learning about communication is important, you need to know exactly what the term means. Over the years, scholars have created hundreds of definitions of communication. How they define the term can limit or expand the study of the subject. In this text, the definition is simple and broad—simple enough to allow understanding and broad enough to include many contexts.

Communication comes from the Latin word *communicare*, which means “to make common” or “to share.” The root definition is consistent with our definition of communication. In this book, **communication** is defined as the process of using messages to generate meaning. Communication is considered a **process** because it is an activity, an exchange, or a set of behaviors—not an unchanging product. Communication is not an object you can hold in your hands—it is an activity in which you participate. David Berlo (1960), a pioneer in the field of communication, probably provided the clearest statement about communication as a process:

If we accept the concept of process, we view events and relationships as dynamic, ongoing, ever changing, continuous. When we label something as a process, we

### communication

The process of using messages to generate meaning.

### process

An activity, exchange, or set of behaviors that occurs over time.

also mean that it does not have a beginning, an end, a fixed sequence of events. It is not static, at rest. It is moving. The ingredients within a process interact; each affects all the others.

What is an example of how process works in everyday communication? Picture three students meeting on the sidewalk between classes and exchanging a few sentences. This “snapshot” does not begin and end with the students’ first words and last sentence. Since they all stopped to chat with each other, you might assume that their relationship began before this encounter. Since they all seem to have a common understanding of what is being said, you might assume that they share experiences that similarly shape their perceptions. You also might assume that this brief encounter does not end when the students go their ways, but rather that they think about their conversation later in the day or that it leads to another meeting later in the week. In other words, a snapshot cannot capture all that occurs during communication, a process that starts before the words begin and ends long after the words end.

Messages include verbal and nonverbal symbols, signs, and behaviors. When you smile at another person, you are sending a message. When a radio announcer chooses language to emphasize the seriousness of a recent event, she is creating a message. The public speaker might spend days choosing just the right words and considering his bodily movements, gestures, and facial expression.

People hope to generate common meanings through the messages they provide. **Meaning** is the understanding of the message. You know that all of the messages you generate are not shared by others with whom you try to communicate. You try to flirt with someone you meet in class, but the other person seems oblivious to your subtle nonverbal signals. College professors are generally very knowledgeable about a subject matter, but they vary greatly in their ability to convey shared meanings.

Understanding the meaning of another person’s message does not occur unless the two communicators can elicit common meanings for words, phrases, and nonverbal codes. When you use language, meaning facilitates an appropriate response that indicates that the message was understood. For example, suppose you ask a friend for a sheet of paper. She says nothing and gives you one sheet of paper. You and your friend share the same meaning of the message exchanged. But a message can be interpreted in more than one way, especially if the people involved have little shared experience. In such a case, a more accurate understanding of the intended meaning can be discerned by *negotiating*, that is, by asking questions.



▲ Understanding emerges from shared meanings.

**meaning**  
The understanding of the message.

## SKILL BUILDER

*While you may believe that you accurately interpret the meaning that others are trying to convey, you probably do not. On at least six different occasions in the next week, ask a person with whom you are communicating if you can paraphrase the meaning of his or her message. Write down how well you did in each of these instances. How could you improve your understanding of others’ messages?*

## Components of Communication

In this section you will learn how communication in action really works. The components of communication are people, messages, codes, channels, feedback, encoding and decoding, and noise.

### People

People are involved in the human communication process in two roles—as both the sources and the receivers of messages. A **source** initiates a message, and a **receiver** is the intended target of the message. Individuals do not perform these two roles independently. Instead, they are the sources and the receivers of messages simultaneously and continually.

People do not respond uniformly to all messages, nor do they always provide the same messages in exactly the same way. Individual characteristics, including race, sex, age, culture, values, and attitudes, affect the ways people send and receive messages. (Throughout this text you will find discussions about the ways in which culture and sex affect communication.)

### The Message

The **message** is the verbal and nonverbal form of the idea, thought, or feeling that one person (the source) wishes to communicate to another person or group of people (the receivers). The message is the content of the interaction. The message includes the symbols (words and phrases) you use to communicate your ideas, as well as your facial expressions, bodily movements, gestures, physical contact, tone of voice, and other nonverbal codes. The message may be relatively brief and easy to understand or long and complex. Some experts believe that real communication stems only from messages that are intentional, or have a purpose. However, since intent is sometimes difficult to prove in a communication situation, the authors of this text believe that real communication can occur through either intentional or unintentional messages.

### The Channel

The **channel** is the means by which a message moves from the source to the receiver of the message. A message moves from one place to another, from one person to another, by traveling through a medium, or channel. Airwaves, sound waves, twisted copper wires, glass fibers, and cable are all communication channels. Airwaves and cable are two of the various channels through which you receive television messages. Radio messages move through sound waves. Computer images (and sound, if there is any) travel through light waves, and sometimes both light and sound waves. In person-to-person communication, you send your messages through a channel of sound waves and light waves that enable receivers to see and hear you.

### Feedback

**Feedback** is the receiver's verbal and nonverbal response to the source's message. Ideally, you respond to another person's messages by providing feedback so that the source knows the message was received as intended. Feedback is part of any communication situation. Even no response, or silence, is feedback, as are restless behavior and quizzical looks from students in a lecture hall. Suppose you're looking for a restroom in a building you've never been in before. You ask a person quickly

#### source

A message initiator.

#### receiver

A message target.

#### message

The verbal or nonverbal form of the idea, thought, or feeling that one person (the source) wishes to communicate to another person or group of people (the receivers).

#### channel

The means by which a message moves from the source to the receiver of the message.

#### feedback

The receiver's verbal and nonverbal response to the source's message.

## cultural note

### What's in a Name?

Americans name their children after relatives, entertainers, famous people, and biblical figures. Many Spanish-speaking males are named after Jesus, and thousands of Muslim males are named after Mohammed. In China, too, names have meanings that can influence how a person feels about him- or herself. Wen Shu Lee (1998), a professor originally from Taiwan, published an article about the names of women in China. She claims that naming practices often reflect gender- and class-based oppression. The name *Zhao Di*, for example, “commands a daughter to bring to the family a younger brother, while ‘expelling’ more younger sisters.” The name reflects a higher value on male children. Does your name influence what you think of yourself? Does your name affect how, when, and with whom you communicate? What's in a name?

passing by, “Excuse me, can you tell me . . . ,” but the person keeps on going without acknowledging you. In this case, the intended receiver did not respond, yet even the lack of a response provides you with some feedback. You may surmise that perhaps the receiver didn't hear you or was in too much of a hurry to stop.

## Code

A computer carries messages via binary code on cable, wire, or fiber; similarly, you converse with others by using a code called “language.” A **code** is a systematic arrangement of symbols used to create meanings in the mind of another person or persons. Words, phrases, and sentences become “symbols” that are used to evoke images, thoughts, and ideas in the mind of others. If someone yells “Stop” as you approach the street, the word *stop* has become a symbol that you are likely to interpret as a warning of danger.

Verbal and nonverbal codes are the two types of code used in communication. **Verbal codes** consist of symbols and their grammatical arrangement. All languages are codes. **Nonverbal codes** consist of all symbols that are not words, including bodily movements, use of space and time, clothing and other adornments, and sounds other than words. *Nonverbal* codes should not be confused with *nonoral* codes. All nonoral codes, such as bodily movement, are nonverbal codes. However, nonverbal codes also include oral codes, such as pitch, duration, rate of speech, and sounds like “eh” and “ah.”

## Encoding and Decoding

If communication involves the use of codes, the process of communicating can be viewed as one of encoding and decoding. **Encoding** is defined as the process of translating an idea or a thought into a code. **Decoding** is the process of assigning meaning to that idea or thought. For instance, suppose you are interested in purchasing a new car. You are trying to describe a compact model to your father, who wants to help you with your purchase. You might be visualizing the car with the black interior, sporty design, and red exterior that belongs to your best friend. Putting this vision into words, you tell your father you are interested in a car that is “small and well designed.” You encode your perceptions of a particular car into words that describe

### code

A systematic arrangement of symbols used to create meanings in the mind of another person or persons.

### verbal codes

Symbols and their grammatical arrangement, such as languages.

### nonverbal codes

All symbols that are not words, including bodily movements, use of space and time, clothing and adornments, and sounds other than words.

### encoding

The process of translating an idea or thought into a code.

### decoding

The process of assigning meaning to the idea or thought in a code.

the model. Your father, on hearing this, decodes your words and develops his own mental image. But his love of larger cars affects this process, and as a result, he envisions a sedan. As you can see, misunderstanding often occurs because of the limitations of language and the inadequacy of descriptions. Nonetheless, encoding and decoding are essential in sharing your thoughts, ideas, and feelings with others.

## Noise

### noise

Any interference in the encoding and decoding processes that reduces message clarity.

In the communication process, **noise** is any interference in the encoding and decoding processes that reduces the clarity of a message. Noise can be physical, such as loud sounds; distracting sights, such as a piece of food between someone's front teeth; or an unusual behavior, such as someone standing too close for comfort. Noise can be mental, psychological, or semantic, such as daydreams about a loved one, worry about the bills, pain from a tooth, or uncertainty about what the other person's words mean. Noise can be anything that interferes with receiving, interpreting, or providing feedback about a message.

## Communication Principles

A definition of communication may be insufficient to clarify the nature of communication. To explain communication in more detail, we consider here some principles that guide our understanding of communication.

### Communication Begins with the Self

How you see yourself can make a great difference in how you communicate. Carl Rogers (1951) wrote, "Every individual exists in a continually changing world of experience of which he [or she] is the center" (p. 483). For instance, when people are treated as though they are inferior, or intelligent, or gifted, or unattractive, they will often begin acting accordingly. Many communication scholars and social scientists believe that people are products of how others treat them and of the messages others send them.

As persons, our understanding of the world is limited by our experiences with it. Shotter (2000) suggests that we cannot understand communication through external, abstract, and systematic processes. Instead, he describes communication as a "ceaseless flow of speech-entwined, dialogically structured, social activity" (p. 119). In other words, communication is participatory; we are actively involved and relationally responsive in our use of communication. Shotter would contrast his perspective of a participatory-holistic view of communication with one that is abstract and systematic.

To apply this perspective, let us consider an example. Suppose you have a roommate who is from another country. The roommate's religion, belief system, and daily habits challenge your perspective of communication, derived from interacting primarily with people in the United States who hold Western and Christian values. To the extent that you each try to impose your own preconceptions on the communication you share, you may be dissatisfied and experience conflict. By preimposing "rules" of communication derived from your earlier experiences in two distinctive cultures, you are bound to fail in this new relationship. If you are able to move beyond such a view and allow your perception of your communication to

## SIZING *things* UP!

We communicate in a variety of contexts. To improve your skill as a communicator you should assess your own communication skills within each of the general communication contexts so that you can identify your strengths and areas for growth. Read each question below carefully and respond using the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

1. I can use communication to solve conflicts with friends.
2. I am able to express my ideas clearly when working in a group.
3. I am comfortable when giving public speeches.
4. I can use the Internet to locate highly reputable information.
5. Other people tell me that I am a good speaker.
6. My friends tell me that I am a good listener.
7. Others listen to my opinions in group meetings.
8. People rely on me to find information on the Web.
9. I am good at delivering speeches.
10. I can effectively lead groups to discuss problems.
11. I make friends easily.
12. I am skilled at using computers to communicate with others (e.g., using Skype, IM, chat rooms, and other communication tools).

become a product of your interactions, you may be able to communicate in interesting and effective ways.

Every day we experience the centrality of ourselves in communication. As a participant in communication, you are limited by your own view of the situation. A student, for instance, may describe a conflict with an instructor as unfair treatment: “I know my instructor doesn’t like the fact that I don’t agree with his opinions, and that’s why he gave me such a poor grade in that class.” The instructor might counter, “That student doesn’t understand all the factors that go into a final grade.” Each person may believe that he or she is correct and that the other person’s view is wrong. As you study communication, you will learn ways to better manage such conflict.

### Communication Involves Others

George Herbert Mead (1967) said that the self originates in communication. Through verbal and nonverbal symbols, a child learns to accept roles in response to the expectations of others. For example, Dominique Moceanu, a successful Olympic gymnast, was influenced quite early in life by what others wanted her to be. Both her parents had been gymnasts, and apparently her father told her for years





▲ Understanding can emerge from dialogue.

that her destiny was to be a world-class gymnast (Hamilton, 1998). Most likely she had an inherent ability to be a good one, but she may not have become a medal-winning gymnast without the early messages she received from her parents and trainers. Like Moceanu, you establish self-image, the sort of person you believe you are, by the ways others categorize you. Positive, negative, and neutral messages that you receive from others all play a role in determining who you are.

Communication itself is probably best understood as a dialogic process. A **dialogue** is simply the act of taking part in a conversation, discussion, or negotiation. When we describe and explain our communicative exchanges with others, we are doing so from a perspective of self and from a perspective derived from interacting with others. Our understanding of communication occurs not in a vacuum but in light of our interactions with other people. (For further reading, see Czubaroff, 2000.)

In a more obvious way, communication involves others in the sense that a competent communicator considers the other person's needs and expectations when selecting messages to share. The competent communicator understands that a large number of messages can be shared at any time, but sensitivity and responsiveness to the other communicators are essential. In short, communication begins with the self, as defined largely by others, and involves others, as defined largely by the self.

### Communication Has Both a Content and a Relational Dimension

All messages have both a content and a relational dimension. Messages provide substance and suggest a relationship among communicators. Another way to think about this distinction is that the content of the message describes the behavior that is

#### dialogue

The act of taking part in a conversation, discussion, or negotiation.

expected, while the relational message suggests how it should be interpreted. For example, if I assert, “Sit down,” the content of the brief message is a request for you to be seated. Relationally, I am suggesting that I have the authority to tell you to be seated. Consider the difference between “Sit down!” and “Would you care to be seated?” While the content is essentially the same, the relational aspect seems far different. Generally, the content of the message is less ambiguous than is the relational message.

## Communication Is Complicated

Communication, some believe, is a simple matter of passing information from one source to another. In a sense, communication defined in this way would occur whenever you accessed information on the web. However, you know that even in this most basic case, communication does not necessarily occur. For example, if you access a homepage written in a language you do not understand, no communication occurs. If the material is highly complex, you might not understand its message. Similarly, you might be able to repeat what someone else says to you, but with absolutely no understanding of the intent, or the content, of the message.

Communication is far more than simple information transmission. Communication involves choices about the multiple aspects of the message—the verbal, non-verbal, and behavioral aspects; the choices surrounding the transmission channels used; the characteristics of the speaker; the relationship between the speaker and the audience; the characteristics of the audience; and the situation in which the communication occurs. A change in any one of these variables affects the entire communication process.



The potential complexity of communication can be observed by carefully analyzing and discussing the video clip “Sam’s Graduation Party” on the *Online Learning Center*.

## Communication Quantity Does Not Increase Communication Quality

You might believe that a textbook on communication would stake claims on the importance of increased communication. You may have heard counselors or therapists encouraging people to communicate more: “What we need is more communication.” However, greater amounts of communication do not necessarily lead to more harmony or more accurate and shared meanings. Sometimes people disagree, and the more they talk, the more they learn that they are in conflict. Other times people have very poor listening or empathy skills and misunderstand vast quantities of information. Communication, defined simply as verbiage, does not necessarily lead to positive outcomes.

### TRY THIS

*Recall an experience in which you and another person tried to resolve a conflict by talking about it, only to find that your conflict escalated instead of being resolved.*

## Communication Is Inevitable, Irreversible, and Unrepeatable

Although communication is complicated, and more communication is not necessarily better communication, communication occurs almost every minute of your life. If you are not communicating with yourself (thinking, planning, reacting to the world around you), you are observing others and drawing inferences from their behavior. Even if others did not intend messages for you, you gather observations and draw specific conclusions. A person yawns, and you believe that he is bored with your message. A second person looks away, and you conclude that she is not listening to you. A third person smiles (perhaps because of a memory of a joke he heard recently), and you believe that he is attracted to you. We are continually

gleaning meanings from others' behaviors, and we are constantly behaving in ways that have communicative value for them.

### Communication Cannot Be Reversed

Have you ever insulted someone accidentally? You may have tried to explain that you did not intend to insult anybody, or said you were sorry for your statement, or made a joke out of your misstatement. Nonetheless, your comment lingers both in the mind of the other person and in your own mind. As you understand the irreversibility of communication, you may become more careful in your conversations with others, and you may take more time preparing public speeches. We cannot go back in time and erase our messages to others.

### Communication Cannot Be Repeated

Have you ever had an incredible evening with someone and remarked, "Let's do this again." But when you tried to re-create the ambience, the conversation, and the setting, nothing seemed right. Your second experience with a similar setting and person yielded far different results. Just as you cannot repeat an experience, you cannot repeat communication.

## What Are Communication Contexts?

#### context

A set of circumstances or a situation.

Communication occurs in a **context**—a set of circumstances or a situation. Communication occurs between two friends, among five business acquaintances in a small-group setting, and between a lecturer and an audience that fills an auditorium. At many colleges and universities, the communication courses are arranged by context: interpersonal communication, interviewing, small-group communication, public speaking, and mass communication. The number of people involved in communication affects the kind of communication that occurs. You may communicate with yourself, with another person, or with many others. The differences among these situations affect your choices of the most appropriate verbal and nonverbal codes.

### Intrapersonal Communication

#### intrapersonal communication

The process of using messages to generate meaning within the self.

**Intrapersonal communication** is the process of using messages to generate meaning within the self. Intrapersonal communication is the communication that occurs within your own mind. For example, suppose you and the person you've been dating for two years share the same attitude toward education and a future career. After the two of you finish your undergraduate degrees, you plan to attend graduate school together and then to run your own business. But one day your partner informs you that he or she has decided to work in the family's business immediately after graduating. In your opinion this action changes everything, including you and your partner's future together. When you begin to share your feelings with your partner, he or she becomes angry and says your attitude is just another example of your inflexibility. You tell your partner that you can't discuss the issue now and that you need to think things over for a while. You leave, thinking about what has just happened and what the future holds for the two of you. You are engaged in intrapersonal communication.

Intrapersonal communication occurs, as this example suggests, when you evaluate or examine the interaction that occurs between yourself and others, but it is not limited to such situations. This form of communication occurs before and during other

## e-note

## The Internet and Communication Models

Individually or in groups, provide answers to these questions about technology and communication models:

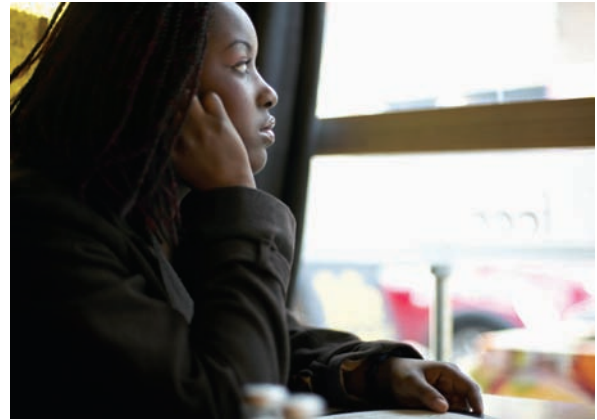
1. How has the Internet—with its e-mail, chat rooms, and websites—altered the way individuals communicate with each other?
2. What is lost and what is gained when a human transaction is mediated by a computer?

forms of communication as well. For instance, you might argue with yourself during a conversation in which someone asks you to do something you don't really want to do: Before you accept or decline, you mull over the alternatives in your mind.

Intrapersonal communication also includes such activities as solving problems internally, resolving internal conflict, planning for the future, and evaluating yourself and your relationships with others. Intrapersonal communication—the basis for all other communication—involves only the self.

Each one of us is continually engaged in intrapersonal communication. Although you might become more easily absorbed in talking to yourself when you are alone (while walking to class, driving to work, or taking a shower, for instance), you are likely to be involved in this form of communication in crowded circumstances as well (such as during a lecture, at a party, or with friends). Think about the last time you looked at yourself in a mirror. What were your thoughts? Although intrapersonal communication is almost continuous, people seldom focus on this form of communication.

Indeed, not all communication experts believe that intrapersonal communication should be examined within communication studies. The naysayers argue that communication requires two or more receivers of a message, and since there are no receivers in intrapersonal communication, no communication actually occurs. They reason that intrapersonal communication should be studied in a discipline such as psychology or neurology—some field in which experts study the mind or the brain. Nonetheless, intrapersonal communication is recognized by most scholars within the discipline as one context of communication.



▲ Intrapersonal communication occurs in our reflections.

## Interpersonal Communications

When you move from intrapersonal to interpersonal communication, you move from communication that occurs within your own mind to communication that involves one or more other persons. **Interpersonal communication** is the process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening. Like intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication occurs for a variety of reasons: to solve problems, to resolve conflicts, to share information, to improve perceptions of

### interpersonal communication

The process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening.

oneself, or to fulfill social needs, such as the need to belong or to be loved. Through our interpersonal communication, we are able to establish relationships with others that include friendships and romantic relationships.

Dyadic and small-group communication are two subsets of interpersonal communication. **Dyadic communication** is simply two-person communication, such as interviews with an employer or a teacher; talks with a parent, spouse, or child; and interactions among strangers, acquaintances, and friends. **Small-group communication** is the process of using messages to generate meaning in a small group of people (Brillhart & Galanes, 1998). Small-group communication occurs in families, work groups, support groups, religious groups, and study groups. Communication experts agree that two people are a dyad and that more than two people are a small group if they have a common purpose, goal, or mission. However, disagreement emerges about the maximum number of participants in a small group. Technology also poses questions for communication scholars to debate: Does a small group have to meet face-to-face? That teleconferences can involve small-group communication is uncontroversial, but what about discussions in chat rooms on the Internet? Small-group communication is discussed in greater detail later in this text.

#### dyadic communication

Two-person communication.

#### small-group communication

The process of using messages to generate meaning in a small group of people.

#### public communication

The process of using messages to generate meanings in a situation in which a single source transmits a message to a number of receivers.

## Public Communication

**Public communication** is the process of using messages to generate meanings in a situation in which a single source transmits a message to a number of receivers, who give nonverbal and, sometimes, question-and-answer feedback. In public communication the source adapts the message to the audience in an attempt to achieve maximum understanding. Sometimes virtually everyone in the audience understands the speaker's message; other times many people fail to understand.

Public communication, or public speaking, is recognized by its formality, structure, and planning. You probably are frequently a receiver of public communication in lecture classes, at convocations, and at religious services. Occasionally, you also may be a source: when you speak in a group, when you try to convince other voters of the merits of a particular candidate for office, or when you introduce a guest speaker to a large audience. Public communication most often informs or persuades, but it can also entertain, introduce, announce, welcome, or pay tribute.

## Mass Communication

#### mass communication

The process of using messages to generate meanings in a mediated system, between a source and a large number of unseen receivers.

**Mass communication**—the process of using messages to generate meanings in a mediated system, between a source and a large number of unseen receivers—always has some transmission system (mediator) between the sender and the receiver. When you watch your favorite TV show, the signals are going from a broadcast studio to a satellite or cable system and then from that system to your TV set: The mediator is the channel, the method of distribution. This type of communication is called “mass” because the message goes to newspaper and magazine readers, TV viewers, and radio listeners. Mass communication is often taught in a college's or university's department of mass communication, radio and television, or journalism.

People who study mass communication may be interested in the processes by which communication is transmitted and therefore study the diffusion of information. Alternatively, they may be interested in the effects of media on people and study persuasion or how public opinion is created and altered. Mass communication has become of increasing interest today because of the expanded opportunities for

communication on the Internet. Today many students are interested in **media convergence** or the way that broadcasting, publishing, and digital communication are now congregating, and in some instances, becoming one.

#### media convergence

The way that broadcasting, publishing, and digital communication are congregating.

## Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) includes human communication and information shared through communication networks. CMC requires digital literacy, which is the ability to find, evaluate, and use information that is available via computer. The e-mail messages, discussion group threads, newsgroup notes, instant messages, text messages, and twitters serve as the message while humans continue to serve as the sources or receivers of those messages. In the same way that media convergence has become an important avenue of study in mass communication, technological convergence has piqued the interest of scholars and practitioners alike. **Technological convergence** focuses on the way that technological systems, including voice, data, and video now share modes of communication and they are changing to perform similar tasks. Consider the variety of electronic devices you use today and what you might have used five years ago to gain some understanding of how quickly these changes are occurring.

#### technological convergence

The way that technological systems are changing to perform similar tasks.

How is CMC unique as a communication context? Messages can be sent and received asynchronously (at different times). People can prestructure messages to which they give a great deal of thought, or they can quickly dash off a message with no thought at all. CMC occurs over a single channel although people have cleverly added emoticons (which we will define and discuss in chapter 4) to lend another dimension to CMC. CMC may allow equality among people as demographic features and social status are removed. But CMC can also encourage racism, sexism, and other bias by the nature of the messages that are created and provided to literally millions of people.

The various communication contexts can be determined by several factors: the number of people involved, the level of formality or intimacy, the opportunities for feedback, the need for restructuring messages, and the degree of stability of the roles of speaker and listener. Table 1.1 compares the contexts on the basis of these factors.

## Communication Myths, Metaphors, and Misunderstandings

Throughout this text we challenge you to think about common communication myths, metaphors, and misunderstandings in various contexts including interpersonal relationships, workplace interactions, the delivery of health care, and even the learning that takes place in classrooms. At the most basic level, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe **metaphors** as a means to understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. Communication scholars argue that our way of knowing about the world, based on language and nonverbal communication, is largely metaphorical. We talk, think, and act in ways that structure our worldview in metaphorical ways. Metaphors can take on mythic, larger-than-life qualities and can lead to misunderstandings.

#### metaphors

A means to understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another.

For example, Americans tend to approach “arguments as war” (Tannen, 1998). This metaphor is evident in such statements as “she *attacked* and *shot down* all of my arguments,” “your claims are *indefensible*,” and “to win this argument, we must act *strategically*.” As a consequence, we usually experience an argument as something that we can win or lose. With the selection of a new metaphor, we could view and experience arguments in different ways. Take a moment to reflect about how the metaphor of “argument as dance” changes the way you think about arguments, participants,

**TABLE 1.1 DIFFERENCES AMONG COMMUNICATION CONTEXTS**

CONTEXTS	INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION	INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION				
		DYADIC COMMUNICATION	SMALL-GROUP COMMUNICATION	PUBLIC COMMUNICATION	MASS COMMUNICATION	COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION
NUMBER OF PEOPLE	1	2	Usually 3 to 10; may be more	Usually more than 10	Usually thousands	2 to billions
DEGREE OF FORMALITY OR INTIMACY	Most intimate	Generally intimate; interview is formal	Intimate or formal	Generally formal	Generally formal	Intimate or formal
OPPORTU- NITIES FOR FEEDBACK	Complete feedback	A great deal of feedback	Less than in intrapersonal communication but more than in public communication	Less than in small-group communication but more than in mass communication	Usually more	None to a great deal
NEED FOR PRESTRUC- TURING MESSAGES	None	Some	Some	A great deal	Almost totally scripted	None to totally scripted
DEGREE OF STABILITY OF THE ROLES OF SPEAKER AND LISTENER	Highly unstable; the individual as both speaker and listener	Unstable, speaker and listener alternate	Unstable; speakers and listeners alternate	Highly stable, one speaker with many listeners	Highly stable; on-air speakers, invisible listeners	Unstable to highly stable

the process of arguing, and potential outcomes. Participants could be viewed as actors engaged in balanced, harmonious, and aesthetically pleasing performances rather than as warriors engaged in a battle. There are times when it is necessary and right to fight and defend yourself or your country. However, when all, or even most, arguments are approached from a warlike mentality, we limit our creativity and imagination for solving problems.

We encourage you to think deeply about how cultural values are reflected in common communication myths and metaphors of everyday life, and how misunderstandings can result. Today, more than ever, you will interact with people from other cultures. Intercultural communication may be viewed as the exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally; it will be covered in detail in chapter 7. And throughout the book we integrate examples of intercultural communication. As we present the various myths, metaphors, and misunderstandings, you will continue to see the importance of intercultural communication. You will also understand that human communication is complex, captivating, and consequential.

## What Are the Goals of Communication Study?

You learned the importance of studying communication at the beginning of this chapter. You will derive many benefits: You can improve the way you see yourself and the ways others see you; you can increase what you know about human relationships; you can learn important life skills; you can better exercise your constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech; and you can increase your chances of succeeding professionally. How will you achieve these outcomes? To the extent that you become a more effective and ethical communicator, you will enhance the likelihood of these positive results.

### Effective Communication

Effective communication is also known as communication competence. **Communication competence** is defined simply as the ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. As you will learn in this book, communication competence is not necessarily easy to achieve. Communication competence can be difficult because your goals and others' goals may be discrepant. Similarly, you and those with whom you communicate may have a different understanding of your relationship. Cultural differences may cause you to view the world and other people differently. Indeed, different perspectives about communication may themselves create problems in your interactions with others. As you read this text, you will learn about the multiple variables involved in communication, and you will become more competent in your communication.

You need to recognize now that while communication competence is the goal, the complexity of communication should encourage you to be a student of communication over your lifetime. In this course you will begin to learn the terminology and the multiple variables comprised in communication. Although you will not emerge from the course as totally effective, you should see significant changes in your communication abilities. The professional public speaker or comedian, the glib TV reporter, and the highly satisfied spouse in a long-term marriage make communication look easy. However, as you will learn, their skills are complex and interwoven with multiple layers of understanding.

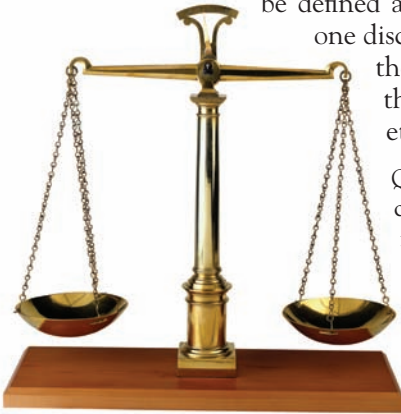
#### communication competence

The ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.



## Ethical Communication: The NCA Credo

A second goal in studying communication lies in its ethical dimension. **Ethics** may be defined as a set of moral principles or values. Ethical standards may vary from one discipline to another just as they differ from one culture to another. Within the communication discipline, a set of ethics has been adopted. In 1999 the National Communication Association created the following set of ethics:



### ethics

A set of moral principles or values.

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:

We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.

We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.

We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.

We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.

We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.

We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.

We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.

We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.

We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

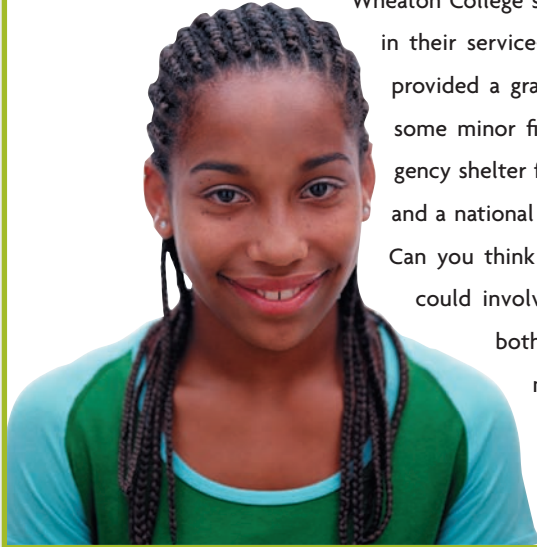
These “Nine Commandments” are actually quite straightforward. They suggest that we should be open, honest, and reasonable. They affirm our belief in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. They affirm that respect for other people and their messages is essential. They acknowledge the need for access to information and to people. Finally, they identify responsibility for our behavior as important.

These ideals are derived from Western conceptions of communication and a belief in democratic decision making. They also reflect ideologies of people within the communication discipline. We acknowledge that these standards might not be consistent with other cultures, belief systems, religions, or even academic disciplines.



To analyze and discuss applications of the NCA Credo on Communication Ethics, view the “You Look Great” and “Pulling Your Own Weight” video clips on the *Online Learning Center*.

## get INVOLVED!



Wheaton College students in Massachusetts got a boost in their service-learning projects when a local bank provided a grant that allowed the students to gain some minor financing as they worked at an emergency shelter for women, a food distribution outlet, and a national program that promotes early literacy. Can you think of some local project in which you could involve your fellow students as a way to both serve others and improve your communication skills through engaging with others?

Murray (2000), for example, would suggest that we more properly should derive ethical standards in dialogue with others, combining our own perspective with others' ethical standards.

While we hold the NCA Credo as the best set of ethical conventions guiding communication, we recognize that others might not view these ideals as appropriate for all of us or appropriate at all times. In any case, throughout this text, we will consider the importance of ethics and will make reference to this credo.

## Contemporary Jobs in Communication

When can you do with a communication degree? The communication field covers many subdisciplines including public relations, advertising, business communication, journalism, corporate training, and marketing. Students sometimes combine their communication courses with courses in health to work in health communication careers; others combine communication with political science to serve as a legislative assistant or political analyst; still others take business courses to prepare themselves to be a corporate recruiter, a training specialist, or a sales representative. Listed below are some of the contemporary jobs of recent communication graduates.

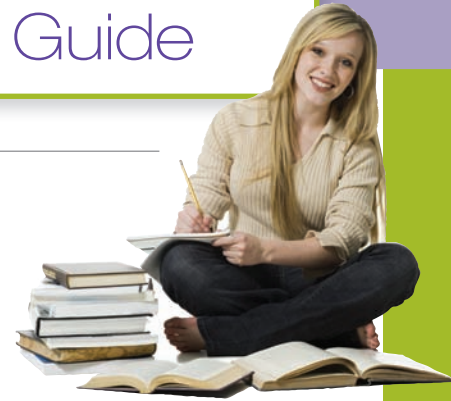
Title	Organization
Speech writer	Political campaign
PR professional	Major hospital
Audio editor	Production firm

Writer/reporter/editor	Newspaper/magazine
Teacher	High school
Advance person	Political campaign
Consultant	Independently employed
Web designer	City government
Administrative assistant	Bank
Creative planner	Advertising firm
Motivational speaker	Consulting firm
Tour guide	Travel firm
Manager	Major hotel
Community affairs liaison	Medium-sized city
Development officer	Small college
Small business owner	Privately employed
Teller	Bank
Event planner	Medium-sized city
Flight attendant	Major airline
Government lobbyist	Small midwestern state
Salesperson	Insurance company

While new graduates are likely to find jobs in a variety of entry level positions, individuals with communication degrees frequently find advancement comes fairly quickly. Some communication graduates take advantage of graduate school, professional school, or other further education. Others apply themselves and find advancement within organizations in which they began their employment or they are willing to move from organization to organization to progress in their careers. These are some positions of communication graduates who received their undergraduate degrees 10 years ago or more.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Fund-raiser	International women's organization
Minister	Medium-sized church
Human resource generalist	Large regional company
Political talk show host	Large market television station
Professor	College or university
Vice president	Public relations firm
News anchor	Major network news
Chief executive officer	Fortune 500 company
Vice president of news	Major network
Speech writer	Major university
Weather reporter	Mid-sized city
Film critic	Major city newspaper
Health educator	Major city hospital
Sales manager	Multi-location business
College recruiter	Large state university
President	Advertising agency
Copywriter	Major academic press

# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Communication is essential because:
  - Understanding communication can improve the way people view themselves and the way others view them.
  - People learn more about human relationships as they study communication and learn important life skills.
  - Studying communication can help people exercise their constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech.
  - An understanding of communication can help people succeed professionally.
- ▶ The components of communication are people, messages, channels, feedback, codes, encoding and decoding, and noise.
- ▶ Communication is the process of using messages to exchange meaning.
  - Communication begins with the self and involves others.
  - Communication has both a content and relational dimension.
- Communication is complicated.
- Increased quantity of communication does not necessarily increase the quality of communication.
- Communication is inevitable, irreversible, and unrepeatable.
- ▶ Communication occurs in intrapersonal, interpersonal, public, mass, and computer-mediated contexts. The number of people involved, the degree of formality or intimacy, the opportunities for feedback, the need for prestructuring messages, and the degree of stability of the roles of speaker and listener all vary with the communication context.
- ▶ Communication behavior should be effective and ethical.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Channel	Ethics	Noise
Code	Feedback	Nonverbal codes
Communication	Interpersonal communication	Process
Communication competence	Intrapersonal communication	Public communication
Context	Mass communication	Receiver
Decoding	Meaning	Small-group communication
Dialogue	Media convergence	Source
Dyadic communication	Message	Technological convergence
Encoding	Metaphors	Verbal codes

## Study Questions

1. Communication is considered a process of using messages to generate meaning because it is
  - a. an activity or exchange instead of an unchanging product
  - b. a tangible object
  - c. something with a beginning, middle, and end
  - d. static
2. Understanding another person's messages does not occur unless
  - a. the speaker uses nonverbal messages
  - b. common meanings for words, phrases, and nonverbal codes are elicited
  - c. the listener asks questions
  - d. both parties use verbal and nonverbal symbols

3. People, messages, codes, channels, feedback, encoding, decoding, and noise are components of
  - a. audience
  - b. meaning
  - c. communication
  - d. context
4. Which communication principle considers variables such as verbal, nonverbal, and behavioral aspects, channel used, and audience characteristics?
  - a. Communication has a content and relational dimension.
  - b. Communication begins with the self.
  - c. Communication involves others.
  - d. Communication is complicated.
5. Intrapersonal communication is communication \_\_\_\_\_, and interpersonal communication is communication \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. between two or more people; within the self
  - b. between two or more people; with a large number of people
  - c. within the self; between two or more people
  - d. within the self; within a small group of people
6. A main difference between public communication and mass communication is that
  - a. mass communication is unstable
  - b. public communication is mediated by television
  - c. public communication allows for feedback from the listeners
  - d. mass communication is generally informal and public communication is formal
7. Which of the following terms is defined as the ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior?
  - a. dyadic communication
  - b. communication competence
  - c. message
  - d. feedback
8. Ethical standards within the communication discipline have been created by the
  - a. National Communication Association
  - b. American Communication Association
  - c. Communication Administration
  - d. Public Speaking Administration
9. According to the text, studying communication is essential because it can
  - a. improve the way you see yourself and the way others see you
  - b. teach you important life skills
  - c. help you succeed professionally
  - d. all of the above
10. When you respond to a speaker with a verbal or nonverbal cue, you are
  - a. giving feedback
  - b. not communicating
  - c. an example of noise
  - d. using a metaphor

### Answers:

1. (a); 2. (b); 3. (c); 4. (d); 5. (c); 6. (c); 7. (b); 8. (a); 9. (d); 10. (a)

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## Critical Thinking

1. In the beginning of the chapter, six advantages to studying communication are discussed. Explain how these benefits apply to you in your chosen area of study.
2. Think of your own computer use. How do you use computer-mediated communication (CMC) in your daily life (that is, for school, personal use, or work)? Do you use one kind of CMC more than the other?

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## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain some of the reasons why differences in perception occur.
2. Describe how selection, organization, and interpretation occur during perception.
3. Differentiate among figure and ground, proximity, closure, and similarity in communication examples.
4. Identify errors you might make when you perceive others.
5. Understand how your view of yourself is related to communication.
6. Define identity management.





# PERCEPTION, SELF, AND COMMUNICATION

**This chapter introduces you to the role of perception** and the role of the self in communication. The chapter opens by explaining what perception is; then it describes why differences in perception occur and what occurs during perception. Next, the chapter moves to our perceptions of others, including errors we occasionally make in those perceptions. A discussion of the role of the self in communication completes the chapter. After you read this chapter, you will have a better understanding of the communicative importance of how you see yourself and how you see others.

**In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*,** Juliet innocently asks, “What’s in a name?” She was implying that a mere name could not affect her love for Romeo (of the rival Montague family). But for some people today, names do matter, especially when applied to sports teams and mascots. Of particular sensitivity are names and symbols that seem to mock or demean Native Americans, such as “Savages” and tomahawk-wielding mascots.

In 2005 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) adopted a policy to prohibit the display of abusive racial or ethnic names, mascots, or imagery at any of the 88 NCAA championships. Some 18 colleges and university teams felt the impact of the policy, ranging from the Florida State Seminoles to the Southeast Oklahoma University Savages.

Designed to promote cultural respect, the policy soon ran into trouble. Some people objected that the ruling prohibited even positive names like Warriors and Chieftains just because they referred to Native Americans. Others argued that the policy did not go far enough in ridding sports of insulting references.

This controversy has lingered in political and legal circles and has sparked endless debate. One perspective on the issue was provided by Chase Iron Eyes in an editorial in the *Grand Forks Herald* on November 18, 2007: “The heart of the problem is a conceptual flaw in the practice of using Indian logos. We don’t want change simply because we disagree semantically with the word ‘Sioux’. No, we want change because our very identity is under attack. . . . This is about our own existence.”

*The controversy over the use of Native American and other racially linked names and mascots illustrates how perception influences our views of the world and our communication with others. For some, Native American names and mascots represent a way of honoring a group; for others, that same use represents a loss of identity. In this chapter you will learn how the difference between these two views stems from individual perspectives and perceptions.*

## What Is Perception?

In this chapter we focus on perception, the self, and communication. Differences in perception affect the way we understand events, others, and ourselves. Consequently, perception affects the way we view ourselves and the way we present ourselves. In turn, perception influences our experience and assessment of others and our communication with them. The way you sense the world—the way you see, hear, smell, touch, and taste—is subjective, uniquely your own. Nobody else sees the world the way you do, and nobody experiences events exactly as you do. The uniqueness of human experience is based largely on differences in **perception**—“the process of becoming aware of objects and events from the senses” (DeVito, 1986). Since our perceptions are unique, communication between and among people becomes complicated.

At one time experts tended to see perception as passive. Passive perception means that, like video recorders, people are simply recorders of stimuli. Today perception is

### perception

The process of becoming aware of objects and events from the senses.

considered to be more active. **Active perception** means that your mind selects, organizes, and interprets that which you sense. So each person is a different video camera, and each person aims the camera at different things; each person's lens is different; each person sees different colors; and each person's audio picks up different sounds. Perception is subjective in that you interpret what you sense; you make it your own, and you add to and subtract from what you see, hear, smell, and touch. **Subjective perception** is your uniquely constructed meaning attributed to sensed stimuli.

Consider how much your inner state affects your perceptions. If you have a bad headache, the pain probably will affect the way you treat your children, the way you respond to a pop quiz, and even the way you see yourself in the mirror. Consider also how complicated communication becomes when you know that everyone has his or her own view, uniquely developed and varying according to what is happening both outside and inside the mind. Perception is just one of the many factors that complicate communication.

How do you see the world around you? Perhaps comparing the way your mind works to the way a computer works will help you answer this. Think of your conscious experiences as the images that appear on your computer monitor. Think of what you sense with your eyes, nose, tongue, ears, and fingertips as that which is read off your computer disk. The picture you see on the screen is not the same as the bits on the disk; instead, an image is generated from the bits to create something you can see. "What we perceive in the world around us is not a direct and faithful representation of that world itself, but rather a 'computer enhanced' version based upon very limited data from that world" according to Wright (1994).

#### active perception

Perception in which your mind selects, organizes, and interprets that which you sense.

#### subjective perception

Your uniquely constructed meaning attributed to sensed stimuli.

### NCA Ethics Credo



*We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.*

## Why Do Differences in Perception Occur?

Perception is subjective, active, and creative. Differences in perception may be the result of physiological factors, people's past experiences and roles, their cultures and co-cultures, and their present feelings and circumstances.

### Physiological Factors

You are not physiologically identical to anyone else. People differ from each other in sex, height, weight, body type, and senses. You may be tall or short, have poor eyesight, or have impaired hearing; you may be particularly sensitive to smells; or your body temperature may be colder than the rest of your family's body temperatures.

#### TRY THIS

*Think of an event that recently occurred in your life in which your perception of what happened might be quite different from the perceptions of others.*

Sex is another physiological factor that may lead to perceptual differences. Some authors have suggested that hemispheric differences in the cerebral cortex of the brain are sex-linked. These differences account for



The relationship between perception and communication can be analyzed in the video clip “Where There’s Smoke” on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

females’ language facility and fine hand control and for males’ spatial and mathematical abilities, as well as their increased likelihood of dyslexia, stuttering, delayed speech, autism, and hyperactivity (Restak, 1984). Regardless of these findings, experts have found no conclusive evidence establishing an anatomical difference between the brain structures of human females and males.

Differences in perception also may arise from temporary conditions. A headache, fatigue, or a pulled muscle can cause you to perceive a critical comment when a friendly one is being offered. You may not see a stop sign if your thoughts are elsewhere. Similarly, if you are tired, you may perceive stimuli differently than when you are well rested. Other physiological needs, such as hunger and thirst, may also affect your perceptive skills.

## Past Experiences and Roles

Just as your size, sex, and senses can affect your perceptions, so can your past experiences and your various roles.

The concept that best explains the influence of your past experiences on your perceptions is **perceptual constancy**—the idea that your past experiences lead you to see the world in a way that is difficult to change; your initial perceptions persist. What happened to you in the past influences your current perceptions. A bad experience in a given situation may cause you to avoid that situation in the future. Your experiences affect how you respond to professors, police, politicians, and lawyers.

Roles also influence perceptions. A **role** is “the part an individual plays in a group; an individual’s function or expected behavior” (DeVito, 1986, p. 269). You may be a student, a single mother or father, a political leader, or a business major. Your roles affect your communication: whom you talk to, how you talk to them, what language you use, and how you respond to feedback. A good example of how perceptual constancy and role are related involves parents’ treatment of their children. Even after some people become adults, their parents treat them as they did when they were growing up. Roles also tend to change with context: in your parents’ home you are a son or daughter; in your own home you may be a roommate or a mother or father; in the classroom you are a student; and at work you may be an editor or a manager.

## Culture and Co-Culture

The ways people greet each other, position themselves when they talk, and even eat and sleep are all influenced by culture. **Culture** can be defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world. Marshall R. Singer (1982), an intercultural communication researcher, maintains that what people see, hear, taste, touch, and smell is conditioned by their culture. He says that people’s perceptions are largely learned; the greater the experiential differences among people, the greater the disparity in their perceptions. Conversely, the more similar their backgrounds, the more similarly they perceive the world.

People from different cultures and different countries perceive communication differently. American speakers who are accustomed to a certain level of feedback might find audiences in Finland and Norway to be inexpressive. Interpersonal communication behaviors also vary as a result of cultural differences. Lu (1997), for example, found that Chinese teachers use different techniques to alter students’

### perceptual constancy

The idea that your past experiences lead you to see the world in a way that is difficult to change; your initial perceptions persist.

### role

The part an individual plays in a group; an individual’s function or expected behavior.

### culture

A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world.

behavior in the classroom than do American teachers. Chinese teachers prefer punishment-oriented or antisocial strategies such as “I’ll give you an F if you don’t do this assignment.”

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, people in service industries need to rethink their communication practices. Differences in perception are plentiful. For example, physicians and other health care workers at Bailey’s Health Center in Falls Church, Virginia, were concerned with a large number of “no shows.” People made follow-up appointments that they never kept. In talking with the patients, who were primarily from Central America, they learned that refusing an appointment time would be viewed as rude. That is, knowing that they could not keep a new appointment was not cause to refuse it (Levine, 2006).

To complicate matters further, your co-culture also affects your perceptions of the world. A **co-culture** is “a group whose beliefs or behaviors distinguish it from the larger culture of which it is a part and with which it shares numerous similarities” (DeVito, 1986). Four of the more common co-cultures in the United States today are Latinos, African Americans, women, and gays and lesbians (Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998). Women and men, for example, tend to see the world differently, to communicate about it differently, and even to practice and perceive communication itself differently. Women tend to see talk as relational, as a way to share and understand feelings, whereas men tend to see talk as instrumental, as a way to achieve a task (Pearson, 1995). Culture and co-culture are discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.



▲ Differences in perception that are created by cultural differences can be overcome in our interaction with others.

## Present Feelings and Circumstances

Your daily, monthly, or yearly cycle may affect how you perceive stimuli. If you are an “evening person,” you might not be able to discriminate among multiple-choice answers on an exam at 8:00 a.m. as well as you could later in the day. If you are having a bad week, you might be offended by the humor of one of your friends; later in the month, you might find the same remark very funny. You might perceive stimuli more acutely in the cooler months of winter than you do in the warmer summer months.

If you have ever spent a night alone in a large house, a deserted dormitory, or an unfamiliar residence, you probably understand that perceptions are altered by circumstances. Most people experience a remarkable change in their hearing at night when they are alone. They hear creaking, whining, scraping, cracking sounds at night but not during the day. The lack of other stimuli—including light, other sounds, and people with whom to talk—coupled with a slight feeling of anxiety provides circumstances that result in more acute hearing.

Now that you know why differences in perception occur, how can you apply this information to your communication skills? Imagine you are talking to a classmate about an assignment and she looks away from you, does not respond to your attempts at conversation, but asks an occasional question. Why is she acting distant and disinterested? She might be catching a cold or the flu and be uncomfortable talking. Or, she has had the experience of helping other classmates out with their work with no gratitude on their part. Finally, she might feel—because of her cultural background—that she should not be telling you what to do on the assignment.

### co-culture

A group whose beliefs or behaviors distinguish it from the larger culture of which it is a part and with which it shares numerous similarities.

## e-note

## Perception Activities on the Web

Sensation and perception are interesting in themselves. For an entertaining look at sensation and perception, go to [http://psych.hanover.edu/Krantz/sen\\_tut.html](http://psych.hanover.edu/Krantz/sen_tut.html). You will find a variety of activities related to visual information in art, size constancy, Gestalt laws of organization, aftereffects, and motion and depth.

Consider public speaking and how this information is important for message design. If you are going to speak on a topic that is controversial by people of a certain age, you might think about the demographics of your audience. Does their age suggest that you should talk about both sides of the issue and not just one? Does the fact that your audience includes many people who speak English as a second language suggest that your word choices should be simple, straightforward, and literal? Should you avoid historical references to events in the United States that might not be known to recent immigrants or international students?

## What Occurs in Perception?

You engage in three separate activities during perception: selection, organization, and interpretation. No one is aware of these separate processes because they occur quickly and almost simultaneously. Nonetheless, each activity plays a discrete role in perception. In turn, our perceptions affect our communication.

### Selection

No one perceives all the stimuli in his or her environment. Through selection, you neglect some stimuli in your environment and focus on other stimuli. For example, when you drive or walk to your classes, you are probably bombarded with sights, sounds, smells, and other sensations. At the time, you elect to perceive some of the stimuli and to disregard others. You smell steak cooking as you walk by a restaurant, but you ignore the dimness of the evening. Afterward, it's likely you will recall the stimuli you perceived but will have forgotten the other stimuli.

You also select the messages to which you attend. You might not hear one of your parents admonishing you, but you do hear the much softer sound of your name being called from a distance. You may “tune out” one of your professors while you listen to the hard rainfall outside the classroom window. You might listen to the criticism a friend offers you, but not the corresponding praise.

Four types of selectivity are selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention. In **selective exposure** you expose yourself to information that reinforces, rather than contradicts, your beliefs or opinions (Wilson & Wilson, 1998). In

#### selective exposure

The tendency to expose yourself to information that reinforces, rather than contradicts, your beliefs or opinions.



other words, conservative Republicans are more likely than liberal Democrats to listen to Rush Limbaugh and Oliver North on the radio and to read editorials by George Will. Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, are more likely to avoid these sources of information and listen to sources that support their beliefs.

In **selective attention**, even when you do expose yourself to information and ideas, you focus on certain cues and ignore others. In class, you might notice the new outfit your friend is wearing but not the earring worn by the man three seats in front of you. At a buffet table, you might be drawn to the smells and the foods that you recognize and select only those. In an elevator, you may notice the conversation between the two other people in the elevator but not the music that's being piped in overhead.

In communication, we do not treat all sounds, words, phrases, and sentences equally. We might attend to a sound that is similar to our names because of familiarity. We might hear a word that we view as obscene or novel because of its nature. We might focus on an unfamiliar comparison or a humorous cliché. We might attend to a sentence that is striking or provocative. Selective attention is as central to communication as it is to other perceived entities.

After you expose yourself to a message and then select it for further attention, you see that message through your own special lens. **Selective perception** is the tendency to see, hear, and believe only what you want to see, hear, and believe (Wilson & Wilson, 1998). Suppose someone accused your trustworthy, law-abiding friend of 20 years of stealing; would you believe that person? You may not listen to the accusations, or even look at the evidence, because you believe it simply is not possible that your friend would ever do such a thing.



One example of selective perception involves how teachers observe signs of confusion or frustration from students. In a study exploring how different types of teachers respond to the unique needs of people who speak English as a second language (ESL), it was found that different types of teachers are more adept at perceiving nonverbal signals of confusion from ESL students (Curtin, 2005). Teachers who tend to use more interaction and dialogue in their classroom are quick to observe nonverbal behaviors signaling a lack of understanding; in contrast, teachers who rely more on lecture tend to miss such signals. These findings illustrate how selective perception, perhaps driven by past experiences and roles, can cause some teachers to selectively perceive and react to such nonverbal signs while others do not. While these findings point to the need for all teachers to be more observant of students' nonverbal behaviors, they may also suggest that ESL students need to be more active in telling teachers when they have difficulty in understanding specific terms or ideas.

Finally, you select the stimuli you will recall or remember. **Selective retention** is the tendency to remember better the things that reinforce your beliefs rather than those that oppose them (Wilson & Wilson, 1998). For example, make a list of some of the bad qualities of someone you dislike and a list of some of the bad qualities of someone you admire. Compare your lists. Usually, people can easily think of the negative qualities of someone they dislike, but they often find it difficult to think of an admirable person's negative qualities (Wilson & Wilson, 1998).

All of us can recall conversations we had with other people. Over time, those recollections are probably affected by selective retention. We recall critical comments that someone made about our abilities when we later proved them to be wrong. We remember (and perhaps even exaggerate) honorific remarks that were made. We enjoy retelling conversations that paint a picture that is consistent with our beliefs about ourselves and others.

#### selective attention

The tendency, when you expose yourself to information and ideas, to focus on certain cues and ignore others.

#### selective perception

The tendency to see, hear, and believe only what you want to see, hear, and believe.

#### selective retention

The tendency to remember better the things that reinforce your beliefs rather than those that oppose them.



Selection is the first process that occurs during perception; the next is organization.

## Organization

Each person organizes the stimuli in his or her environment. Organization is the grouping of stimuli into meaningful units or wholes. You organize stimuli in a number of ways, such as through figure and ground, closure, proximity, and similarity.

### Figure and Ground

#### figure

The focal point of your attention.

#### ground

The background against which your focused attention occurs.

One organization method is to distinguish between figure and ground. **Figure** is the focal point of your attention, and **ground** is the background against which your focused attention occurs. When looking at Figure 2.1, some people might perceive a vase or a candlestick, whereas others perceive twins facing each other. People who see a vase identify the center of the drawing as the figure and the area on the right and left as the ground (or background). Conversely, people who see twins facing each other identify the center as the ground and the area on the right and left as the figure.

How do figure and ground work in communication encounters? In your verbal and nonverbal exchanges, you perform a similar feat of focusing on some parts (figure) and distancing yourself from others (ground). When you hear your name in a noisy room, your name becomes figure and the rest becomes ground; on a posted grade list, your student ID number becomes figure and the other numbers become ground. Here's another example: During a job evaluation your employer may talk about your weaknesses and strengths, but the so-called weaknesses may make you so angry that you don't even remember the strengths. The messages about weaknesses are figure, and the ones about strengths are ground. Because of who and what you are, and because of your own unique perceptual processes, your attention focuses and fades, and you choose the figure or ground of what you see, hear, smell, touch, and taste.

### Closure

#### closure

The tendency to fill in missing information in order to complete an otherwise incomplete figure or statement.

Another way of organizing stimuli is **closure**, the tendency to fill in missing information in order to complete an otherwise incomplete figure or statement. If someone were to show you Figure 2.2 and ask you what you see, you might say it is a



**Figure 2.1** An example of figure and ground: a vase or twins?



**Figure 2.2** An example of closure: ink blobs or a cat?

picture of a cat. But as you can see, the figure is incomplete. You see a cat only if you are willing to fill in the blank areas.

Closure also functions in your communication interactions. You see two people standing face-to-face and gazing deeply into each other's eyes, and you "fill in" your inference that they are lovers. A public speaker says, "We need to preserve our neighborhoods," and you assume she is against the proposed low-income housing. Visual closure might involve completing the circle or seeing the cat, but mental closure means filling in the meaning of what you hear and observe.

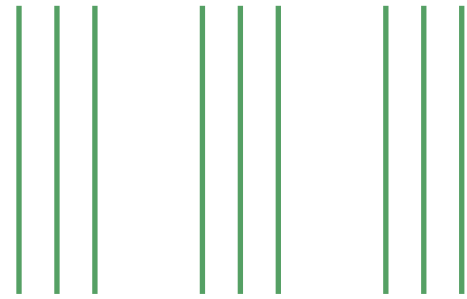
### Proximity

You also organize stimuli on the basis of their proximity. According to the principle of **proximity**, objects physically close to each other will be perceived as a unit or group (DeVito, 1986). This principle is at work in Figure 2.3. You are most likely to perceive three groups of three lines, rather than nine separate lines.

Proximity works verbally and nonverbally in communication. Nonverbal examples include thinking that the person standing next to the cash register is the cashier and assuming that the two people entering the room at the same time are together. And here is a verbal example: Suppose your boss announces that due to an economic downturn he is forced to lay off 25 employees, and one hour later he calls you into his office—the proximity of the messages leads you to believe that you will be laid off.

### Similarity

Similarity is probably one of the simplest means of organizing stimuli. On the basis of the principle of **similarity**, elements are grouped together because they resemble each other in size, color, shape, or other attributes. The saying "Birds of a feather flock together" can hold true as well for human groups, who are often organized by ethnicity, religion, political leaning, or interests. In Figure 2.4 you probably perceive circles and squares, rather than a group of geometric shapes, because of the principle of similarity.



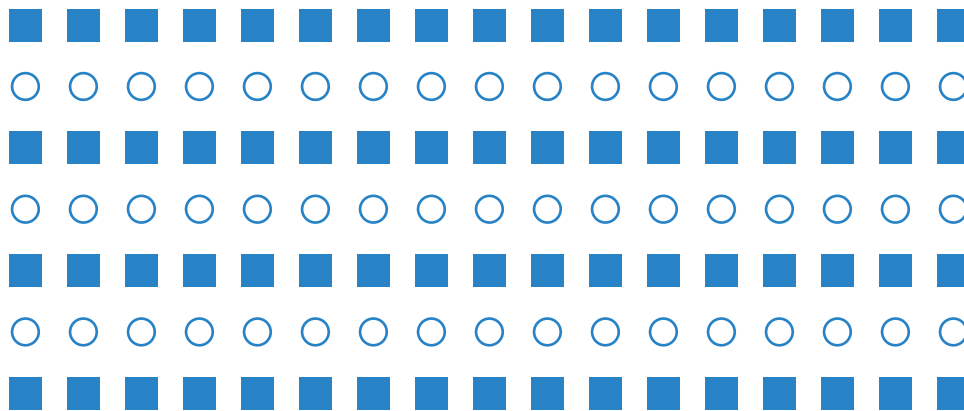
**Figure 2.3** An example of proximity: three groups of lines or nine separate lines?

#### proximity

The principle that objects physically close to each other will be perceived as a unit or group.

#### similarity

The principle that elements are grouped together because they share attributes such as size, color, or shape.



**Figure 2.4** An example of similarity: squares and circles or a group of geometric shapes?

How does similarity work in our relationships and our interactions? Generally, we seek friends, work partners, and roommates based on similarity. We choose to interact with those who are similar, on some dimension, to ourselves. Because our perceptions are egocentric, we choose to communicate with those we believe are similar to us. In other words, our friends tend to represent some part of our self (Leary, 2002). We reject, or certainly are less interested in interacting with, people who are highly different from the way we see ourselves.

To understand the relationship between the organization of stimuli and communication, think about a classroom setting. When you enter the room, your tendency is to organize the stimuli, or people there, into specific groups. Your primary focus is on acquaintances and friends—the *figure*—rather than on the strangers, who function as the *ground*. You talk to friends sitting near the doorway as you enter, due to their *proximity*. You then seat yourself near a group of students you perceive as having interests identical to yours, thus illustrating *similarity*. Lastly, you see your instructor arrive with another professor of communication; they are laughing, smiling, and conversing enthusiastically. *Closure* is a result of your assumption that they have a social relationship outside the classroom.

### Interpretation

The third activity you engage in during perception is interpretation, the assignment of meaning to stimuli. **Interpretive perception**, then, is a blend of internal states and external stimuli. The more ambiguous the stimuli, the more room for interpretation. The basis for the well-known inkblot test lies in the principle of interpretation of stimuli. Figure 2.5 shows three inkblots that a psychologist might ask you to interpret. The ambiguity of the figures is typical.

When interpreting stimuli, people frequently rely on the context in which the stimuli are perceived, or they compare the stimuli to other stimuli (Figure 2.6). Sometimes context helps, but other times it can create confusion in interpretation.

You can become so accustomed to seeing people, places, and situations in a certain way that your senses do not pick up on the obvious. Many people who read the following sentence will overlook the problem with it:

The cop saw the man standing on the the street corner.



Figure 2.5 An example of interpretation: the inkblot.

#### interpretive perception

Perception that involves a blend of internal states and external stimuli.

We achieve closure on the sentence and interpret its meaning without being conscious of the details, so the repeated *the* is overlooked. Context provides cues for how an action, an object, or a situation is to be interpreted or perceived. Not seeing the double *the* in the sentence would be no problem for a reader trying to comprehend meaning, but a proofreader's job would be in jeopardy if such an error was missed often.

How does interpretation work in our interactions with others? Imagine that you are working in a group in one of your classes. One member of the group always comes prepared and seems to dominate the group interaction and to dictate the direction the project is taking. Another member of the group frequently misses agreed-upon group meeting times, arrives late when he does come, and is never prepared. How do you interpret the behavior of these two people?

Suppose you are more like the first person than the second. You might feel that the first person is challenging your leadership in the group. On the other hand, you consider the enormous contributions she makes by bringing a great deal of research and planning each time. You dismiss the second person as lazy, unmotivated, and a poor student. You are worried that he will bring the group grade down.

Now suppose you are more like the second person than the first. You, too, miss meetings, arrive late, and do virtually nothing to prepare. You might interpret the first person's behavior as showing off, but, at the same time, you are glad that she is going to lead the group to a good grade. You see the second person as laid-back and fun. In fact, you decide you would like to hang out with him.

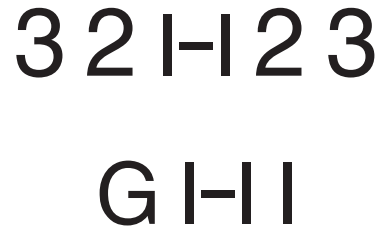
## What Errors Do We Make in Our Perceptions?

Once we understand the active nature of perception and recognize that people hold unique perceptions as a consequence, we can see that we might make errors when we perceive other people. While many types of errors exist, we discuss only two of the most common errors here. Detailed discussions of the many types of errors are a topic for psychology classes or upper-level communication classes. Here we consider stereotyping and prejudice as one error and first impressions as a second.

### Stereotyping and Prejudice

Stereotyping occurs when we offer an oversimplified or standardized image of a person because of her or his group membership. How does stereotyping work? First, we categorize other people into groups based on a variety of criteria—age, sex, race, sexual orientation, occupation, region of the country, or physical abilities. Next, we infer that everyone within that group has the same characteristics. For instance, we might conclude that all lesbians are masculine, that people on the East Coast are fast-talking, or that older people are conservative.

Our expectations and our interpretations of the behavior of others are then guided by these perceptions. When we observe people from other groups, we exaggerate, or overestimate, how frequently they engage in the stereotypic behaviors we believe they



**Figure 2.6** An example of the usefulness of context in the interpretation of stimuli.

## e-note

## Attributional Style

What kinds of attributions do you make? Do you believe that you have control over your fate, or do you think that others control your successes and failures? To learn more about yourself, complete the Locus of Control and Attribution Style Test at [www.queendom.com/tests/personality](http://www.queendom.com/tests/personality). The test is scored online in a matter of seconds.



The influence of perception on stereotyping can be observed in the video clip “The Right Kind of Care” on the *Online Learning Center*.

hold. We ignore, or underestimate, how frequently they engage in the behaviors that we do not believe they engage in.

Unfortunately, our stereotypes of people from different groups are often negative (Hendrix, 2002). If you are a man, you might hold some negative views of women. If you are white, you might believe that black people are not as qualified for higher education as you are. If you are able-bodied, you might not empathize with someone in a wheelchair. Hughes and Baldwin (2002) found that these negative stereotypes created different communication patterns when white and black individuals, for example, interacted. They suggest that “macrolevel interpretations between interracial speakers may be problematic” (p. 113).

Our explanations for the expected and unexpected behaviors of people are frequently in error as we assume situational reasons for unexpected outcomes and personal reasons for expected outcomes. For example, if we believe that teenagers are foolhardy and high risk takers, we explain the behavior of a careful and conservative teenager by concluding that this is her “public behavior” and that she actually behaves differently in private.

Finally, we differentiate ourselves from people whom we stereotype. The woman who has some African-American heritage but does not identify with it might view other black people as possessing qualities that are different from her own. The man who has only the slightest Hispanic background but is proud of this heritage may see Caucasians as boring and too prudent.

Stereotypes can lead to prejudices. Prejudice refers to the prejudgments that we make before we know any relevant facts or circumstances about a person or an event. While prejudice can be positive or negative, most often it references a harmful or hostile attitude about a person based on her or his membership in a particular social or ethnic group. Throughout history and around the world, people have held stereotypes and they have been prejudiced against others.

Prejudice interferes with our accurate perceptions of others, and it can lead to discrimination. For example, women might not be hired for particular jobs because of prejudice against them. People may be disallowed housing because of their religious beliefs. Finally, people may fear others because of their racial or ethnic backgrounds. The color of people’s skin, the texture of their hair, the shape and size of their facial features, and their clothing are sometimes used to identify out-groups; that is, groups toward which a person feels contempt or with which a person feels a difference.

### First Impressions

Each of us seeks to form a first impression of others—an initial opinion about people upon meeting them. Frequently, these “first impressions” are based on other

people's appearance and may occur in as little as 3 seconds (Sterling, 2006). The nonverbal cues they offer are particularly powerful. We notice their clothing, their height and weight, their physical attractiveness, and their interaction skills and make a snap judgment.

As people make their first impressions, they also compare the new person to themselves. According to Sterling (2006), we make certain comparisons and draw certain conclusions in a business setting. For example, if the person appears to be of a comparable business or social level, we decide that they are worthy of further interaction. If they appear to be of a higher level, we admire them and cultivate them as a valuable contact. If they appear to be of lower status, we tolerate them but keep them at arm's length.

Our first impressions are powerful, and sometimes they lead to errors in our assessment of others. Imagine a businessperson who has traveled all day and arrives late for a meeting. Her flight was delayed, her luggage was lost on route, and she is disheveled and harried. New business acquaintances might dismiss her simply on the grounds of her appearance.

First impressions may be affected by specific situations or circumstances that the other person is experiencing, making our initial assessment inaccurate. Just the same, we tend to cling to these impressions in future interactions. Rather than altering our opinion, we filter out new information that disputes our original appraisal.

Imagine that you met a friend's mother on a holiday. Your friend's mother drank a great deal and was highly gregarious. You conclude that she enjoys parties and is very friendly. On your next encounters with the friend's mother, she seems quiet and businesslike. Nonetheless, you adhere to your original conclusion that she is a fun-loving and talkative individual.

Understanding that our perceptions of others rest on a subjective, active, and creative perceptual process is important. Our perceptions of others are unique, and individuals are perceived in multiple ways by multiple interactants. We can more fairly appraise others and their behavior by understanding common attribution and perceptual errors and the extent to which we are engaged in them.

Another important skill is perceptual checking, a process that helps us understand another person and her or his message more accurately. Perceptual checking has three steps. First, you describe to the other person the behavior—including the verbal and nonverbal cues—that you observed. Second, you suggest plausible interpretations. Third, you seek clarification, explanation, or amplification.

For example, imagine that you are assigned a group project in one of your classes. Another member of the group asks you to produce all of your primary sources for the research project. You presented this source material weeks ago. You respond by saying, "I understand that you want me to give you my primary sources" (describe the behavior or the message). "I have a feeling that you do not trust me" (first interpretation). "Or maybe you just want to create the bibliography for the whole group" (second interpretation). "Can you explain why you want my primary sources" (request for clarification)?

Perceptual checking may be even more important in our personal or romantic relationships. Suppose a platonic friend provides you with a very romantic birthday present. You begin by describing the behavior: "The gift you gave me was very romantic." You then suggest alternative interpretations: "Perhaps you want to change the nature of our relationship" (first interpretation)? "Maybe this gift was for someone else" (second interpretation)? "Maybe you don't view the gift as romantic" (third interpretation)? "Can you tell me what you intended?"



On the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e), view the video segment titled "Opposites Attract" to analyze the use of perceptual checking during interpersonal conflict.

In perceptual checking, you must suggest interpretations that do not cause the other person to be defensive. In the first instance, imagine that you offered as one explanation, “Maybe you want my primary sources so you can claim that you did all of the research.” The other person is most likely to become defensive. In the second instance, you could have offered, “Maybe you don’t realize that I don’t want a romantic relationship with you.” Most likely, embarrassment and a loss of face would follow.

As another example, recall the situation in Falls Church, Virginia, at the medical clinic where patients from Central America did not keep their appointments. The health care workers had to do some follow-up to learn about the cultural differences. They needed to describe the behavior, suggest an interpretation, but then allow the patients to explain the practice.

Perceptual checks were also necessary when physicians learned that they could not look directly at a Hmong man and that breast self-exam programs for Muslim women needed to be conducted before regular hours so no men were on the property. Women from other countries report being surprised by the directness and invasiveness

## get INVOLVED

How can you improve the way you see yourself? Many people spend their lifetimes trying to improve themselves—dieting, exercising, taking classes, reading self-help books, and engaging in every new fad that emerges. Others know that the way to find themselves is to lose themselves in focusing on others.

Robert Greenleaf is credited with the concept of servant leadership. Servant leadership is based on the idea that people want to serve, and this desire to serve leads to an aspiration to lead. Servant leaders focus on the needs of others, rather than on their own needs. Servant leadership, perhaps surprisingly, leads to the fulfillment of one’s own needs as the individual concentrates on others. These sorts of contradictions run through Greenleaf’s writing.

He explains, for example, that “Gandhi taught that there are seven things that will destroy us. Wealth without work. Pleasure without conscience. Knowledge without character. Commerce without morality. Science without humanity. Worship without sacrifice. Politics without principle” (p. 8).

Servant leadership relies on working with others in a trusting and empathic way. Some of the characteristics of the servant leader include that this individual listens and empathizes, that she or he cares about the growth of others and builds community, and that stewardship is considered essential.

Read about Greenleaf’s work at the Greenleaf Center website: <http://www.greenleaf.org/>. Consider how you could apply the principles of servant leadership in your own life.

Greenleaf, Robert K. (2002). *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*. New Jersey: Paulist Press.



of male physicians' questions and sometimes do not answer these questions truthfully or fully (Levine, 2006). Health care workers must continue to do perceptual checks to ensure that the women are receiving the best medical care possible.

## SKILL BUILDER

*Bring an object to class that means a great deal to you. With a partner, explain the significance of this object. The partner should listen carefully to you. When you are finished, the partner should ask questions about the object. When the partner is satisfied that she or he understands your relationship to the object, she or he should try a perceptual check (first, describing your message; then suggesting some alternative interpretations; and finally, concluding by asking for the correct interpretation). When you are satisfied that the partner understands your message, reverse roles.*

## Who Are You?

The discussion of perception naturally leads to a look at self-perception. How you perceive yourself plays a central role in communication, regardless of whether the communication is in a daydream, in a journal, in a small group, or at a podium. An early step in considering yourself a communicator is to contemplate who you are. In chapter 6 we present the Johari window, which will help you understand the self-disclosure process. The Johari window serves as a reminder that you may know some things about yourself but that you do not know everything. You might have some habits in the way you communicate to others but be unaware of them. Perhaps you use verbal fillers such as “and then” or nonverbal fluencies such as “um” when you give a presentation in class. Perhaps you report stories that are offensive to some of your friends. These are your communicative behaviors, but you are unaware of them.

What you know about yourself includes your past, present, and future. Your past goes all the way back to how you were reared, or how your family taught you to think, believe, and behave. You began as a spontaneous creature who cried when hungry or frustrated, lashed out when angry, and giggled and beamed when happy. Over time, adults took away some of your spontaneity until you behaved like a little adult—until you ate at mealtimes, held your anger in check with your teachers, laughed when appropriate, and cried little if at all. Your emotions, as well as your physical responses, were altered to make you responsible for your own behavior.

Determining who you are is not a matter of simply adding up your past experiences, however. Philosophers and psychologists have debated the nature of personal identity for centuries. John Locke, for example, felt that an individual's personal identity was founded on consciousness rather than in terms of his or her body or soul. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/>) identifies a number of issues that personal identity introduces. For example, if people change over time, which parts of their personal identity are persistent? How are we similar to others and how are we different?

These same questions are studied today in social scientific research. People's personal identities influence their perceptions of others (Seta, Schmidt, & Bookhout, 2006). Personal identities appear to have some stability and some fragmentation; in other words, they are not necessarily either intrinsically stable or fragmented (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006).



Personal identities can be changed, and people can improve their behavior as a result. For example, some low-income and minority teens who had low academic attainment were taught strategies that allowed the development of a “new academic possible self.” These students achieved higher grades, scored higher on standardized tests, and showed greater academic initiative. At the same time, their levels of depression, absenteeism, and in-school misbehavior declined (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006).

How can personal identity research be applied to communication? When a speaker creates a message that points up shared values with listeners, the listeners perceive a personal identity match and are more likely to be persuaded. Other factors may interfere with this cause-effect relationship, however. For example, if the shared values are unexpected because of someone’s political party membership or other social group affiliations, the message may be rejected and the persuasive attempt may fail (Nelson & Garst, 2005).

Your awareness of who you are develops in your communication with yourself, that is, your intrapersonal communication. Shedletsky (1989) writes that intrapersonal communication includes “our perceptions, memories, experiences, feelings, interpretations, inferences, evaluations, attitudes, opinions, ideas, strategies, images, and states of consciousness.” Intrapersonal communication may be viewed as “talking to ourselves”; it is also synonymous with thinking. Intrapersonal communication appears to be the most common context of communication, the foundation for the other contexts.

Your awareness of who you are also develops in your communication with others. Once you mastered language, symbolic interactionism shaped you in ways that made you what you are today. **Symbolic interactionism** refers to the process of development of the self through the messages and feedback received from others (Mead, 1934). You may have been punished for acting up in class, rewarded for athletic skill, or ignored for saying too little. The result is the person you see in the mirror today.

To explore who you are, you may be assigned a speech of self-introduction. This speech may be the first one you deliver in class. Since you know more about yourself than anyone else in the classroom, you will probably feel very little anxiety about this assignment. You will, of course, want to provide some basic information about yourself—your name, where you are from, and your current major in college.

But consider some of the more remarkable and memorable information you can share. Instead of beginning your brief talk with basic information, consider providing some information that is provocative and that will gain the attention of your audience. For example, one student began, “How many people do you know who fly an airplane and have also jumped out of one?” Another speaker stated, “I’ve been in 40 of the 50 states.” A third noted, “I have never lived any place but in this town.” These three students found some aspect about themselves to be unique. In one case, the student was adventuresome and a risk taker; the second student had enjoyed a great deal of travel with his family; and the third realized that her stability allowed her to nurture her roots.

The speech of self-introduction will allow you to draw on the information in this chapter and it will allow you a relatively stress-free way to begin giving talks in this class. Here are some tips for being effective in your self-introduction:

1. Be honest and don’t exaggerate. You might be tempted to invent information about yourself or to make some of your experiences more extreme than they actually are. This is not a good idea because it destroys your credibility. Your fellow students will not believe information you provide in later speeches.

### symbolic interactionism

The process in which the self develops through the messages and feedback received from others.

2. Make sure that the information you provide makes a point. To conclude your talk, you should provide an answer to the “so what?” question. Why did you choose to share the information you did? Was the point of your skydiving about goal setting and goal achievement? Was it part of a group that allowed team building? Why did you choose to sky dive?
3. Be creative in your language when you tell the story of who you are. Carefully selected language encourages audience interest. Using comparisons with other known information might be helpful. For example, if you are telling the class about how safe piloting a private plane is, you could note, “Many people are afraid of spiders, but in the United States the only dangerous species are the widows and the recluse spiders. People also have an unreasonable fear of piloting a plane, but your risk of dying in a plane crash is only 1 in 11 million.”
4. Do not provide detail that is unnecessary in telling the story. Some speakers go off on tangents and get off the topic. Others offer every element of their experiences: “Then after we took Interstate 29, we chose a state highway to cross into Minnesota.”
5. If you can, gather information from people who are close to you. Can they provide a pithy quote or additional information from their point of view that helps to tell the story? Sometimes another person’s point of view adds spice to the story.
6. Finally, you want to conclude with a memorable statement that parallels the introduction to your presentation. If you begin with the statement, “I am not a registered voter,” you might want to end it with, “Even though I am not a registered voter, I did vote in the last election because I am a resident of North Dakota, the only state where voter registration does not occur.”

### Learning More About Yourself

Perhaps you now understand why the ancients said, “Know thyself.” They, like people today, believed that self-awareness is a discovery worth making. It tells you which choices are open to you and which ones are not. If you hate chemistry, you should not become a physician or pharmacist. If you like to write and are good at it, you may have a future as a writer. If you are skillful at athletics, perhaps you can exploit that talent with scholarships, varsity sports, and even professional sports. What you have learned about yourself in the past, and what you learn about yourself today, will affect your future.

In the here-and-now, you should be aware of what kind of person you are. Are you timid, shy, and unassertive? Are you healthy, vigorous, and energetic? Do you welcome change, adventure, and risk? Do you see yourself as capable, unstoppable, and hard-driving? The answers to these and many other questions are the key to your self-awareness. As Will Schutz (1982) notes, “Given a complete knowledge of myself, I can determine my life; lacking that mastery, I am controlled in ways that are often undesirable, unproductive, worrisome, and confusing” (p. 1).

Joseph O’Connor was a high school junior when he spent two weeks in the Sierra Nevada mountain range of northeastern California—a challenge that changed his level of self-awareness. Rain poured, hail pelted, and the beauty of dawn at 13,000 feet entranced him. Writing about his self-awareness in an article titled “A View from Mount Ritter: Two Weeks in the Sierras Changed My Attitude Toward



▲ New experiences may lead to increased self-knowledge.

Life and What It Takes to Succeed,” O’Connor (1998) states:

The wonder of all I’d experienced made me think seriously about what comes next. “Life after high school,” I said to myself. “Uh-oh.” What had I been doing the last three years? I was so caught up in defying the advice of my parents and teachers to study and play by the rules that I hadn’t considered the effects my actions would have on me. (p. 17)

O’Connor’s experience changed his self-awareness, and he went from being a D student to one who made the honor roll.

You don’t have to go to the mountains to come to a new awareness of yourself. If you want to learn more about yourself, you can take several steps to achieve that goal. If you want to learn more about your physical self, you should get an annual physical. You can also talk to your relatives about the causes of death of older people in your family. What health ailments do your parents and grandparents face? Are these problems inherited?

If you want to learn more about your personality and how others perceive you, you can talk with relatives, friends, co-workers, bosses, and even your children if you are a parent. Consider other features of your life that will suggest how you are perceived. Do people seek you out as a relational partner? Do others ask you to participate in social events? Do friends ask you for advice? Also consider the number of friends you have.

What kind of worker are you? Do you like to work alone or with others? What kinds of jobs have you held? Have you been given increasing amounts of responsibility in those jobs, or have you frequently lost jobs? Do your grades indicate that you are motivated and disciplined or that you are not living up to your potential? Do others seek you out to partner with them on work- or school-related projects?

Are you skillful in communication? Do you enjoy public speaking and receive invitations to talk to civic and church groups? Can you listen to others uncritically and empathize with them? Are you adept at problem solving or conflict resolution? Are you an effective and adaptive leader? Are you apprehensive about communication? Are you argumentative? You can learn about your communication skills or deficits through a number of research methods. For example, the latter three concepts can be found on the web by typing “Leader Effectiveness and Adaptability,” “Personal Report of Communication Apprehension,” and “Argumentativeness Scale,” respectively, into a search engine. Many valid and reliable instruments measuring communication constructs can be found online, in communication journals, and in resource books.

## How Do You Present Yourself?

In this chapter we have shown the relationship between perception, self-perception, and communication. Communication and perception influence each other. Communication is largely responsible for our self-perceptions. Communication can also be

## cultural note

### Cultural Differences in Memory

Research by Qi Wang and her associates (Han, Leichtman, & Wang, 1998; Wang & Leichtman, 2000; Wang, Leichtman, & Davies, 2000; Wang, Leichtman, & White, 1998) shows that American adults and preschool children recall their personal memories differently than do indigenous Chinese. Since our self-concept is dependent on our self-awareness, these cultural differences are important.

“Americans often report lengthy, specific, emotionally elaborate memories that focus on the self as a central character,” says Wang. “Chinese tend to give brief accounts of general routine events that center on collective activities and are often emotionally neutral. These individual-focused vs. group-oriented styles characterize the mainstream values in American and Chinese cultures, respectively” ([www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicles/6.28.01/memory-culture.html](http://www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicles/6.28.01/memory-culture.html)).

Wang and Leichtman (2000) also investigated the stories and personal experiences of American and Chinese 6-year-olds. They found that Chinese children were more concerned with moral correctness and authority and American children had a greater sense of independence in their narratives. Cultural values and differences were obvious. “These findings indicate that cultural differences in autobiographical memory are apparently set by early preschool years and persist into adulthood. They are formed both in the larger cultural context that defines the meaning of the self and in the immediate family environment,” Wang concludes. “The self and autobiographical memory are intertwined not only within an individual but also in the overarching cultural system” ([www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicles/6.28.01/memory-culture.html](http://www.news.cornell.edu/Chronicles/6.28.01/memory-culture.html)).

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please read each statement carefully and respond by using the following scale:

1 = Strongly agree

2 = Agree

3 = Disagree

4 = Strongly disagree

1. On the whole I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think that I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least the equal of others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Source: Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and adolescent self-image* (rev. ed.). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

## e-note

## Electronic Self-Presentation

Although Goffman's work centered on face-to-face interaction, electronic communication allows us to consider applications of his theory beyond interpersonal communication. The World Wide Web has developed quickly and has revolutionized communication between people. Today many people have their own home pages, or they have their own blogs in which they present themselves to others. Stone (1998) has discussed the nature of our "electronic selves." What do home pages and blogs communicate? Find five web pages or five blogs and analyze the differences among them. What impressions do you have about the person who created the site?

used to change the perceptions that others have of us. We attempt to influence others' perceptions of ourselves through self-presentation.

In our daily interactions we present ourselves to people, both consciously and unconsciously. Self-presentation may be defined as the way we portray ourselves to others. Generally, our self-presentation is consistent with an ideal self-image, allows us to enact an appropriate role, influences others' view of us, permits us to define the situation in our terms, and/or influences the progress of an interaction.

Erving Goffman (1959, 1974, 1981) first described the process of self-presentation. Goffman adopted the symbolic interactionist perspective described earlier. He described everyday interactions through a dramaturgical, or theater arts, viewpoint. His theory embraces individual identity, group relationships, the context or situation, and the interactive meaning of information. Individuals are viewed as "actors," and interaction is seen as a "performance" shaped by the context and situation and constructed to provide others with "impressions" consistent with the desired goals of the actor. **Identity management** is thus defined as the control (or lack of control) of the communication of information through a performance. In identity management people try to present an "idealized" version of themselves in order to reach desired ends.

You may believe that you do not engage in identity management. However, a number of research studies illustrate that people act differently when they are being viewed than when they are not. For example, people speaking on a telephone who are expressing empathy or shared emotions do not engage in facial responsiveness, whereas people expressing the same sentiments in face-to-face encounters do (Chovil, 1991). Investigations in this area suggest that people generally do engage in identity management in their face-to-face interactions.

In the next two chapters you will learn more about verbal and nonverbal communication. Your understanding of these symbolic means of communicating will be enhanced by your understanding of identity management. Wiggins, Wiggins, and Vander Zanden (1993) suggest that three essential types of communication are used to manage impressions: manner, appearance, and setting. Manner includes both verbal and nonverbal codes. Your manner might be seen as brusque, silly, business-like, immature, friendly, warm, or gracious. Your appearance may suggest a role that you are playing (lab assistant), a value that you hold (concern for the environment), your personality (relaxed), or your view of the communication setting (unimportant). The setting includes your immediate environment (the space in which you communicate) as well as other public displays of who you are (the kind of home in which you live, the type of automobile you drive).

**identity management**

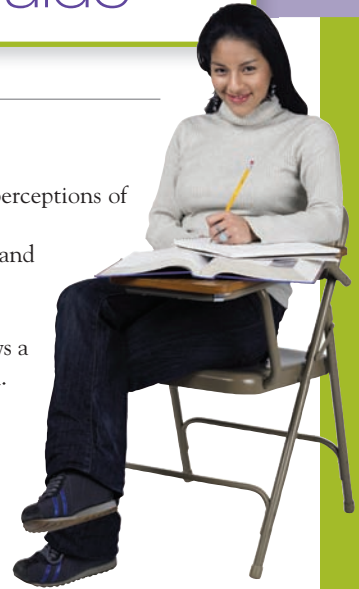
The control (or lack of control) of the communication of information through a performance.

# Chapter Review & Study Guide

## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Perception is important in communication because perception affects the way we understand events, others, and ourselves.
- ▶ Our perceptions are unique because of physiological factors, past experiences, culture and co-culture, and present feelings and circumstances.
- ▶ During perception, three separate activities are occurring: selection, organization, and interpretation.
  - Through selection you neglect some stimuli in your environment and focus on others. Four types of selectivity are selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention.
  - The stimuli you focus on are organized in a number of ways—through figure and ground, closure, proximity, and similarity.
- ▶ We often make errors in our perceptions of others.
  - We engage in stereotyping and prejudice.
  - We make first impressions.
- ▶ How you perceive yourself plays a central role in communication.
  - Understanding yourself includes understanding your attitudes, values, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses.
  - Symbolic interactionism is related to understanding yourself.
- ▶ Identity management is the control (or lack of control) of the communication of information through a performance.



## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Active perception  
Closure  
Co-culture  
Culture  
Figure  
Ground  
Identity management

Interpretive perception  
Perception  
Perceptual constancy  
Proximity  
Role  
Selective attention

Selective exposure  
Selective perception  
Selective retention  
Similarity  
Subjective perception  
Symbolic interactionism

## Study Questions

1. Which of the following may be the result of physiological factors, past experiences and roles, cultures, and present conditions?
  - a. selection
  - b. similarity
  - c. self-serving bias
  - d. differences in perception
2. By neglecting some stimuli and focusing on other stimuli, you are engaging in which process of perception?
  - a. organization
  - b. selection
  - c. classification
  - d. interpretation
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is an organizational method whereby missing information is filled in to create the appearance of a complete unit, and \_\_\_\_\_ is another organizational technique whereby elements are grouped based on their similarities in size, color, and shape.
  - a. Closure; similarity
  - b. Proximity; figure and ground
  - c. Similarity; proximity
  - d. Closure; proximity
4. The more ambiguous the stimuli,
  - a. the less room for confusion
  - b. the more room for interpretation
  - c. the less room for interpretation
  - d. the less you rely on context

5. Perceptual constancy results because of
  - a. physiological factors
  - b. past experiences and roles
  - c. people's cultures and co-cultures
  - d. people's present feelings and circumstances
6. A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors is known as a
  - a. person
  - b. communicator
  - c. role
  - d. culture
7. Selection occurs in perception in all of the following ways *except for*
  - a. attention
  - b. exposure
  - c. distraction
  - d. retention
8. Which of the following is a perceptual error frequently made by people?
  - a. believing stereotypes about people who are different from themselves
  - b. believing other people are courageous, while they, themselves, are cowardly
  - c. believing that others are considerably older than themselves
  - d. believing that uneducated people are happier than educated people
9. When people seek to present an ideal version of themselves, they are engaging in
  - a. identity management
  - b. active perception
  - c. attribution
  - d. selection
10. First impressions
  - a. generally take weeks or more to develop
  - b. are based on people's sense of humor, their personality, and their religion
  - c. are frequently based on other people's appearance
  - d. are generally accurate and therefore are lasting impressions

#### Answers:

1. (d); 2. (b); 3. (a); 4. (b); 5. (b); 6. (d); 7. (c); 8. (a); 9. (a); 10. (c)

## Critical Thinking

1. Singer states that people's perceptions are largely learned because what people see, hear, taste, touch, and smell is conditioned by their culture. What parts of your culture are key factors in how you perceive events in day-to-day life?
2. The book discusses how people form impressions of who they are and how communication affects self-perceptions. How do you see yourself? How is this affected by your past, present, and projected future? How do you see yourself differently now than you did when you were in elementary school or high school? How have conversations you have had with friends, co-workers, or other people at college altered the way you see yourself?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define language and state several of its characteristics.
2. Identify three sets of rules that govern language use.
3. Explain how language and culture are intertwined.
4. Describe the various forms of unique language and how they can provide both beauty in and barriers to communication.
5. Use specific techniques, like paraphrasing and dating, to demonstrate your verbal communication skills.



# LANGUAGE



**This chapter is about the importance of language and how language functions in communication.** In this chapter you will learn about the world of language, including the definition of language and its many characteristics. You will learn that language can be both an enhancement and an obstacle to communication. Finally, specific suggestions are provided for improving your verbal skills.

# AND MEANING

“sup?”

“nm sup with u?”

It’s likely that you, like most college students, use abbreviations like these at least occasionally when texting or chatting online. It’s equally likely that you have heard an English teacher, parent, or some other authority figure criticize this kind of shorthand and identify its use with the decline of writing. However, much evidence shows that texting has no adverse influence on young adults’ ability to write and may in fact promote writing skill.

As new forms of electronic communication are invented, people develop new symbols to use with them. When telephones were invented, Thomas Alva Edison suggested the use of “hello” as a standard greeting—Alexander Graham Bell had suggested the use of “Ahoy.” Eventually “hello” won, and in time it became a standard face-to-face greeting as well. Perhaps early-twentieth-century social critics deplored this modern-sounding word the way English teachers criticize “sup” today. However, once a symbol, such as a word or abbreviation, becomes commonly understood and used, it’s hard for anyone to change it or stamp it out. “Sup” will be with us until people start using another symbol in its place.

*In this chapter you will learn about language, which is a collection of arbitrary symbols that people use to communicate. You will see that language is closely related to culture—as in the example here about texting, one group of people may not understand the symbols that another group uses. You will see ways in which we use, and misuse, language when we try to share meaning with other people.*

Sources: (telephone greeting) <http://www.npr.org/programs/Infsound/stories/990319.stories.html>; Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing (Penn) at [http://writing.upenn.edu/news/csmonitor\\_SAT.html](http://writing.upenn.edu/news/csmonitor_SAT.html); “Writing, Technology, and Teens” at [pewinternet.org/-/media/Files/Reports/2008/PIP\\_Writing\\_Report\\_FINAL3.pdf](http://pewinternet.org/-/media/Files/Reports/2008/PIP_Writing_Report_FINAL3.pdf); *Boston Globe* at [http://www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2008/06/16/is\\_language\\_dead\\_or\\_evolving/](http://www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2008/06/16/is_language_dead_or_evolving/).

## What Is Language?

### language

A collection of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings that are governed by rules and used to communicate.

### decode

The process of assigning meaning to others’ words in order to translate them into thoughts of your own.

**Language** is a collection of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings that are governed by rules and used to communicate. Language consists of words or symbols that represent things without being those things. The word *automobile* is a symbol for a vehicle that runs on gasoline, but the symbol is not the vehicle itself. When you listen to others’ verbal communication, you **decode**, or assign meaning to, their words in order to translate them into thoughts of your own. Because language is an imperfect means of transmission, the thoughts expressed by one person never exactly match what is decoded by another.

Verbal communication is essential in virtually all of our endeavors, from the very private to the most public. Both writing and speaking rely on the use of language. Verbal communication represents one of the two major codes of communication; the other is nonverbal communication, which we will discuss in the next chapter. In Chapter 4 we will consider the similarities and differences of these two codes.

Our definition tells you that language consists of words or symbols, has rules, and is arbitrary, but the definition does not reveal some of the other important

characteristics of language. Language is also abstract, is intertwined with culture, and organizes and classifies reality. In this section we take a closer look at each of these characteristics.

## Language Has Rules

Language has multiple rules. Three sets of rules are relevant to our discussion: semantic rules, syntactic rules, and pragmatic rules. **Semantics** is the study of the way humans use language to evoke meaning in others. Semantics focuses on individual words and their meaning. Semanticists—people who study semantics—are interested in how language and its meaning change over time.

While semantics focuses on the definition of specific words, **syntax** is the way in which words are arranged to form phrases and sentences. For example, in the English language the subject is usually placed before the verb, and the object after the verb. Other languages have different rules of syntax, including reading from right to left. You **encode** by translating your thoughts into words. Syntax changes the meaning of the same set of words. For example, the declarative statement “I am going tomorrow” uses syntax to signal that someone is leaving the next day. If you change the word arrangement to “Am I going tomorrow?” the statement becomes a question and acquires a different meaning.

**Pragmatics** is the study of language as it is used in a social context, including its effect on the communicators. Messages are variable, depending on the situation. Ambiguous messages such as “How are you?” “What’s new?” and “You’re looking good” have different meanings, depending on the context. For example, many people use such phrases as **phatic communication**—communication that is used to establish a mood of sociability rather than to communicate information or ideas. Indeed, they would be surprised if someone offered a serious or thoughtful answer to such questions or statements. On the other hand, if you are visiting your grandmother who has been ill, your questions about how she is feeling are sincere and designed to elicit information. Similarly, you might genuinely be complimenting another person’s new haircut, new tattoo, or new tongue bolt when you tell him he is looking good. Pragmatic rules help us interpret meaning in specific contexts.

## Language and Culture Are Intertwined

Although we will talk about the role of intercultural communication in a later chapter, it is important to note the relationship between language and culture here. **Culture** may be defined as all of the socially transmitted behavior patterns, beliefs, attitudes, and values of a particular period, class, community, or population. We often think of the culture of a country (Greek culture), institution (the culture of higher education), organization (the IBM culture), or group of people (the Hispanic culture). Culture and language are thus related as the transmission of culture occurs through language.

The relationship between culture and language is not as simple as it might first appear, however. Let us take the example of women and men and communication. Several years ago, books and articles were written on the differences between women and men in their communicative practices. As this research further developed, gender was expanded to refer to a complex social construct rather than simple biological sex. Some authors argued that gender was just as important as social class in understanding variations in communication (Schilling-Estes, 2002).

Language and culture are related in a second way. Culture creates a lens through which we perceive the world and create shared meaning. Language thus develops

### semantics

The study of the way humans use language to evoke meaning in others.

### syntax

The way in which words are arranged to form phrases and sentences.

### encode

The process of translating your thoughts into words.

### pragmatics

The study of language as it is used in a social context, including its effect on the communicators.

### phatic communication

Communication that is used to establish a mood of sociability rather than to communicate information or ideas.

### culture

The socially transmitted behavior patterns, beliefs, attitudes, and values of a particular period, class, community, or population.

**Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**

A theory that our perception of reality is determined by our thought processes and our thought processes are limited by our language and, therefore, that language shapes our reality.

in response to the needs of the culture or to the perceptions of the world. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf were among the first to discuss the relationship between language and perception. The **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**, as their theory has become known, states that our perception of reality is determined by our thought processes and our thought processes are limited by our language and, therefore, that language shapes our reality (Whorf, 1956). Language is the principal way that we learn about ourselves, others, and our culture (Bakhurst & Shanker, 2001; Cragan & Shields, 1995; Wood, 1997).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been illustrated in multiple cultures (Samovar & Porter, 2000; Whorf, 1956). The Hopi language serves as an early example. The Hopi people do not distinguish between nouns and verbs. In many languages, nouns are given names that suggest that they remain static over time. For example, we assume that words like *professor*, *physician*, *lamp*, and *computer* refer to people or objects that are relatively unchanging. Verbs are action words that suggest change. When we use words like *heard*, *rehearsed*, *spoke*, and *ran*, we assume alterations and movement. The Hopi, by avoiding the distinction between nouns and verbs, thus refer to people and objects in the world as always changing.

Other examples come from the terms that we use for various colors. For instance, the color spectrum allows us to understand colors as blending into each other and allowing an infinite number of colors, but leading scientists agree on only seven component colors of white light: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

People who use color in their work (artists, designers) probably use many more color terms than do those for whom color is not so important (firefighters, police officers). The first group might readily describe persimmon, puce, lavender, and fuchsia while the second group limits their vocabulary (and thus their perceptions) to orange, red, purple, and pink.

People who speak different languages also have different color terms from those who speak English. The color blue is familiar to most English speakers—both in their vocabulary and as a recognized color. English speakers use the word *blue* to refer to shades ranging from cyan to sky to navy to midnight blue. In Vietnamese and in Korean, a single word refers to blue or green. Japanese people use the word *ao* to refer to blue, but the color they are referencing is (for English speakers) actually (to us) green. Finally, Russian speakers do not have a single word for the range of colors that English speakers denote as blue; instead, they have one color for light blue and another for dark blue.

Waquet and Howe (2001) wrote an enlightening treatise on this same topic. In *Latin: A Symbol's Empire* they trace the domination of Latin in the civic and religious worlds of Europe. Its influence on the entire world followed as scholars, educational institutions, and the Roman Catholic Church adopted Latin as their official language. Latin, like any other language, affects perception and the development of culture. The domination of the language has surely shaped the cultures of many Western countries.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, while complex, is not universally accepted by people who study language. For example, critics point out that Inuits may have a large number of words for snow because of their view of snow or because they actually have more varieties of snow in their world. Artists may have more color terms, and printers more words for different fonts, simply because of their work and environment. Thus, the critics note, thought and language may not be intimately related, but experience and language are. Our need to describe our environment and the items within it cause us to create language to do so.

## e-note

## Language and Culture

The Ojibwe band of Native Americans sponsors a website devoted to the culture, art, history, language, and people of their tribe. The site, [www.nativetech.org/shinob](http://www.nativetech.org/shinob), provides multiple links to help the novice understand this group of people, who live in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Find additional websites that provide similar information for another culture. Suggest how the language of the people you identify may affect their perceptions of the world.

## Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

Because you cannot account for all the individual things in the world when you speak, you lump them into groups; thus, all four-legged pieces of furniture with seats and backs are called “chairs.” Following is an example of how you might use classification when trying to identify someone in a crowd:

“See that guy over there?”

“Which one?”

“The tall one.”

“The one with short brown hair?”

“No, the fat one with shoulder-length hair and glasses.”

In this case language is used to classify by sex, height, weight, hair color, and adornment.

You cannot think of your own identity without words because you are symbolically created through language. Your existence emerges through language, yet language is an inadequate means of describing you. You can describe yourself as “an Italian Roman Catholic,” but those words say nothing about your height, weight, age, sex, personality, IQ, ambitions, or dreams. So language creates us, without capturing our complexities.

## Language Is Arbitrary

To understand language, you need to understand how words engender meaning. Words are arbitrary: They have no inherent meanings; they have only the meanings people give them. For example, in the English language, a person who has suffered from a difficult past experience is known as a “victim.” When many people use a word to represent an object or idea, the word is included in the dictionary. The agreed-upon meaning or dictionary meaning is called the **denotative meaning**. Including a word in the dictionary, however, neither keeps its meaning from changing nor tells you the **connotative meaning**—an individualized or personalized

**denotative meaning**

The agreed-upon meaning or dictionary meaning of a word.

**connotative meaning**

An individualized or personalized meaning of a word, which may be emotionally laden.



## cultural note

### The Importance of Context: The Gullah Mystery

White people in coastal South Carolina thought the black people in their area spoke a very strange kind of English until a linguist unlocked a 200-year-old mystery. The linguist discovered, through ancient records of slave dealers, that the Gullahs—the black people of lowland, coastal Carolina—originally came from Sierra Leone in West Africa. The reason the Gullahs' language persisted for so long when other tribal languages disappeared in America was that the Gullahs proved highly resistant to malaria, a disease that drove the slave owners inland and left the Gullahs in relative isolation.

SOURCE: *Family Across the Sea*, a public television documentary produced by Educational Television of South Carolina.

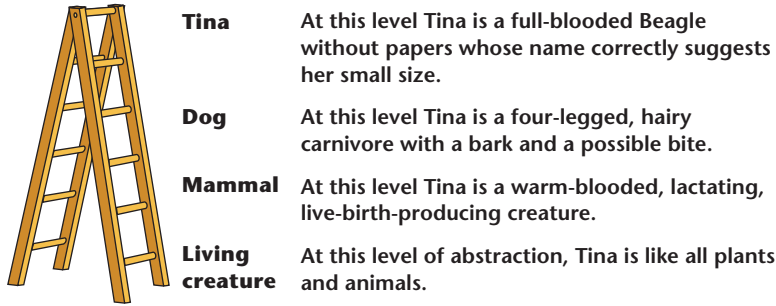
meaning that may be emotionally laden. Connotative meanings are meanings others have come to hold because of personal or individual experience. For example, the word *love* holds vastly different meanings for people because of their unique experiences with that concept.

To understand connotative meaning further, consider the language that relational couples create. In a romantic relationship you may have pet names for each other, special terms for activities in which you participate, and unique ways to communicate private thoughts in public settings. Bruess and Pearson (1993) showed that married couples are most likely to create such terms early in their relationships and that the creation of such terms is associated with relational satisfaction.

Language is symbolic. The words we choose are arbitrary and are based on an agreed-upon connection between them and the object or idea that we are referencing. Language varies based on a variety of features of the communicators, including their relational history. When two people hold different arbitrary symbols for a concept or object, they share messages but not meanings.

Language and its meaning are personal. Each person talks, listens, and thinks in a unique language (and sometimes several) that contains slight variations of its agreed-upon meanings and that may change each minute. Your personal language varies slightly from the agreed-upon meanings. It is shaped by your culture, country, neighborhood, job, personality, education, family, friends, recreation, sex, experiences, age, and other factors. The uniqueness of each individual's language provides valuable information as people attempt to achieve common, shared meaning. But because language is so personal, it can also present some difficulties in communication.

The meanings of words also vary when someone uses the same words in different contexts and situations. For example, *glasses* might mean “drinking glasses” if you are in a housewares store but most likely would mean “eyeglasses” if you are at the optometrist's office. Semanticists say that meaning emerges from context. But in the case of language, context is more than just the situation in which the communication occurred: Context includes the communicators' histories, relationships, thoughts, and feelings.



**Figure 3.1** The ladder of abstraction.  
SOURCE: Concept adapted from Hayakawa (1978).

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

A rhetorical debate has taken place among scholars and practitioners over the labeling of individuals who experience sexual harassment (e.g., Clair, 1996, 1998). Metaphors such as “target,” “victim,” and “survivor” have been proposed as symbolic choices. Which do you think is most appropriate? What understandings are constructed through the different symbolic choices (survivor, victim, target) that refer to people who have encountered sexual harassment? Are some meanings more empowering than others?

### Language Is Abstract

Words are abstractions, or simplifications of what they stand for. Words stand for ideas and things, but they are not the same as those ideas and things. People who study meaning say “the word is not the thing.” Semanticist S. I. Hayakawa (1978) introduced the “ladder of abstraction,” which illustrates that words fall somewhere on a continuum from concrete to abstract. Figure 3.1 shows an example of a ladder of abstraction for a dog named Tina. The words used to describe her become increasingly concrete as you go up the ladder.

### NCA Ethics Credo



*We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.*

## How Can Language Be an Enhancement or an Obstacle to Communication?

People sometimes use language in unique or unusual ways, and communication may be helped or hindered when this occurs. For example, people sometimes break the semantic, syntactical, or pragmatic rules of a particular culture by replacing them with the language rules of another culture. Co-cultural memberships, too, may encourage one set of words over another. More personal decisions



may dictate the choice and structuring of words. Finally, a person might not understand the communication context and use language that does not follow normal pragmatic rules.

You might be able to make sense of unconventional language usage in some situations; at other times, language used in a specialized way may be an obstacle to communication; and in still others, it may add beauty or a new understanding. Alternative or unconventional language includes grammatical errors and the use of colloquialisms, clichés, euphemisms, slang, profanity, jargon, regionalisms, and sexist, racist, or heterosexist language.

### Grammatical Errors

Oral communication, in some situations, does not require the same attention to grammar as does written communication. For example, to hear people say, “Can I go with?” and “We’re not sure which restaurant we’re going to” are common, but neither of these sentences is desirable in written communication. “May I go with you?” and “We’re not sure to which restaurant we’re going” are correct but sound stilted because of the informal nature of these hypothetical utterances. Although we are often corrected for making grammatical errors in our writing, we are rarely corrected for speaking the same way. On the other hand, some grammatical errors are more obvious than others—for example, “I told him I ain’t going to do it” or “Could you pass them there peanuts?” Communicators who make such errors may find that others form negative opinions about them. Grammatical errors are thus particularly problematic in more formal situations or when another person is assessing your competence. When you are in a classroom, a job interview, or a new relationship, grammatical errors may result in a negative outcome.

#### colloquialisms

Words and phrases used informally.

#### cliché

An expression that has lost originality and force through overuse.

▼ Colloquialisms are frequently used in informal situations.

### Colloquialisms

**Colloquialisms** are words and phrases used informally. Sometimes colloquial words and phrases are unclear, particularly to someone who is a stranger to your region. Non-native speakers and foreigners may be particularly confused by colloquialisms. Similarly, people from other co-cultures may not understand your intended meaning. On the other hand, colloquialisms may serve relational purposes. Typical examples of colloquialisms are “Have a good day,” “Good to see you,” “Take care now,” and “See you.”

### Clichés

A **cliché** is an expression that has lost originality and force through overuse. Common clichés include “No pain, no gain,” “Beauty is only skin deep,” “One for all and all for one,” and “No use crying over spilled milk.” So many clichés exist that



avoiding them would be impossible in your day-to-day conversations, and doing so is unnecessary. Clichés can be a shorthand way to express a common thought. But clichés may be unclear to individuals who are unfamiliar with the underlying idea, and they are usually ineffective in expressing ideas in fresh ways.

## Euphemisms and Doublespeak

Like clichés, euphemisms can confuse people who are unfamiliar with their meaning. A **euphemism** is a more polite, pleasant expression used in place of a socially unacceptable form (DeVito, 1986). Rothwell (1982) observes that euphemisms enter the language to “camouflage the naked truth” (p. 93). Most people use euphemisms in their everyday language. Euphemisms are frequently substituted for short, abrupt words, the names of physical functions, or the terms for some unpleasant social situations. Although euphemisms are frequently considered more polite than the words for which they are substituted, they distort reality. For example, you might hear people say “powder my nose,” “see a man about a dog,” “visit the little girls’ room,” or “go to the bathroom” instead of “urinate.”

Closely related to euphemisms is **doublespeak**—any language that is purposefully constructed to disguise its actual meaning. This concept originated in the 1950s and was used initially to refer to political messages with either desirable or undesirable meanings. Some examples of doublespeak are “aerial ordinance” for bombs and missiles, “collateral damage” for the killing of innocent bystanders, “person of interest” for a suspect in a crime, and “preowned” for something that is used or second-hand.

Euphemisms and doublespeak are not necessarily to be avoided. While they can disguise the meaning a person is attempting to convey, they can also substitute for rude or obnoxious commentary. Euphemisms, especially unique euphemisms, can add interest to a conversation. They can also reinforce relational closeness as friends and colleagues regularly use similar euphemisms.

## Slang

**Slang** is a specialized language of a group of people who share a common interest or belong to a similar co-culture. Although many people understand slang, they avoid using it in formal oral and written communication. Slang is temporary in nature. For example, in the 1950s common terms used by young women and men were *scuzz* and *zilch*. In the 1960s young people used the words *pic*, *groovy*, and *uptight*. In the 1970s young people said *turkey*, *gross*, and *queer*. You know which slang terms are popular today.

Slang helps a co-culture establish its membership and its boundaries. Recall the first time one of your parents used a slang term that was popular with you and your friends when you were in high school. Most likely you were appalled and perhaps decided that you would never use the term again. By using the slang term, your parent was “invading” your co-culture and attempting to act like a member. The purpose of slang is to keep insiders in and outsiders out.

## Profanity

The word *profane* comes from a Latin word meaning “outside the temple.” Thus **profanity** is language that is disrespectful of things sacred. Certainly, some people

### euphemism

A more polite, pleasant expression used instead of a socially unacceptable form.

### doublespeak

Any language that is purposefully constructed to disguise its actual meaning.

### slang

A specialized language of a group of people who share a common interest or belong to a similar co-culture.

### profanity

Language that is disrespectful of things sacred.

participate in groups in which profanity is normative. But when you are speaking to people outside your “group”—especially in professional interviews, work teams, or public-speaking situations—the use of profanity is unwise. Profanity, like slang, may provide a vehicle for establishing group norms or developing relational closeness in some settings.

### jargon

The technical language developed by a professional group.

### Jargon

**Jargon** is the technical language developed by a professional group, such as physicians, educators, electricians, economists, or computer operators. Some examples of jargon include *CPR*, *InCo*, *brief*, and *storyboard*. Jargon can be an efficient and effective aid in communicating with those who share an understanding of the terms. However, like slang, jargon can lead to confusion when individuals who understand such terms attempt communication with those who do not. The situation in which and the group with whom you are communicating are essential variables when you are considering whether to use jargon. Most of us err in overusing it, out of habit. Unfortunately, others are more inclined to be puzzled than to ask, “What do you mean by PBL and APR?”

### TRY THIS

*Make a list of the jargon used in your area of study or in a job you have or had in the past. Ask a friend to do the same. Do you know what the words on your friend's list mean? Can he or she determine what the words on your list mean?*

### Informal and IM Language

Informal language is appropriate in some circumstances. For example, if you are having a conversation with a friend or family member, you might avoid some of the rules of grammar. Sometimes people carelessly impose this casual or irregular language in more formal settings. The most recent and fairly widespread transfer of informal language into formal settings occurs as a result of electronic

While medical jargon may obstruct communication with patients, nonverbal cues can provide comfort.



communication. Instant messages, or IM, occurs when people have a typed “chat” in real time with others who are connected to the Internet. When these “conversations” are conducted on mobile phones, they are known as text messaging. The symbols used in these messages are the same; the electronic device is the only difference. Because of the rapidity of the messages, people use letters and numbers to represent complete words in instant messaging or text messaging. Some simple examples include the following: “R” represents the word *are*, “8” stands for *ate*, “4” means *for*, and “Y” asks *Why?* Webopedia, an online service that claims that it is the number one online encyclopedia dedicated to computer technology, provides more than 1,000 chat abbreviations. They are as simple as those above and as complicated as “;S” which means, “Gentle warning, like ‘Hmm? What did you say?’,” “@TEOTD” which stands for “at the end of the day,” and “MUAH” which translates as “multiple unsuccessful attempts at humor.” Educators do not view the text messages you send to a friend or classmate, that might include, “DNR? CU L8R?” which translates as “Dinner? See you later?” as inappropriate. Indeed, they might use the same symbols to communicate with their own friends and family members. These shortcuts, after all, allow people to communicate very quickly and to send dozens of messages to many friends and acquaintances. However, when people translate these shorthand forms of communication into more formal settings, others might not understand them and/or they may be offended by their use.

Many professors find this usage as inappropriate in communications with students. English teachers and communication teachers are particularly sensitive to levels of formality and informality in language and feel that students should not incorporate IM or text messaging shortcuts into their essays, speeches, or even in notes to the professor. They feel that the informal and stylized communication that occurs in electronic communication properly belongs in that form of communicating and that it is reserved for personal, not professional, relationships.

Other professors view “Internet English” as an interesting development that might be used to engage students in learning. For example, one professor observes, “anytime (students) are reading or writing, it’s going to help” (Associated Press, 2003, p. 1). People of this persuasion see IM “as a type of literacy in and of itself” (O’Connor, 2005). As this debate unfolds, you will need to determine the point of view of your professors. You know now that informal language such as IM is not accepted everywhere and at all times.

## Regionalisms

**Regionalisms** are words and phrases specific to a particular region or part of the country. The word *coke* in Texas has the same meaning as *soda* in New York and *pop* in Indiana. When people from different parts of the country try to talk with each other, clarity can break down. Some of us move with frequency from one region of the country to another; others tend to stay in one area. You may believe that you will never leave your home state but find that you are transferred for occupational advancement. Careful listening, which is almost always a good idea, is especially important when you move to a new region. You can fairly easily identify and learn to use language that is particular to a location. Regionalisms encourage group membership for those who use them and create divisiveness for those who are unfamiliar with the terms.

### regionalisms

Words and phrases specific to a particular region or part of the country.

**sexist language**

Language that excludes individuals on the basis of gender.

**racist language**

Language that insults a group because of its skin color or ethnicity.

**heterosexist language**

Language that implies that everyone is heterosexual.

**ageist language**

Language that describes and denigrates people on the basis of their age.

## Sexist, Racist, Heterosexist, and Ageist Language

Language can communicate prejudice, and it can silence some members of co-cultures as it privileges others (Hecht, 1998; Taylor & Hardman, 1998). **Sexist language** is language that excludes individuals on the basis of gender, **racist language** is language that insults a group because of its skin color or ethnicity, **heterosexist language** is language that implies that everyone is heterosexual, and **ageist language** is language that denigrates older people. Whereas some of the other unique language choices have both positive and negative features, language that is sexist, racist, heterosexist, or ageist has only negative consequences. Avoid generalizations and stereotypes—beliefs, based on previously formed opinions and attitudes, that all members of a group are more or less alike. For example, not all nurses are women, and not all doctors and lawyers are men. Rather than “A professor needs to read incessantly to keep up with his field,” say “Professors need to read incessantly to keep up with their field.” Also, avoid gender-specific compound words, like *salesman*, and gender-specific occupational titles when the gender is irrelevant. For example, instead of “Our clergyman is a great fisherman,” say “Our pastor is a great angler.”

Most people have a good idea of what racist language is. Rather than using racist language, call people what they want to be called. White people should not decide what black people should be called, and straight people should not decide what gay and lesbian individuals should be called.

Homosexual people have always existed, in our culture and in other cultures. However, in many cultures language has masked that reality. An increasing number of gay and lesbian individuals have declared or shared their sexual orientation in recent years.

At the same time, many people reject any orientation other than heterosexual in their language choices and their pairing of women and men. If you are not gay or lesbian and do not have close friends who have this orientation, you may not be sensitive to your language that privileges heterosexuality. Consider using terms like *partner*, *companion*, and *friend* instead of *husband*, *girlfriend*, and *spouse*.

Our conceptions of age are changing. Today many people in their sixties, seventies, and even eighties continue to have active lives that often include paid labor or service obligations. The workforce, partly because of the economy and partly because of the health of older people, is becoming more age-diverse.

Clearly, ageist language is outdated. Ageist language in the workplace negatively affects worker productivity and corporate profitability (“When words get old,” 2008). In interpersonal communication, ageism is evident in language that infantilizes the older person and it diminishes people’s concepts of themselves as vigorous and vital. Examples of this practice include when a person’s name is used in the diminutive, such as “Johnny” instead of “John,” or “Annie” instead of “Ann.” Inappropriate terms of affection also mark ageism: “honey,” “poor dear,” and “good boy.” Finally, terms such as “Grandma,” “old codger,” and “Gramps” for older people to whom you are not related signals a bias based on age (Nuessel & Stewart, 1999).

### TRY THIS

Think of words you could use in place of those that are gender-specific, such as anchorman, chairman, congressman, forefathers, freshman, housewife, handyman, and mankind.

## How Can Language Skills Be Improved?

It’s important to recognize that the names for different kinds of language are not mutually exclusive; that is, a particular expression could fit in more than one category. Can you see how the brief sentence “How’s it going?” could be a colloquialism,

## SKILL BUILDER

### LANGUAGE QUIZ

To determine how well you understand the uses of language discussed in this section, complete the following quiz. Which of the following represent colloquialisms, clichés, euphemisms, slang, jargon, regionalisms, or sexist, racist, or heterosexist language?

1. “Flake off!”
2. “Squirrel away some money.”
3. “She’s a cute chick.”
4. “Don’t add insult to injury.”
5. “We are engaged in ethnic cleansing.”
6. “I haven’t seen you in a coon’s age.”
7. “Who is the reporting authority?”
8. “The missus and I will go.”
9. To a woman: “Who’s your boyfriend?”
10. “How much spam do you receive every day?”
11. “Better late than never.”
12. “No time for a thorough cleaning, so I will just clat over the floor.”
13. “I can really burn rubber.”
14. “The employer is engaged in ‘right-sizing.’”

#### Answers:

1. Slang; 2. Colloquialism; 3. Sexist/heterosexist; 4. Cliché; 5. Euphemism; 6. Regionalism; 7. Jargon; 8. Colloquialism; 9. Sexist/heterosexist; 10. Jargon; 11. Cliché; 12. Regionalism; 13. Slang; 14. Euphemism

a cliché, and perhaps even a regionalism? Nonetheless, these categories provide a vocabulary you can use to describe the language you hear every day.

Words need not be obstacles to communication. You can make specific changes in your language usage that will help you become a more effective communicator. The changes include avoiding intentional confusion, being descriptive, being concrete, differentiating between observation and inference, and demonstrating cultural competence. Before examining those changes, two notes of caution are in order.

First, you are limited in your language changes by factors you do not always understand or control. Before reading this chapter, you may have been unaware of all the influences—such as your culture, co-culture, religion, sex, and neighborhood—on language. Even now, you may be influenced by factors of which you are unaware. For example, earlier in the chapter, you learned that language, culture, and perception are intertwined. But the intimate relationship among them also creates difficulties for people in changing their language and their perceptions when their culture remains intact. For example, women were generally seen as inferior to men in the Old Testament, and the word “helper” is used as a synonym for “woman.” If you have grown up in a family that accepts the Old Testament unconditionally, but you view women as equal to men, you may have difficulty in avoiding using language that places women as men’s helpers or as unequal to them.

Second, when experimenting with new language behavior, you should consider the purpose of your former behavior and the purpose of your new verbal patterns. Sometimes ambiguous, colloquial, or distorted language serves an important purpose. You may use such terminology to protect yourself—to establish a healthy self-concept or maintain a distorted self-concept, or to deny self-knowledge or gain time to develop self-knowledge. You may also use such forms to protect others—to help them maintain a selective view of reality, to help them distort their world, or to help them acknowledge successes or deny difficulties. A “gifted child” may feel pressure to succeed. The term *sanitation specialist* changes our perception of a “garbage man.” The cliché “No pain, no gain” is verbalized to justify over strenuous exercise.

Your choice of language provides information to others about how you see yourself, how you see others, and what relationships you believe exist between yourself and others. You may relax around friends and classmates and use language deemed “inappropriate” by your parents or co-workers. If you are being interviewed for a job, you may use language that is particular to your profession and may be careful to use correct grammar. With a lover you may use words that have special meaning. Changes in your verbal behavior must occur within the context of the situation in which you find yourself. You must consider what you wish to share with others through your language and how clearly you wish to be known. Your prior relationships with others and your current goals in the interactions are important considerations. Understanding and sharing are the ultimate benefits of verbal clarity; you must decide how important these goals are to you and which ones are attainable. With these points in mind, you are ready to consider how you can improve your verbal skills.

### Avoid Intentional Confusion

Some people’s verbal patterns become so habitual that the people using them no longer realize such patterns are intentionally confusing. They begin to believe that “everyone” speaks the way they do. They take comfort in their clichés. You should strive to become increasingly sensitive to your own use of empty language, ambiguities, clichés, and euphemisms. Having someone else monitor your statements and point out problem areas is often helpful. After someone else has sensitized you to your confusing phraseology, you can “take the reins in your own hands,” that is, do the job yourself.

### Use Descriptiveness

**Descriptiveness** is the practice of describing observed behavior or phenomena instead of offering personal reactions or judgments. You can be descriptive in different ways: by checking on your perceptions, paraphrasing, using operational definitions, and defining terms.

### Check Your Perceptions

One of the most common ways you can be descriptive is through simple checks on your perception. To communicate effectively with another person, you and the other person need to have a common understanding of an event that has occurred or a common definition of a particular phenomenon. You can check with another person to determine if his or her perception is the same as yours. For example, if a room feels too hot to you, you might ask, “Isn’t it hot in here?” After a particularly difficult week, you might ask, “It’s been a long week, hasn’t it?” Or after an exam, you

#### descriptiveness

The practice of describing observed behavior or phenomena instead of offering personal reactions or judgments.

## SKILL BUILDER

Write two descriptions. The first should be of an object with which you are familiar but with which others might not be familiar. For example, you could describe a favorite piece of art, a pet, an automobile, or a place you have visited. The second should be a description of an event that was particularly emotional for you. The event could be a wedding, the birth of a baby, graduation day, or a celebration.

Exchange these descriptions with a classmate. Have the classmate draw the object that you described in the first instance. How accurate is the drawing? Can you trace any errors to your description?

Next, ask your classmate to describe in his or her own words the event about which you wrote. Your classmate should write this description completely before sharing it with you. Did your classmate capture the feeling you experienced? Can you explain how you could have provided better language to capture your feelings?

Rewrite both descriptions based on the feedback you gained from your classmate. What did you learn in this exercise?

might ask, “Wasn’t that test difficult?” Many disagreements occur because people do not stop to make these simple checks on their perception.

### Paraphrase

Paraphrasing can also help you improve your use of descriptive language. **Paraphrasing** is restating another person’s message by rephrasing the content or intent of the message. Paraphrasing is not simply repeating exactly what you heard. Paraphrasing allows the other person—the original speaker—to make corrections in case you misinterpreted what he or she said. The original speaker must actively listen to your paraphrase to determine whether you understood both the *content* and the *intent* of what he or she said.

#### paraphrasing

Restating another person’s message by rephrasing the content or intent of the message.

### Use Operational Definitions

Another kind of descriptiveness involves using **operational definitions**—that is, definitions that identify something by revealing how it works, how it is made, or what it consists of. Suppose a professor’s syllabus states that students will be allowed an excused absence for illness. A student spends a sleepless night studying for an exam in another course, misses class, and claims an excused absence because of illness. The student explains that she was too tired to come to class, and the professor explains that illness is surgery, injury, vomiting, diarrhea, or a very bad headache. This operational definition of illness does not please the student, but it does clarify what the professor means by “illness.” In other examples, a cake can be operationally defined by a recipe, and a job by its description. Even abstractions become understandable when they are operationalized. Saying that someone is “romantic” does not reveal much compared with saying that someone prepared a four-course dinner for you and then slow-danced with you in your living room.

#### operational definition

A definition that identifies something by revealing how it works, how it is made, or what it consists of.

### Define Your Terms

Confusion can also arise when you use unusual terms or use words in a special way. If you suspect someone might misunderstand your terminology, you must define the



term. In such an instance, you need to be careful not to offend the other person; simply offer a definition that clarifies the term. Similarly, you need to ask others for definitions when they use words in new or unusual ways.

You may wish to consider figures of speech in your attempts to be increasingly descriptive. Although figures of speech may lead to confusion in some instances, they can also clarify meaning. For example, a woman in her 70s learned that she had a heart problem, and her physician described the blockage in her heart valve by specifying the number of millimeters the valve was open. The woman was distressed because she did not have a frame of reference for the measurement. A nurse who overheard the conversation explained, “The valve should be the size of a water hose, but your valve has an opening that is smaller than a drinking straw.” The comparison was one the woman could understand.

### Be Concrete

#### concrete language

Words and statements that are specific rather than abstract or vague.

A person whose language is **concrete** uses words and statements that are specific rather than abstract or vague. “You have interrupted me three times when I have begun to talk. I feel as though you do not consider my point of view as important as yours” is specific. In contrast, “You should consider my viewpoint, too,” is vague.

Earlier in the chapter, semanticists were briefly mentioned. Count Alfred Korzybski started the field of general semantics with the noble purpose of improving human behavior through the careful use of language. The general semanticists’ contribution includes the use of more precise, concrete language to facilitate the transmission and reception of symbols as accurately as possible. They encourage practices that make language more certain to engender shared meanings. Two such practices are dating and indexing.

### Dating

#### dating

Specifying when you made an observation, since everything changes over time.

**Dating** is specifying when you made an observation, which is necessary because everything changes over time. Often, you view objects, people, or situations as remaining the same. You form a judgment or view of a person, an idea, or a phenomenon, and you maintain that view even though the person, idea, or phenomenon may have changed. Dating is the opposite of **frozen evaluation**, in which you do not allow your assessment to change over time. When using dating, instead of saying that something is always or universally a certain way, you state *when* you made your judgment and clarify that your perception was based on that experience.

#### frozen evaluation

An assessment of a concept that does not change over time.

For example, if you took a course with a particular instructor two years ago, any judgment you make about the course and the instructor must be qualified as to time. You may tell someone, “English 101 with Professor Jones is a breeze,” but that judgment may no longer be true. Or suppose you went out with someone a year ago, and now your friend is thinking about going out with him. You might say that he is quiet and withdrawn, but that may no longer be accurate: Time has passed, the situation is different, and the person you knew may have changed. You can prevent communication problems by saying “English 101 with Professor Jones was a breeze for me when I took it during the spring of 2002,” or “Joe seemed quiet and withdrawn when I dated him last year, but I haven’t seen him since.”

## Indexing

**Indexing** is identifying the uniqueness of objects, events, and people. Indexing simply means recognizing the differences among the various members of a group. Stereotyping, which was defined earlier in the chapter, is the opposite of indexing. People often assume that the characteristics of one member of a group apply to all members of a group. For example, you might assume that because you have a good communication instructor, all instructors in the department are exceptional, but that may not be the case. Indexing can help you avoid such generalizations. You could say, “I have a great communication instructor. What is yours like?” Or, instead of saying “Hondas get good gas mileage—I know, I own one,” which is a generalization about all Hondas based on only one, try “I have a Honda that uses very little gas. How does your Honda do on gas mileage?” And, rather than “Firstborn children are more responsible than their younger brothers or sisters,” try using indexing: “My older brother is far more responsible than I. Is the same true of your older brother?”

### indexing

Identifying the uniqueness of objects, events, and people.

## Differentiate Between Observations and Inferences

Another way to improve language skills is to discern between observations and inferences. Observations are descriptions of what is sensed; inferences are conclusions drawn from observations. For example, during the day you make observations as to where objects in a room are placed. However, at night, when you walk through the room, although you cannot see where the objects are placed, you conclude that they are still where they were during the day, and you are able to walk through the room without bumping into anything. You have no problem with this kind of simple exchange of an inference for an observation—unless someone has moved the furniture or placed a new object in the room, or unless your memory is inaccurate. Even simple inferences can be wrong. Many shins have been bruised because someone relied on inference rather than observation.

The differences between observations and inferences become even more clouded when more than one culture is involved. For example, American students studying in Denmark concluded that Danish students were not very friendly. Their inference was based on their experiences attending parties that included both Danish and American undergrads. The Danes tended to arrive in groups and spend the bulk of the evening conversing with that particular group of friends. The Americans were accustomed to moving among several groups and talking with many of the people present. The Danish students were amiable, but they expressed their friendliness differently than the American students. The Americans, in this instance, confused their observation of the Danish students with an inference about their feelings toward others.

## Demonstrate Cultural Competence

Our world is truly becoming a global village as increasing numbers of people travel around the globe for business and pleasure. You may well spend part of your undergraduate years in another country as a student, an intern, or a visitor. Even if you do not travel abroad, you know the significance of being able to communicate with people from other cultures.

The United States has become increasingly diverse as people from other countries are making their home here. The last official census for which results are available,



View the video clip titled “The Right Kind of Care” on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e). Analyze whether Susan and her grandmother demonstrated cultural competence.

### cultural competence

The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, and religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

in 2000, showed that nearly 47 million people who are residents of the United States speak English as a second language and speak another language in their homes. The most frequently spoken language is Spanish, but many U.S. residents are native speakers of French or Creole, German, Chinese, and Italian. Significant increases in people of Hispanic origins in the United States have occurred in recent decades ([www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-29.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-29.pdf)). U.S. national population projections suggest the number of people from other countries, and who speak English as a second language, will continue to increase in number and in proportion to the population.

The United States is fortunate to have a rich mixture of people of different national, ethnic, racial, religious, and individual characteristics. At the same time, differences in cultural backgrounds, as we have seen, are tied to differences in language and in perception. Nearly every day we read about conflicts between people from different ethnic, racial, religious, or national backgrounds. Intercultural conflict may be one of the truly significant problems of our time.

**Cultural competence** is defined as “the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds and religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each” ([www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence/](http://www.cwla.org/programs/culturalcompetence/)). Cultural competence is essential if we are to have satisfying personal, family, and community lives and if we are to be successful in the workplace.

Cultural competence can be demonstrated through communicative skills. You will learn more about cultural competence in chapter 7 on intercultural communication, as well as in other chapters. Empathic listening and critical thinking, which you will study in chapter 5, will help you become more sensitive to differences in the verbal and nonverbal cues that others offer. Audience analysis, the topic of chapter 10, will provide you with tools that you can use to assess the characteristics of people with whom you interact. Generally, listening rather than speaking, and understanding rather than judging, will be invaluable as you become more culturally competent.

## SIZING things UP

### Role Category Questionnaire

This chapter taught you how language can be used to create hierarchy and classification. To illustrate this function of language, this survey asks you to describe two people, one of whom you really like and one of whom you really do not like. For each person you should use sentences to describe the person’s personality, mannerisms, behaviors, and other general characteristics; you should not be concerned with appearance and other physical characteristics.

Describe a person that you really like:

Describe a person that you really dislike:

Adapted from: Crockett, W. H. (1965). Cognitive complexity and impression formation. In B. A. Maher (Ed.), *Progress in experimental personality research* (Vol. 2, pp. 47–90). New York: Academic.

## How Can ESL Speakers Improve Their Language Skills?



If you speak English as a second language, you know that language skills take time and effort to develop. Although much work still needs to be done to better understand how to help non-native speakers build their language skills, the National Teachers of English as a Second Language ([www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)) provides this advice:

1. *Keep language functional.* Rather than initially learning a second language through vocabulary lists and formal rules of grammar, you should try to learn how to use language in conversation. By learning the functional rules of language, you will develop skills more quickly.
2. *Be aware of language nuances.* As you learn the English language, recognize that how it functions differs depending on who you are talking to and in what context. As with your native language, there are many nuances to the English language. As you pay attention to slight variations in how English is used, your skills in English will accumulate rapidly. Being flexible, observant, and patient is important as you learn about these differences.
3. *Recognize that language learning is long-term.* Native speakers begin learning language from infancy, so it should be no surprise that non-native speakers need time to develop skills. For many non-native speakers it may take up to

### get INVOLVED



We are each immersed in our own languages. We do not think about language unless we attempt to learn a second or third language. You can learn more about your own language by studying another and, even better, by being immersed in a culture where another language is spoken. Many college students take advantage of language-learning opportunities through service learning. One program, “The Road Less Traveled,” provides opportunities to high school and college students to engage in service learning in other cultures. For example, programs to learn Spanish are offered in El Sendero, Costa Rica; Los Cayucos, San Blas Islands, Panama; Sigue no Mas, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands; and Pachamama, Peru. Other cultural opportunities occur in Hujambo, Tanzania; Wapenduka, Namibia; Namaste, India; and Valle de los Volcanes, Guatemala.

Consider an international experience that combines learning about a different culture and language with service to others. To get started on learning about these opportunities, go to <http://www.theroadlesstraveled.com/>.

5–7 years to attain proficiency with English. You can try to speed your learning by engaging in consistent, meaningful interactions with native speakers.

4. *Develop language processes interdependently.* Old views of language acquisition assumed that language learning was linear—that you learned first to listen, then to speak, and finally to read in a second language. Newer views suggest that these processes happen at the same time. Thus, to develop your skills more quickly, you should engage in all of these activities consistently.
5. *Use your own language to help.* Your intuitive understanding of your native tongue can assist you in learning English. For example, in your native language there are probably some differences between spoken and written language. Using those differences as a guide, can you discover similar differences in English? By comparing and contrasting your language with English, you will more quickly develop an automatic understanding of how to use English appropriately in different situations.



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Language is a collection of symbols, letters, and words with arbitrary meanings that are governed by rules and are used to communicate.
- ▶ Language consists of words or symbols that represent something without being that thing. Language employs rules of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics.
- ▶ Language, perception, and culture are intertwined.
- ▶ Language is arbitrary, organizes and classifies reality, is abstract, and shapes perceptions.
- ▶ People sometimes use language in unconventional ways, which can present a barrier or a bonus to communication. Examples of unconventional language include:
  - Grammatical errors.
  - Clichés.
  - Euphemisms and doublespeak.

- Slang.
  - Profanity.
  - Jargon.
  - Colloquialisms.
  - Informal and IM language.
  - Regionalisms.
  - Sexist, racist, heterosexist, and ageist language.
- ▶ You can change and improve your use of language by:
- Avoiding intentional confusion.
  - Being more descriptive.
  - Being more concrete.
  - Differentiating between observations and inferences.
  - Demonstrating communication competence in your interactions with others.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Ageist language  
Cliché  
Colloquialisms  
Concrete language  
Connotative meaning  
Cultural competence  
Culture  
Dating  
Decode  
Denotative meaning  
Descriptiveness

Doublespeak  
Encode  
Euphemism  
Frozen evaluation  
Heterosexist language  
Indexing  
Jargon  
Language  
Operational definition  
Paraphrasing  
Phatic communication

Pragmatics  
Profanity  
Racist language  
Regionalisms  
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis  
Semantics  
Sexist language  
Slang  
Syntax

## Study Questions

1. Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of language?
  - a. classifies reality
  - b. organizes reality
  - c. is intertwined with culture
  - d. is concrete
2. Because messages can vary depending on the situation, it is important to examine the context of the communication. This is called
  - a. syntax
  - b. pragmatics
  - c. semantics
  - d. encoding
3. Which statement reflects the relationship between language and culture?
  - a. Language does not progress in response to the needs of the culture, but culture does progress in response to language.

- b. Language is a minor way that we learn about our culture.
  - c. Culture creates a lens through which we perceive the world and create shared meaning.
  - d. Language and culture are not related.
4. When doctors communicate with technical language, they are using
    - a. profanity
    - b. euphemisms
    - c. doublespeak
    - d. jargon
  5. One way to improve language skills is to restate the other person's message by rephrasing the content of the message, a process called
    - a. defining your terms
    - b. paraphrasing
    - c. using concrete language
    - d. dating
  6. A word's dictionary definition is its \_\_\_\_\_ meaning, and an individualized or personalized definition is its \_\_\_\_\_ meaning.
    - a. denotative; connotative
    - b. denotative; abstract
    - c. connotative; denotative
    - d. concrete; connotative
  7. Communication may be helped or hindered when
    - a. proper grammar is used
    - b. language is used in unique or unusual ways
    - c. clichés are avoided
    - d. sexist or ageist language is utilized
  8. Dating, or specifying when you made an observation, is important because
    - a. you always view objects, people, or situations as remaining the same
    - b. situations do not change over time
    - c. you are saying that something is always or universally a certain way
    - d. you clarify that your perception was based on a particular experience in a specific context
  9. Which of the following terms refers to disrespectful language?
    - a. profanity
    - b. jargon
    - c. clichés
    - d. colloquialisms
  10. When you describe observed behavior instead of offering personal reactions, you are
    - a. avoiding intentional confusion
    - b. being concrete
    - c. using descriptiveness
    - d. demonstrating cultural competence

#### Answers:

1. (d); 2. (b); 3. (c); 4. (d); 5. (b); 6. (a); 7. (b); 8. (d); 9. (a); 10. (c)

## Critical Thinking

1. What are some euphemisms and slang used to refer to death? To marriage? Explore where these sayings originated.
2. Choose an object and develop your variation of Hayakawa's ladder of abstraction. Include descriptions that fall in all areas of the continuum from concrete to abstract.

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define nonverbal communication.
2. Describe how verbal and nonverbal codes work in conjunction.
3. Identify two problems people have in interpreting nonverbal codes.
4. Define and identify nonverbal codes.
5. Recognize the types of bodily movement in nonverbal communication.
6. Describe the role of physical attraction in communication.
7. State the factors that determine the amount of personal space you use.
8. Understand how objects are used in nonverbal communication.
9. Utilize strategies for improving your nonverbal communication.



# NONVERBAL



**This chapter focuses on the role of nonverbal codes in communication.** The chapter first looks at the problems that can occur in interpreting nonverbal codes. Next, some of the major nonverbal codes are identified and defined, including bodily movement and facial expression, bodily appearance, space, time, touching, and vocal cues. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some solutions to the problems you might encounter in interpreting nonverbal codes.

# COMMUNICATION

**Clothing communicates important messages about who a** person is and what he or she is capable of: For example, a lawyer dresses differently from a bank teller or a teacher; and people from disadvantaged backgrounds may have trouble finding jobs, not because they are unqualified but because they often cannot afford business attire and therefore don't look the part. The second example portrays a classic Catch-22 situation; women need business suits to go on job interviews, but they can't afford to buy business suits if they don't already have jobs. Dress for Success is a worldwide organization that aims to break that vicious cycle by assisting women in addressing such nonverbal communication codes as clothing.

Founded in 1997, Dress for Success helps women find jobs and stay employed (Career Gear is a similar group that helps men). The organization gives each client a suit to wear while job hunting as well as mentoring and other assistance. When she finds a job, each client receives enough business clothing to wear for the first week as well as continued mentoring, education, and networking services. Although Dress for Success helps its clients in many different ways, it is best known for business suits. Perhaps this is because wearing a business suit is such an important way of communicating competence, knowledge, and self-confidence.

The overall mission of Dress for Success is to help disadvantaged women become independent and self-sufficient. And it all starts with a business suit.

*Dress for Success exemplifies the importance of nonverbal means of communication such as clothing, physical appearance, body movement, facial expressions. All of these nonverbal codes strongly influence the way other people perceive us. In this chapter, you will learn about the ways in which nonverbal communication can help or hinder effective communication.*

Sources: (Dress for Success) <http://www.dressforsuccess.org/home.aspx>; (Career Gear) <http://www.careergear.org/>.

## What Is Nonverbal Communication?

This chapter focuses on nonverbal communication and the relationship between nonverbal and verbal communication. The chapter should help you make sense of the most frequently seen nonverbal codes, as well as provide you with some suggestions for improving your nonverbal communication. Let us begin with a definition of nonverbal communication and a brief discussion on its significance.

**Nonverbal communication** is the process of using wordless messages to generate meaning. Nonverbal communication includes nonword vocalizations such as inflection and nonword sounds such as “ah” and “hmm.” Communication is complex. We cannot quantify the relative contribution of nonverbal communication to verbal communication (Lapakko, 1997), but nonverbal communication often provides much more meaning than people realize. Indeed, when we are not certain about another person's feelings or our feeling about him or her, we may rely far more

### nonverbal communication

The process of using wordless messages to generate meaning.

on nonverbal cues and less on the words that are used (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999; Vedantam, 2006).

You know the importance of nonverbal communication in your own life. Imagine how difficult communication would be if you could not see the people with whom you are communicating, hear their voices, or sense their presence. Actually, this is what occurs when you send e-mail or instant messages or chat with others online. As electronic forms of communication have become more prevalent, people have found creative ways to communicate feeling and emotions. Emoticons are sequences of characters composed in two-dimensional written formats for the purpose of expressing emotions. The most common example of the emoticon is the “smiley” or “smiley face.” Emoticons are a form of nonverbal communication, and they illustrate the importance of this means of communication, no matter the context.

## How are Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Related?

In the last chapter we examined verbal communication and verbal codes. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are essential for effective interactions with others. How are the two related? Nonverbal communication works in conjunction with the words that we utter in six ways: to repeat, to emphasize, to complement, to contradict, to substitute, and to regulate. Let us consider each of these briefly.

**Repeating** occurs when the same message is sent verbally and nonverbally. For example, you frown at the PowerPoint presentation while you ask the speaker what he means. Or you direct a passing motorist by pointing at the next street corner and explaining where she should turn.

**Emphasizing** is the use of nonverbal cues to strengthen your message. Hugging a friend and telling him that you really care about him is a stronger statement than using either words or bodily movement alone.

**Complementing** is different from repetition in that it goes beyond duplication of the message in two channels. It is also not a substitution of one channel for the other. The verbal and nonverbal codes add meaning to each other and expand the meaning of either message alone. Your tone of voice, your gestures, and your bodily movement can all indicate your feeling, which goes beyond your verbal message.

**Contradicting** occurs when your verbal and nonverbal messages conflict. Often this occurs accidentally. If you have ever been angry at a teacher or parent, you may have stated verbally that you were fine—but your bodily movements, facial expression, and use of space may have “leaked” your actual feelings. Contradiction occurs intentionally in humor and sarcasm. Your words provide one message, but your nonverbal delivery tells how you really feel.

**Substituting** occurs when nonverbal codes are used instead of verbal codes. You roll your eyes, you stick out your tongue, you gesture thumbs down, or you shrug. In most cases your intended message is fairly clear.

**Regulating** occurs when nonverbal codes are used to monitor and control interactions with others. For example, you look away when someone else is trying to talk and you are not finished with your thought. You walk away from someone who has hurt your feelings or made you angry. You shake your head and encourage another person to continue talking. While verbal and nonverbal codes often work in concert, they also exhibit differences that we will consider next.

### repetition

The same message is sent both verbally and nonverbally.

### emphasis

The use of nonverbal cues to strengthen verbal messages.

### complementation

Nonverbal and verbal codes add meaning to each other and expand the meaning of either message alone.

### contradiction

Verbal and nonverbal messages conflict.

### substitution

Nonverbal codes are used instead of verbal codes.

### regulation

Nonverbal codes are used to monitor and control interactions with others.

## e-note

**Exploring Emoticons**

Emoticons are important tools when you are trying to convey your feelings to another person electronically. Without vocal inflections, facial expression, and bodily movement, your emotions are difficult to interpret. Emoticons can be helpful in avoiding misunderstanding. No absolute, standard definitions exist for individual emoticons, but many people have common understandings for a variety of these symbols. Generally, emoticons are made to resemble a face. Four examples are provided here. You can easily find additional examples online by using a search engine and the key word *emoticons*.

:-) Happiness or humor

:-| Indifference

:-Q Confusion

:-O Surprise

**NCA Ethics  
Credo**

*We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.*

## Why are Nonverbal Codes Difficult to Interpret?

Nonverbal communication is responsible for much of the misunderstanding that occurs during communication. Just as people have difficulty interpreting verbal symbols, so do they struggle to interpret nonverbal codes. The ambiguity of nonverbal communication occurs for two reasons: People use the same code to communicate a variety of meanings, and they use a variety of codes to communicate the same meaning.

### One Code Communicates a Variety of Meanings

The ambiguity of nonverbal codes occurs in part because one code may communicate several different meanings. For example, the nonverbal code of raising your right hand may mean that you are taking an oath, you are demonstrating for a cause, you are indicating to an instructor that you would like to answer a question, a physician is examining your right side, or you want a taxi to stop for you. Also consider how you may stand close to someone because of a feeling of affection, because the room is crowded, or because you have difficulty hearing.

Although people in laboratory experiments have demonstrated some success in decoding nonverbal behavior accurately (Horgan & Smith, 2006), in actual situations receivers of nonverbal cues can only guess about the meaning of the cue (Motley & Camden, 1988). Several lay authors have been successful in selling books suggesting that observers can learn to easily and accurately distinguish meaning from specific nonverbal cues. Unfortunately, these authors have not been able to demonstrate any significant improvement among their readers. Single cues can be interpreted in multiple ways.

## A Variety of Codes Communicate the Same Meaning

Nonverbal communication is not a science: Any number of codes may be used to communicate the same meaning. One example is the many nonverbal ways by which adults communicate love or affection. You may sit or stand more closely to someone you love. You might speak more softly, use a certain vocal intonation, or alter how quickly you speak when you communicate with someone with whom you are affectionate. Or perhaps you choose to dress differently when you are going to be in the company of someone you love.

Cultural differences are especially relevant when we consider that multiple cues may be used to express a similar message. How do you show respect to a speaker in a public-speaking situation? In some cultures respect is shown by listeners when they avert their eyes; in other cultures listeners show respect and attention by looking directly at the speaker. You may believe that showing your emotions is an important first step in resolving conflict, whereas a classmate may feel that emotional responses interfere with conflict resolution.

### SKILL BUILDER

*You can improve your own nonverbal communication by first becoming aware of how you communicate. Using one of the multiple video technologies, record yourself when you are engaged in a conversation, group discussion, or public speech. Watch the recording with classmates, and take note of your facial expressions, gestures, posture, and other nonverbal features. How might you improve your nonverbal communication?*

## What Are Nonverbal Codes?

**Nonverbal codes** are codes of communication consisting of symbols that are not words, including nonword vocalizations. Bodily movement, facial expression, bodily appearance, the use of space, the use of time, touch, vocal cues, and clothing and other artifacts are all nonverbal codes. Let us consider these systematic arrangements of symbols that have been given arbitrary meaning and are used in communication.

### Bodily Movement and Facial Expression

The study of bodily movements, including posture, gestures, and facial expressions, is called **kinesics**, a word derived from the Greek word *kinesis*, meaning “movement.” Some popular books purport to teach you how to “read” nonverbal communication so that you will know, for example, who is sexually aroused, who is just kidding, and whom you should avoid. Nonverbal communication, however, is more complicated than that. Interpreting the meaning of nonverbal communication is partly a matter of assessing the other person’s unique behavior and considering the context. You don’t just “read” another person’s body language; instead, you observe, analyze, and interpret before you decide the probable meaning.

Assessing another person’s unique behavior means that you need to know how that person usually acts. A quiet person might

#### nonverbal codes

Codes of communication consisting of symbols that are not words, including nonword vocalizations.

#### kinesics

The study of bodily movements, including posture, gestures, and facial expressions.



## cultural note

### Greetings

Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans bow, and Thais bow their heads while holding their hands in a prayerlike position. The bumi putra, or Muslim Malaysians, have a greeting of their own: They shake hands as Westerners do, but they follow up by touching their heart with their right hand to indicate that they are greeting you “from the heart.”

be unflappable even in an emergency situation. A person who never smiles may not be unhappy, and someone who acts happy might not actually be happy. You need to know how the person expresses emotions before you can interpret what his or her nonverbal communication means.

To look more deeply into interpreting nonverbal communication, let us consider the work of some experts on the subject: Albert Mehrabian, Paul Ekman, and Wallace Friesen.

Mehrabian (1971) studied nonverbal communication by examining the concepts of liking, status, and responsiveness among the participants in communication situations.

- *Liking* is expressed by forward leaning, a direct body orientation (such as standing face-to-face), close proximity, increased touching, relaxed posture, open arms and body, positive facial expression, and direct eye contact. For example, look at how a group of males acts when drinking beer and watching a game on television, or watch newly matched couples in the spring.
- *Status*, especially high status, is communicated nonverbally by bigger gestures, relaxed posture, and less eye contact. Male bosses sometimes put their feet up on their desks when talking to subordinates, but subordinates rarely act that way when talking to their boss.
- *Responsiveness* is exhibited by movement toward the other person, by spontaneous gestures, by shifts in posture and position, and by facial expressiveness. In other words, the face and body provide positive feedback to the other person.

Ekman (1993, 1997, 1999a, 1999b) and Ekman and Friesen (1969) categorized movement on the basis of its functions, origins, and meanings. Their categories include emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators, and adaptors.

#### emblems

Nonverbal movements that substitute for words and phrases.

#### illustrators

Nonverbal movements that accompany or reinforce verbal messages.

- **Emblems** are nonverbal movements that substitute for words and phrases. Examples of emblems are a beckoning first finger to mean “come here,” an open hand held up to mean “stop,” and a forefinger and thumb forming a circle to mean “OK.” Be wary of emblems; they may mean something else in another culture.
- **Illustrators** are nonverbal movements that accompany or reinforce verbal messages. Examples of illustrators are nodding your head when you say yes, shaking your head when you say no, stroking your stomach when you say you are hungry, and shaking your fist in the air when you say, “Get out of

here.” These nonverbal cues tend to be more universal than many in the other four categories of movement.

- **Affect displays** are nonverbal movements of the face and body used to show emotion. Watch people’s behavior when their favorite team wins a game, listen to the door slam when an angry person leaves the room, and watch men make threatening moves when they are very upset with each other but don’t really want to fight.
- **Regulators** are nonverbal movements that control the flow or pace of communication. Examples of regulators are starting to move away when you want the conversation to stop, gazing at the floor or looking away when you are not interested, and yawning and glancing at your watch when you are bored.
- **Adaptors** are nonverbal movements that you might perform fully in private but only partially in public. For example, you might rub your nose in public, but you would probably never pick it.

Finally, Ekman and Friesen (1967) determined that a person’s facial expressions provide information to others about how he or she feels. Consider the smile. Findings are overwhelming that the person who smiles is rated more positively than the person who uses a neutral facial expression. Indeed, you are more likely to be offered a job if you smile (Krumhuber, Manstead, Cosker, Marshall, & Rosin, 2009).

Perhaps a more provocative finding is that people are more likely to attend to faces that are angry or threatening than they are to neutral facial expressions. When adults were presented with multiple faces, including some that appeared threatening, they were more likely to attend to the angry faces than they were to others. Recently it was shown that children have this same bias and they observed angry and frightened faces more rapidly than they did happy or sad faces (LoBue, 2009). This response to threatening stimuli may have evolved as a protective means to help people avoid danger.

Research on bodily movement today includes considerations of how our bodies and minds work together. Although we have known for some time that bodily movement has some basis in the brain and in our neurological functioning, a new focus combining these areas has shown promise. Choreographers, neuroscientists, and psychologists have joined together to study body and mind. This kind of collaboration between dancers and scientists may allow new discoveries that were not possible when people from these areas worked independently (McCarthy, Blackwell, DeLaunta, Wing, Hollands, Barnard, Nimmo-Smith, & Marcel, 2006). The future is bright for additional creative discoveries.

Facial expressions are important in conveying information to others and in learning what others are feeling. Bodily movement and orientation adds to that information by suggesting how intense the feeling might be. When you are able to observe and interpret both facial expression and bodily movement, you gain a fuller understanding of the other person’s message.

## Physical Attraction

Beauty, it has been noted, is in the eye of the beholder. However, some research has suggested that particular characteristics—bright eyes, symmetrical features, and thin or medium build—are generally associated with physical attraction (Cash, 1980; Kowner, 1996). Moreover, such characteristics may not be limited to our culture but may be universal (Brody, 1994).

### affect displays

Nonverbal movements of the face and body used to show emotion.

### regulators

Nonverbal movements that control the flow or pace of communication.

### adaptors

Nonverbal movements that you might perform fully in private but only partially in public.



## get INVOLVED

Elizabeth (Vernon) Kelley joined the Peace Corps after serving as a journalist for five years. She explained that she was tired of sitting in front of a computer and wanted to do something to help others, and she wanted to see more of the world. She served in Bulgaria from 2003 to 2005.

She describes an interaction in a restaurant when she was trying to order a beverage. First she asked for coffee and the waitress shook her head from side to side. She then tried, “Tea?” The response from the waitress was the same. Finally she asked for cola but the waitress again shook her head from side to side. She explained that she did not know that a sideways shake of the head means “yes” in Bulgaria, not “no” as it does in the United States.

Even after she learned that the nonverbal signals for “yes” and “no” were reversed from that she had known and practiced all of her life, she did not do much better. Part of her assignment in Bulgaria was classroom teaching. When her students would answer a question correctly, she would nod positively, but the students would immediately try to change their answers. They believed that her nod meant that they had given the wrong answer.

She revealed that after a year of living and teaching in Bulgaria, she rarely made this error. However, sometimes when tired or after a long day, she found herself nodding and shaking her head at the same time which resulted in a semicircular wobble. Needless to say, the Bulgarians found her behavior entertaining. You can read more about Kelley’s experience at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/stories/>.

Have you considered joining the Peace Corps? Perhaps you are more interested in a domestic opportunity rather than an international one. Learn and Service is a national program in the United States with state-based opportunities. In California, more than 240,000 people work in these projects. North Carolina has 54 major projects. Even the small state of North Dakota has multiple projects that include a Native American community college, networks for youth, a variety of high schools, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, and the North Dakota Supreme Court. While leaving New York City for a rural Indian reservation in Oklahoma is not the same as traveling abroad, the cultural differences are significant and the service is fulfilling. Consider getting involved.



Physical attractiveness affects many aspects of our lives. The influence of physical appearance begins when we are young. By age 4, children are treated differently based on their physical appearance by their day-care teachers (Cash, 1980; Langlois & Downs, 1979). When children misbehave, their behavior is viewed as an isolated, momentary aberration if they are physically attractive, but as evidence of a chronic tendency to be bad if they are unattractive. These patterns continue throughout childhood and adolescence (Knapp & Hall, 1992).

Physical attractiveness generally leads to more social success in adulthood. Women who are attractive report a larger number of dates in college. Attractiveness may be affected by skin tone and hair color. Swami, Furnham, and Joshi (2008) found that men clearly prefer brunettes over blondes, and slightly prefer women who have light skin tones. Both women and men who are attractive are seen as more sociable and sensitive (Knapp & Hall, 1992).

Do people change their view of mate preferences over time? Eastwick and Finkel (2008) found that men ideally desire a physically attractive mate while women ideally desire a mate who has strong earning prospects. In real-life potential partners, women and men did not evidence these preferences or differences. Stereotypes may exist in abstract thinking about potential mates, but they do not appear to be realized in actual behavior.

The “matching hypothesis” suggests that women and men seek others who are of similar attractiveness. Lee, Loewenstein, Ariely, Hong, and Young (2008) recently demonstrated this consistent finding, although they did find that men were more oblivious to their own physical attractiveness in selecting a woman to date while women were keenly aware of their “physical attraction quotient.” They also asked whether less attractive people delude themselves when they are dating less attractive people with the sense that they are more attractive than others view them. They found that this is not the case. People have a fairly objective sense of their own, and their partner’s, attractiveness.

Similarly, people who are obese are less likely to have physically attractive partners than are people of normal weight. Body type is not the only factor in mate selection; obese people are seen as more attractive if they have good educations, good grooming, and more attractive personalities. Nonetheless, similarity in body type remains the strongest predictor in mate selection among these qualities (Carmalt, Cawley, Joyner, & Sobal, 2008).

Physical attractiveness affects both credibility and one’s ability to persuade others. Attractive people receive higher initial credibility ratings than do those who are viewed as unattractive (Widgery, 1974). Women have more success in persuading the opposite sex when they are attractive than men have in persuading the opposite sex when they are attractive, but attractive women find that this effect dissipates as they grow older (Davies, Goetz, & Shackelford, 2008). When two attractive women interact, they compete dynamically for status which suggests that they feel that they have more social status or interactional power as a result of their physical beauty (Haas & Gregory, 2005).

## Space

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1966) introduced the concept of **proxemics**—the study of the human use of space and distance—in his book *The Hidden*

### proxemics

The study of the human use of space and distance.

▼ Physical attractiveness is an important nonverbal attribute, but the media may distort realistic views of physical attractiveness.



*Dimension.* This researcher and others, such as Werner (1987), have demonstrated the role space plays in human communication. Two concepts considered essential to the study of the use of space are territoriality and personal space.

- *Territoriality* refers to your need to establish and maintain certain spaces as your own. In a shared dormitory room the items on the common desk area mark the territory. For example, you might place your notebook, pens and pencils, and PDA on the right side of the desk and your roommate might place books, a cell phone, and a laptop on the left side. While the desk is shared, you are each claiming part of the area. On a cafeteria table the placement of the plate, glass, napkin, and eating utensils marks the territory. In a neighborhood it might be fences, hedges, trees, or rocks that mark the territory. All are nonverbal indicators that signal ownership.
- *Personal space* is the personal “bubble” that moves around with you. It is the distance you maintain between yourself and others, the amount of space you claim as your own. Large people usually claim more space because of their size, and men often take more space than women. For example, in a lecture hall, observe who claims the armrests as part of their personal bubbles.

Hall (1966) was the first to define the four distances people regularly use while they communicate. His categories have been helpful in understanding the communicative behavior that might occur when two people are a particular distance from each other. Beginning with the closest contact and the least personal space, and moving to the greatest distance, Hall’s categories are intimate distance, personal distance, social distance, and public distance.

- *Intimate distance* extends from you outward to 18 inches, and it is used by people who are relationally close to you. Used more often in private than in public, this intimate distance is employed to show affection, to give comfort, and to protect. Graves and Robinson (1976) and Burgoon (1978) note that use of intimate distance usually elicits a positive response because individuals tend to stand and sit close to people to whom they are attracted.
- *Personal distance* ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet, and it is the distance used by most Americans for conversation and other nonintimate exchanges.
- *Social distance* ranges from 4 to 12 feet, and it is used most often to carry out business in the workplace, especially in formal, less personal situations. The higher the status of one person, the greater the distance.
- *Public distance* exceeds 12 feet and is used most often in public speaking in such settings as lecture halls; churches, mosques, and synagogues; courtrooms; and convention halls. Professors often stand at this distance while lecturing.

Distance, then, is a nonverbal means of communicating everything from the size of your personal bubble to your relationship with the person to whom you are speaking or listening. A great deal of research has been done on proxemics (see, e.g., Andersen, Guerrero, Buller, & Jorgensen, 1998; McMurtray, 2000; Terneus & Malone, 2004). Virtual environments allow researchers to study the human use of space in relatively unobtrusive ways (Bailenson, Blascovich, Beall, & Loomis, 2001). Sex, size, and similarity seem to be among the important determiners of personal space.

Gender affects the amount of space people are given and the space in which they choose to communicate (Ro’sing, 2003). Men tend to take more space because they are often larger than women (Argyle & Dean, 1965). Women take less space, and children take and are given the least space. Women exhibit less discomfort with



The use of space can be analyzed in the video clip titled “Sam’s Graduation Party” on the *Online Learning Center*. You can also analyze what happens when personal space is violated by viewing “You Look Great.”

## SIZING *things* UP

### Social Scientific Method

In this book, and especially in this chapter, you read about a number of social scientific studies. You might wonder how social scientific studies are different than common sense. For example, you read about how physical attractiveness is defined and the effects of physical attractiveness on a variety of other factors. You might think to yourself that you have a different perspective on these matters. How are the results of these studies different than an opinion? Your opinion is a belief or a feeling about phenomena while a fact is based on direct evidence, actual experience, or observation.

Social scientists learn about social phenomena in the disciplines of communication, sociology, psychology, criminal justice, and other fields by applying the scientific method. The scientific method entails several steps. First, researchers identify and formulate questions about which they are curious. Second, they design and plan a study in which they can gather evidence or observe behavior. Third, they sample a group of people from whom they can generalize their findings. These people may complete surveys, may be asked to complete a task, or they may be observed. Using statistical methods, or other ways to measure and summarize, the social scientists process and analyze the data. Finally, the data is interpreted, inferences are drawn, and the social scientists write research reports sharing their findings with others. These reports are then sent to other people to determine their importance and trustworthiness. If a group of peers judges the work to add new knowledge in the discipline, they publish it in an academic journal. All of the studies we cite have gone through this process and have been published.

small space and tend to interact at closer range (Addis, 1966; Leventhal & Matturro, 1980; Snyder & Endelman, 1979). Perhaps because women are so often given little space, they come to expect it. Also, women and children in our society seem to desire more relational closeness than do men.

Your relationship to other people is related to your use of space (Guardo, 1969). You stand closer to friends and farther from enemies. You stand farther from strangers, authority figures, high-status people, physically challenged people, and people from racial groups different from your own. You stand closer to people you perceive as similar or unthreatening because closeness communicates trust.

The physical setting also can alter the use of space. People tend to stand closer together in large rooms and farther apart in small rooms (Sommer, 1962). In addition, physical obstacles and furniture arrangements can affect the use of personal space.

The cultural background of the people communicating also must be considered in the evaluation of personal space. Hall (1963) was among the first to recognize the importance of cultural background when he was training American service personnel for service overseas. He wrote:

Americans overseas were confronted with a variety of difficulties because of cultural differences in the handling of space. People stood “too close” during conversations, and when the Americans backed away to a comfortable conversational distance, this was taken to mean that Americans were cold, aloof, withdrawn, and disinterested in the people of the country. USA housewives muttered about “waste-space” in houses in the Middle East. In England, Americans who were used to neighborliness were hurt when they discovered that their neighbors were no

more accessible or friendly than other people, and in Latin America, exurbanites, accustomed to unfenced yards, found that the high walls there made them feel “shut out.” Even in Germany, where so many of my countrymen felt at home, radically different patterns in the use of space led to unexpected tensions. (p. 422)

Cultural background can result in great differences in the use of space and in people’s interpretation of such use. As our world continues to shrink, more people will be working in multinational corporations, regularly traveling to different countries and interacting with others from a variety of backgrounds. Sensitivity to space use in different cultures and quick, appropriate responses to those variations are imperative.

## Time

### chronemics

Also called temporal communication; the way people organize and use time and the messages that are created because of their organization and use of it.

Temporal communication, or **chronemics**, refers to the way that people organize and use time and the messages that are created because of their organization and use of it. Time can be examined on a macro level. How do you perceive the past, future, and present? Some people value the past and collect photographs and souvenirs to remind themselves of times gone by. They emphasize how things have been. Others live in the future and are always chasing dreams or planning future events. They may be more eager when planning a vacation or party than they are when the event arrives. Still others live in the present and savor the current time. They try to live each day to its fullest and neither lament the past nor show concern for the future.

One distinction that has been drawn that helps us understand how individuals view and use time differently is the contrast between monochronic and polychronic people. *Monochronic* people view time as very serious and they complete one task at a time. Often their jobs are more important to them than anything else—perhaps even including their families. Monochronic people view privacy as important. They tend to work independently, and they rarely borrow or lend money or other items. They may appear to be secluded or even isolated. Although we cannot generalize to all people, we may view particular countries as generally monochronic. They include the United States, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland. In contrast, *polychronic* people work on several tasks at a time. Time is important, but it is not revered. Interpersonal relationships are more important to them than their work. Polychronic individuals tend to be highly engaged with others. Again, without generalizing to all people, countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and the Phillipines tend to include people who are polychronic.

## SKILL BUILDER

*We become better communicators as we are able to distinguish between others’ varying behaviors. In the next week, observe at least three of your friends. Describe how each of them uses time differently. Do they tend to be more monochronic or polychronic? What cues did you use to make this assessment? How can you be more effective in your communication with them if they are monochronic? If they are polychronic? Consider adaptations that you can make when you encounter a person who is more monochronic than polychronic.*

Time is viewed dissimilarly in different cultures (Bruneau, 2007). In the United States, two recent applications of the use of time—one in electronic communication and one in the workplace—have been studied. The first is the effect of relatively slow or quick responses to e-mail. Earlier research suggested that delayed e-mail messages could cause perceptions of decreased closeness. More recently it appears that several factors interact to produce feelings of increased closeness or more distance. In addition to reply rate is biological sex and emotional empathy. People who demonstrate concern for the other person may offset feelings of detachment that a delayed e-mail message could ordinarily signal.

The second study looked at how several features of time affected worker job satisfaction and worker satisfaction with their communication. The researchers learned that the highest job satisfaction occurred among people who viewed their work as more punctual and oriented toward the future. When workers experienced delayed time, they were least satisfied with their interactions (Ballard & Seibold, 2006).

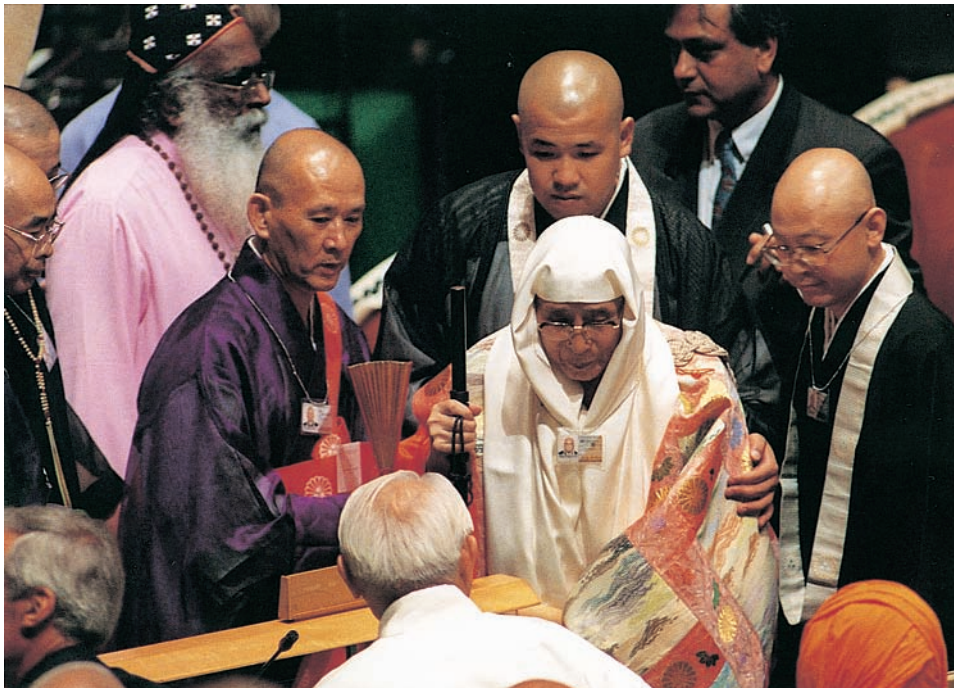
## Touching

**Tactile communication** is the use of touch in communication. Because touch always involves invasion of another person's personal space, it commands attention. It can be welcome, as when a crying child is held by a parent, or unwelcome, as in sexual harassment. Our need for and appreciation of tactile communication starts early in life. Schutz (1971) observed:

The unconscious parental feelings communicated through touch or lack of touch can lead to feelings of confusion and conflict in a child. Sometimes a “modern” parent will say all the right things but not want to touch the child very much. The child's confusion comes from the inconsistency of levels: if they really approve of me so much like they say they do, why don't they touch me? (p. 16)

### tactile communication

The use of touch in communication.



Touch commands attention and is essential to many rituals.

Insufficient touching can lead to health disorders, such as allergies and eczema, speech problems, and even death. Researchers have found that untouched babies and small children can grow increasingly ill and die (Hertenstein, 2002; Loots & Devise, 2003; Montagu, 1971).

## TRY THIS

*Think about how you use nonverbal communication. Are you comfortable touching and being touched? Do you frequently hug others or shake hands with others? Why or why not?*

For adults, touch is a powerful means of communication (Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce, 1998; Fromme et al., 1989). Usually, touch is perceived as positive, pleasurable, and reinforcing. The association of touch with the warmth and caring that began in infancy carries over into adulthood. People who are comfortable with touch are more likely to be satisfied with their past and current lives. They are self-confident, assertive, socially acceptable, and active in confronting problems.

Touch is part of many important rituals. In baptism the practice can range from as little as a touch on the head during the ceremony to as much as a total immersion in water. Prayers in some churches are said with the pastor's hand touching the person being prayed for. In some fundamentalist Christian churches, the healer might accompany the touch with a mighty shove, right into the hands of two catchers. Physician Bernie Siegel (1990) wrote the following in his book on mind–body communication:

I'd like to see some teaching time devoted to the healing power of touch—a subject that only 12 of 169 medical schools in the English-speaking world deal with at all . . . despite the fact that touch is one of the most basic forms of communication between people. . . . We need to teach medical students how to touch people. (p. 134)

Religion and medicine are just two professions in which touch is important for ceremonial and curative purposes.

Touch varies by gender (Lee & Guerrero, 2001). The findings relating touch with gender indicate the following:

- Women value touch more than men do (Fisher, Rytting, & Heslin, 1976).
- Women are touched more than men, beginning when they are 6-month-old girls (Clay, 1968; Goldberg & Lewis, 1969).
- Women touch female children more often than they touch male children (Clay, 1968; Goldberg & Lewis, 1969).
- Men and their sons touch each other the least (Jourard & Rubin, 1968).
- Female students are touched more often and in more places than are male students (Jourard, 1966).
- Males touch others more often than females touch others (Henley, 1973–1974).
- Males may use touch to indicate power or dominance (Henley, 1973–1974).

On the last point, to observe who can touch whom among people in the workplace is interesting. Although fear of being accused of sexual harassment has eliminated a great deal of touch except for handshaking, the general nonverbal principle is that the higher-status individual gets to initiate touch, but touch is not reciprocal: The president might pat you on the back for a job well done, but in our society you don't pat back.

Further, both co-culture and culture determine the frequency and kind of nonverbal communication. People from different countries handle nonverbal communication differently—even something as simple as touch (McDaniel & Andersen, 1998). Sidney Jourard (1968) determined the rates of touch per hour among adults

from various cultures. In a coffee shop, adults in San Juan, Puerto Rico, touched 180 times per hour; while those in Paris, France, touched about 110 times per hour; followed by those in Gainesville, Florida, who touched about 2 times per hour; and those in London, England, who touched only once per hour. North Americans are more frequent touchers than are the Japanese (Barnlund, 1975).

Touch sends such a powerful message that it has to be handled with responsibility. Touch may be welcomed by some in work or clinical settings, but it is equally likely that touch is undesirable or annoying. Certainly touch can be misunderstood in such settings (Kane, 2006; Lee & Guerrero, 2001; Strozier, Krizek, & Sale, 2003). When the right to touch is abused, it can result in a breach of trust, anxiety, and hostility. When touch is used to communicate concern, caring, and affection, it is welcome, desired, and appreciated.

## Vocal Cues

Nonverbal communication includes some sounds, as long as they are not words. We call them **paralinguistic features**—the nonword sounds and nonword characteristics of language, such as pitch, volume, rate, and quality. The prefix *para* means “alongside” or “parallel to,” so *paralinguistic* means “alongside the words or language.”

The paralinguistic feature examined here is **vocal cues**—all of the oral aspects of sound except words themselves. Vocal cues include

- **Pitch:** the highness or lowness of your voice.
- **Rate:** how rapidly or slowly you speak.
- **Inflection:** the variety or changes in pitch.
- **Volume:** the loudness or softness of your voice.
- **Quality:** the unique resonance of your voice, such as huskiness, nasality, raspiness, or whininess.
- **Nonword sounds:** “mmh,” “huh,” “ahh,” and the like, as well as pauses or the absence of sound used for effect in speaking.
- **Pronunciation:** whether or not you say a word correctly.
- **Articulation:** whether or not your mouth, tongue, and teeth coordinate to make a word understandable to others (such as a lisp).
- **Enunciation:** whether or not you combine pronunciation and articulation to produce a word with clarity and distinction so that it can be understood. A person who mumbles has an enunciation problem.
- **Silence:** the lack of sound.

These vocal cues are important because they are linked in our minds with a speaker’s physical characteristics, emotional state, personality characteristics, gender characteristics, and even credibility. In addition, vocal cues, alone, have a persuasive effect for people when they are as young as 12 months (Vaish & Striano, 2004).

According to Kramer (1963), vocal cues frequently convey information about the speaker’s characteristics, such as age, height, appearance, and body type. For example, people often associate a high-pitched voice with someone who is female, younger, and/or smaller. You may visualize someone who uses a loud voice as being big or someone who speaks quickly as being nervous. People who tend to speak slowly and deliberately may be perceived as being high-status individuals or as having high credibility.

A number of studies have related emotional states to specific vocal cues. Joy and hate appear to be the most accurately communicated emotions, whereas

### paralinguistic features

The nonword sounds and nonword characteristics of language, such as pitch, volume, rate, and quality.

### vocal cues

All of the oral aspects of sound except words themselves.

### pitch

The highness or lowness of the speaker’s voice.

### rate

The pace of your speech.

### inflection

The variety or changes in pitch.



shame and love are among the most difficult to communicate accurately (Laukka, Juslin, & Bresin, 2005; Planalp, 1996). Joy and hate appear to be conveyed by fewer vocal cues, and this makes them less difficult to interpret than emotions such as shame and love, which are conveyed by complex sets of vocal cues. “Active” feelings such as joy and hate are associated with a loud voice, a high pitch, and a rapid rate. Conversely, “passive” feelings, which include affection and sadness, are communicated with a soft voice, a low pitch, and a relatively slow rate (Kramer, 1963).

Personality characteristics also have been related to vocal cues. Dominance, social adjustment, and sociability have been clearly correlated with specific vocal cues (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956). Irony, on the other hand, cannot be determined on the basis of vocal cues alone (Bryant & Tree, 2005).

Although the personality characteristics attributed to individuals displaying particular vocal cues have not been shown to accurately portray the person, as determined by standardized personality tests, our impressions affect our interactions. In other words, although you may perceive loud-voiced, high-pitched, fast-speaking individuals as dominant, they might not be measured as dominant by a personality inventory. Nonetheless, in your interactions with such people, you may become increasingly submissive because of your perception that they are dominant. In addition, these people may begin to become more dominant because they are treated as though they have this personality characteristic.

Vocal cues can help a public speaker establish credibility with an audience and can clarify the message. Pitch and inflection can be used to make the speech sound aesthetically pleasing, to accomplish subtle changes in meaning, and to tell an audience whether you are asking a question or making a statement, being sincere or sarcastic, or being doubtful or assertive. A rapid speaking rate may indicate you are confident about speaking in public or that you are nervously attempting to conclude your speech. Variations in volume can be used to add emphasis or to create suspense. Enunciation is especially important in public speaking because of the increased size of the audience and the fewer opportunities for direct feedback. Pauses can be used in a public speech to create dramatic effect and to arouse audience interest. Vocalized pauses—“ah,” “uh-huh,” “um,” and so on—are not desirable in public speaking and may distract the audience.

Silence is a complex behavior steeped in contradictions. To be sure, silence is far better than vocalized pauses in public speaking. Too, silence may signal respect and empathy when another person is speaking or disclosing personal information. One observer notes: “Sometimes silence is best. Words are curious things, at best approximations. And every human being is a separate language. . . . [Sometimes] silence is best” (Hardman, 1971). On the other hand, silence may signal the dark side of communication. People in power, in dominant cultures, or in positions of authority may silence others. Those with whom they come in contact may be marginalized or embarrassed and feel that they must remain silent because of sexism, racism, taboo, incidents of violence or abuse, shame, or a hostile environment (Olson, 1997).

### Clothing and Other Artifacts

**Objectics**, or object language, refers to the study of the human use of clothing and other artifacts as nonverbal codes. **Artifacts**

#### objectics

Also called object language; the study of the human use of clothing and other artifacts as nonverbal codes.

#### artifacts

Ornaments or adornments you display that hold communicative potential.

### TRY THIS

*When you picture people you talk to on the telephone before meeting them, does your expectation of how they will look usually turn out to be accurate? What vocal cues did they use that led to your picture of how they would look?*

are ornaments or adornments you display that hold communicative potential, including jewelry, hairstyles, cosmetics, automobiles, canes, watches, shoes, portfolios, hats, glasses, tattoos, body piercings, and even the fillings in teeth. Your clothing and other adornments communicate your age, gender, status, role, socioeconomic class, group memberships, personality, and relation to the opposite sex. Dresses are seldom worn by men, low-cut gowns are not the choice of shy women, bright colors are avoided by reticent people, and the most recent Paris fashions are seldom seen in the small towns of America.

These cues also indicate the time in history, the time of day, the climate, and one's culture (Frith, Hong, & Ping Shaw, 2004). Clothing and artifacts provide physical and psychological protection, and they are used to spur sexual attraction and to indicate self-concept. Your clothing and artifacts clarify the sort of person you believe you are (Fisher, 1975). They permit personal expression (Boswell, 2006), and they satisfy your need for creative self-expression (Horn, 1975). A person who exhibits an interest in using clothing as a means of expression may be demonstrating a high level of self-actualization (Perry, Schutz, & Rucker, 1983). For example, an actress who always dresses in expensive designer dresses may be showing everyone that she is exactly what she always wanted to be.

Many studies have established a relationship between an individual's clothing and artifacts and his or her characteristics. Conforming to current styles is correlated with an individual's desire to be accepted and liked (Taylor & Compton, 1968). In addition, individuals feel that clothing is important in forming first impressions (Henricks, Kelley, & Eicher, 1968).

Perhaps of more importance are the studies that consider the relationship between clothing and an observer's perception of that person. In an early study, clothing was shown to affect others' impressions of status and personality traits (Douty, 1963). People also seem to base their acceptance of others on their clothing and artifacts. In another early study, women who were asked to describe the most popular women they knew cited clothing as the most important characteristic (Williams & Eicher, 1966).

Clothing also communicates authority and people's roles. Physicians have historically worn a white coat to indicate their role. For many people the white coat signified healing and better health. As the white coat has begun to be phased out, however, the physician's ability to persuade patients to follow advice may have declined as well. Thus the physician may need to learn alternative symbolic means of persuasion (Panja, 2004).

Body modifications are a type of artifact. They include tattoos and piercing, which have been popular in recent years. Although they can be removed, the procedures may be both costly and time intensive. What do tattoos signal to others? Most people probably choose to adorn themselves with tattoos and piercings because they believe it adds to their overall attractiveness. A recent study, however, showed some different findings. Men with tattoos were viewed as more dominant than nontattooed men while women with tattoos were seen as less healthy than women without tattoos. These findings hold implications for a biological signaling effect of tattoos (Wohlrab, Fink, Kappeler, & Brewer, 2009).



▲ What do you conclude about this person based on her artifacts?

## What Are Some Ways to Improve Nonverbal Communication?

Sensitivity to nonverbal cues is highly variable among people (Rosenthal, Hall, Matteg, Rogers, & Archer, 1979). You can improve your understanding of nonverbal communication, though, by being sensitive to context, audience, and feedback.

The *context* includes the physical setting, the occasion, and the situation. In conversation your vocal cues are rarely a problem unless you stutter, stammer, lisp, or suffer from some speech pathology. Paralinguistic features loom large in importance in small-group communication, in which you have to adapt to the distance and to a variety of receivers. These features are perhaps most important in public speaking because you have to adjust volume and rate, you have to enunciate more clearly, and you have to introduce more vocal variety to keep the audience's attention. The strategic use of pauses and silence is also more apparent in public speaking than it is in an interpersonal context in conversations or small-group discussion.

The occasion and physical setting also affect the potential meaning of a nonverbal cue. For example, when would it be appropriate for you to wear a cap over unwashed, uncombed hair and when would it be interpreted as inappropriate? The distance at which you communicate may be different based on the setting and the occasion: You may stand farther away from people in formal situations when space allows, but closer to family members or to strangers in an elevator.

The *audience* makes a difference in your nonverbal communication, so you have to adapt. When speaking to children, you must use a simple vocabulary and careful enunciation, articulation, and pronunciation. With an older audience or with younger audiences whose hearing has been impaired by too much loud music, you must adapt your volume. Generally, children and older people in both interpersonal and public-speaking situations appreciate slower speech. Also, adaptation to an audience may determine your choice of clothing, hairstyle, and jewelry. For instance, a shaved head, a facial piercing, and a shirt open to the navel will not go over well in a job interview unless you are trying for a job as an entertainer.

Your attention to giving *feedback* can be very important in helping others interpret your nonverbal cues that might otherwise distract your listeners. For example, some pregnant women avoid questions and distraction by wearing a shirt that says, "I'm not fat, I'm pregnant"; such feedback prevents listeners from wondering instead of listening. Similarly, your listeners' own descriptive feedback—giving quizzical looks, staring, nodding off—can signal you to talk louder, introduce variety, restate your points, or clarify your message.

If your conversational partner or audience does not provide you with feedback, what can you do? Practice asking questions and checking on the perceptions of others with whom you communicate. Silence has many meanings, and you sometimes must take great effort to interpret the lack of feedback in a communicative setting. You can also consider your past experience with particular individuals or a similar audience. Do they ever provide feedback? Under what circumstances are they expressive? How can you become more accurate in your interpretation of their feedback?

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Berkley Nonverbal Expressiveness Questionnaire

In this chapter you learned that your nonverbal communication is used to express meaning generally and emotion in particular. Each statement below describes ways in which you express your emotions through nonverbal communication. Respond to each statement using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2

3

4 = Neutral

5

6

7 = Strongly Agree

1. Whenever I feel positive emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling.
2. I sometimes cry during sad movies.
3. People often do not know what I am feeling.
4. I laugh out loud when someone tells me a joke that I think is funny.
5. It is difficult for me to hide my fear.
6. When I'm happy, my feelings show.
7. My body reacts very strongly to emotional situations.
8. I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it.
9. No matter how nervous or upset I am, I tend to keep a calm exterior.
10. I am an emotionally expressive person.
11. I have strong emotions.
12. I am sometimes unable to hide my feelings, even though I would like to.
13. Whenever I feel negative emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling.
14. There have been times when I have not been able to stop crying even though I tried to stop.
15. I experience my emotions very strongly.
16. What I'm feeling is written all over my face.

Source: Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (1997). Revealing feelings: Facets of emotional expressivity in self-reports, peer ratings, and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 435–448.

## How Can ESL Speakers Adapt Their Nonverbal Behaviors?



As you will learn in chapter 7, a variety of characteristics can be used to identify distinctions among cultures—many of which include nonverbal differences in how we use gestures, space, touch, and even time. The amount of nonverbal adaptation you will need to undertake as a

non-native speaker depends on how similar your culture is to American culture. Although many nonverbal characteristics will likely be similar—the use of facial expression to convey emotion, for instance—there are also likely to be several differences. Understanding those differences can help you avoid misperceiving others and potentially to avoid creating misperceptions yourself. Key considerations include the following:

- *Americans tend to expect consistent uses of space.* In normal conversations Americans tend to stay in Hall's personal distance zone. Standing closer can violate expectations and cause discomfort and unease; standing farther apart can be perceived as unfriendly. Unless you are very close to another person, touching is generally considered a violation of space rather than a signal of warmth, particularly among adults.
- *A greater emphasis is placed on verbal messages.* Although most communication is still done nonverbally during interactions, Americans tend to be verbally explicit in terms of describing feelings, opinions, and thoughts. As a non-native speaker you may need to be more explicit with your communication; you should also not assume that such explicitness is rude—such directness is simply a cultural characteristic.
- *Americans' uses of emblems are often for less formal messages.* Commonly used emblems range from obscene gestures to specific emblems representing athletic teams. Unlike emblems in other cultures, very few American emblems signify status or respect.
- *Eye contact is expected.* In nearly every communication situation, consistent eye contact is viewed positively as a signal of confidence, warmth, and attentiveness. Even in situations in which there are strong power differences, such as the communication between a supervisor and employee, eye contact is desirable; a lack of consistent eye contact can cause you to be viewed as untrustworthy or noncredible.
- *For vocal characteristics, bigger tends to be better.* Listeners tend to react positively to speakers who have strong volume, good vocal variety, and forceful projection and articulation.

As a general principle, Americans tend to be expressive with most nonverbal behaviors though such expressiveness is typically not found with respect to space and touch. There are many other cultural characteristics of American nonverbal behavior that you will notice as you gain more experience observing native speakers. Some of those differences you may integrate into your own communication repertoire; others you may dismiss. Being observant and asking native speakers about their use of various nonverbal behaviors, as well as their expectations for how others use those behaviors, will help you develop your own skills more quickly.

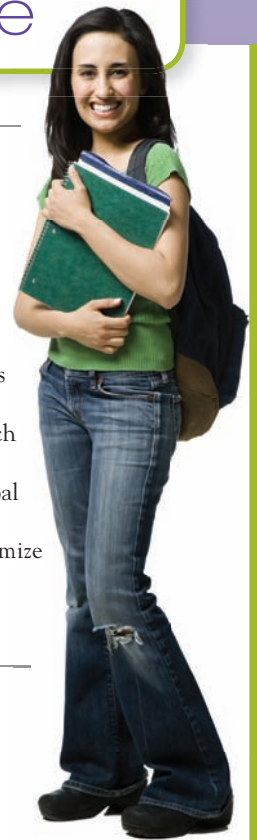
Mediated communication affects the importance of physical attractiveness in another way. Today many people get to know each other online. As a result, attractiveness may now be based on words and messages rather than on physical traits. People who are not perfect specimens have the opportunity to flirt and to charm. And physically attractive people can be deemed desirable on the basis of other characteristics including their intellect and their interests. Clearly, online relationships will change the nature of physical attraction in the future (Levine, 2000).

# Chapter Review & Study Guide

## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Verbal and nonverbal codes work in conjunction with each other.
  - ▶ People often have difficulty interpreting nonverbal codes because
    - They use the same code to communicate a variety of meanings.
    - They use a variety of codes to communicate the same meaning.
  - ▶ Nonverbal codes consist of nonword symbols such as
    - Bodily movements and facial expression.
    - Bodily appearance.
- Personal space.
  - Time.
  - Touching.
  - Vocal cues.
  - Clothing and artifacts.
- ▶ You can solve some of the difficulties in interpreting nonverbal codes if you
  - Consider all of the variables in each communication situation.
  - Consider all of the available verbal and nonverbal codes.
  - Use descriptive feedback to minimize misunderstandings.



## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Adaptors	Illustrators	Proxemics
Affect displays	Inflection	Rate
Artifacts	Kinesics	Regulation
Chronemics	Nonverbal codes	Regulators
Complementation	Nonverbal communication	Repetition
Contradiction	Objectics	Substitution
Emblems	Paralinguistic features	Tactile communication
Emphasis	Pitch	Vocal cues

## Study Questions

1. What is included in nonverbal communication?
  - a. only vocalized cues
  - b. only nonvocalized cues
  - c. nonword vocalizations as well as nonvocalized cues
  - d. vocalized words
2. Nonverbal codes work together with vocalized words to
  - a. repeat and emphasize
  - b. complement and regulate
  - c. contradict and substitute
  - d. all of the above
3. One of the difficulties of interpreting nonverbal codes is
  - a. one code may communicate several different meanings
  - b. no two nonverbal codes communicate the same meaning
  - c. each nonverbal cue has only one perceived meaning
  - d. observers can easily distinguish meaning from specific nonverbal cues
4. Bodily movement, facial expression, the use of time, and vocal cues, among other actions, are examples of
  - a. kinesics
  - b. complementation
  - c. nonverbal codes
  - d. adaptors
5. When interpreting nonverbal communication, it is important to consider
  - a. context
  - b. only observed behavior
  - c. gut instinct
  - d. "reading" people

6. Pointing to your wrist while asking for the time is an example of a(n)
  - a. adaptor
  - b. illustrator
  - c. regulator
  - d. emblem
7. Compared to those who are unattractive, physically attractive people
  - a. are treated differently as children
  - b. generally have more success socially
  - c. are more likely to succeed at work
  - d. all of the above
8. With regard to chronemics, Americans of high status
  - a. are granted the opportunity of arriving late
  - b. are always on time
  - c. work on several tasks at a time
  - d. view privacy as important
9. In relation to gender and tactile communication, which of the following is true?
  - a. Females and their daughters touch each other the least.
  - b. Men value touch more than women do.
  - c. Women are touched more than men.
  - d. Females touch others more often than males touch others.
10. Which of the following provide physical and psychological protection, permit personal expression, and communicate age, gender, socioeconomic class, and personality?
  - a. vocal cues
  - b. affect displays
  - c. illustrators
  - d. artifacts

#### Answers:

1. (c); 2. (d); 3. (a); 4. (c); 5. (a); 6. (b); 7. (d); 8. (a); 9. (c); 10. (b)

## Critical Thinking

1. Think back to chapter 2 on perception. Which nonverbal cues have you demonstrated that led others to make errors in perception? Which nonverbal cues have others demonstrated that led you to make errors in your perception? Why do you think these particular cues resulted in misinterpretation or confusion?
2. When you are at the library or other public place, note how people “mark their territory.” Do they use their backpack or purse, books, or nothing at all? Also observe the size of people’s personal space. Does one gender have a smaller space than the other? Does age make a difference? In what situations does that distance decrease?

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## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

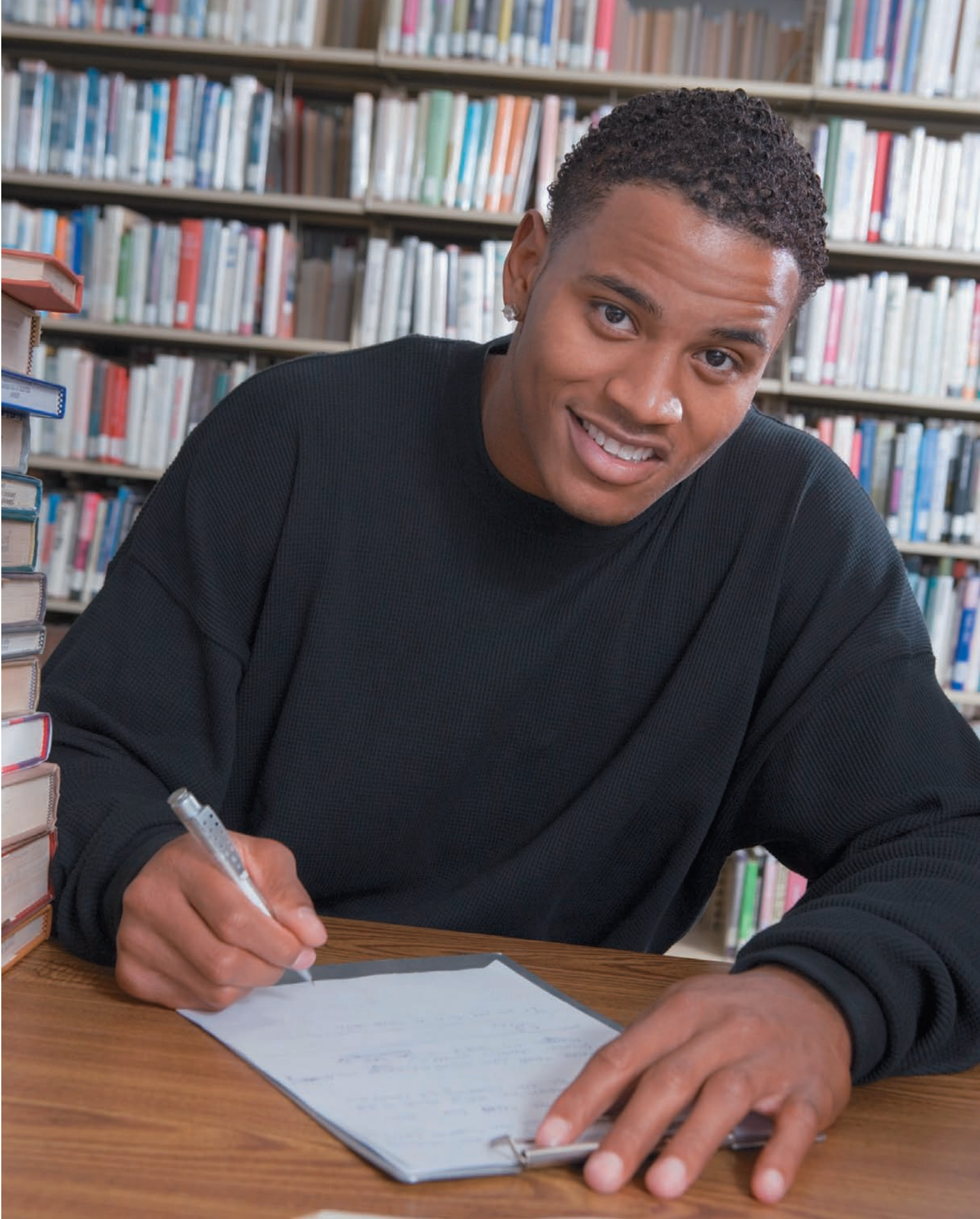
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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe the listening process and identify the primary features that distinguish listening from hearing.
2. Discuss three reasons why listening is important in our lives.
3. Define and discuss examples of active, empathic, critical, and enjoyment listening.
4. Analyze barriers to effective listening, including internal and external noise, perceptions of others, and yourself.
5. Use strategies for critical thinking to evaluate both the communication situation and the message of the speaker.
6. Describe differences in listening behaviors between men and women.
7. Adapt general strategies for effective listening to specific situations including the workplace, the classroom, and mediated environments.
8. Engage in ethical listening behaviors.





# LISTENING AND CRITICAL THINKING

**Listening is our most frequently used and least studied communication skill.**

In this chapter you will learn about the listening process, some factors that can inhibit effective listening, different types of listening, and strategies for becoming a more effective listener. Our hope is that you will learn that listening, like any other communication behavior, is a skill that must be developed through forethought and practice.

**Walk into any modern hospital** and you cannot help but be impressed by the wide array of medical technology, from electronic thermometers to large-scale imaging devices that can detect microscopic tumors. Such technology has undeniable benefits, but critics caution that these devices should not overwhelm the human side of medicine—the physician who *listens* to his or her patient’s feelings, fears, and concerns.

Most medical schools have recognized the need to train medical professionals to be better listeners. They have created programs in which community members “play” patients in mock medical interviews. Student doctors and nurses are evaluated on their listening and other communication skills as they interact with these patients. After the sessions the patients give feedback on how well they think the students listened and reacted to their feelings.

Listening to patients is an essential skill for medical professionals, but what does that actually mean? Dr. Pete Anderson, of MD Anderson Cancer Center, offers one way to integrate listening into treatment plans. Dr. Anderson is a pediatric oncologist who specializes in treating a devastating form of childhood bone cancer called osteosarcoma. When working with patients to develop treatment protocols, Dr. Anderson asks patients about important events in their lives like birthday celebrations, family vacations, and even prom. He then co-creates with patients a treatment calendar that places doctor visits, treatments, and other medical procedures around those events so that they do not conflict. In so doing, Dr. Anderson not only listens to his patients’ concerns, but also enacts a more holistic approach to treatment.

*Listening is an important skill that takes careful practice and commitment. Dr. Anderson’s approach to cancer care shows that good listening can have important outcomes for doctors; however, good listening has important benefits for all of us, not just professionals like Dr. Anderson. In this chapter you will learn ways to improve your listening skills in your relationships with others, in the workplace, and in the classroom.*

## What Is Listening?

John Dewey, a twentieth-century educational and social philosopher, observed in his book *The Public and Its Problems* (1947) that true democracy happens when we take time to listen to the people around us—our friends and family, our neighbors, and the people in our community. Dewey’s observation seems intuitive; however, how often have you “faked” that you were listening? For instance, your friend may tell you about something that happened to them, but you only “half listened,” or you listened to a neighbor talk about a community event but quickly forgot about it? In fact, good listening is hard and takes sustained effort. The sounds may go into your ears, but that does not mean that your brain interprets them; nor does it mean that your mind stores the message or that your body does what the message requested. Sometimes you hear, you listen, and you even understand the message, but you do not obey. The listening process is complicated. Much happens between the reception of sounds and an overt response by the receiver.

## e-note

## International Listening Association

The International Listening Association (ILA) is the scholarly organization devoted to the study and teaching of listening behaviors. The ILA website has a wide variety of information about listening including quotations, bibliographies, and links to research articles. The web address for the ILA is [www.listen.org](http://www.listen.org).

The first step in learning about listening is to understand the distinction between hearing and listening. **Hearing** is simply the act of receiving sound. Although much of this chapter is devoted to listening rather than hearing, there are important things to learn about the physical act of hearing. First, behaviors you engage in now will impact your hearing as you age (Tamesue, Tetsuro, & Itoh, 2009). In fact, many audiologists warn that young adults and even children should take care when listening to MP3 players and other audio using earbuds. When using lower quality earbuds that do not block external noise, people have a tendency to increase volume to levels that can cause long-term damage to hearing. Even without hearing loss stemming from noise pollution, some people have other physical problems with their hearing. Tinnitus is a condition caused by many factors that results in a constant “ringing” in the ears. The American Tinnitus Association ([www.ata.org](http://www.ata.org)) estimates that over 50 million Americans experience tinnitus to some degree—the condition can be caused by many factors ranging from allergies to certain types of benign tumors. So, to assume that everyone, even those who are in your group of friends, can hear equally well would be incorrect.

Hearing is not the same as listening. **Listening**, as defined by the ILA, is “the active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. It involves the ability to retain information, as well as to react empathically and/or appreciatively to spoken and/or nonverbal messages” (1995, p. 1). As you can see, listening involves more than simply hearing.

**hearing**

The act of receiving sound.

**listening**

The active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. It involves the ability to retain information, as well as to react empathically and/or appreciatively to spoken and/or nonverbal messages.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, &amp; MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*A common myth is that listening is mostly a physical act. In fact, listening is much more of a mental act than a physical act. As you will learn in this chapter, listening requires you to actively think about and process information.*

The process of listening is summarized in Figure 5.1. As the illustration shows, we receive stimuli (such as music, words, or sounds) in the ear, where the smallest bones in the body translate the vibrations into sensations registered by the brain. The brain, using what is referred to as attention and working memory, focuses on the sensations and gives them meaning. Your brain might, for example, recognize the first few bars of a favorite song, the voice of a favorite artist, or the sound of a police siren. Upon hearing these sounds, you immediately know what they mean. Your interpreted message is then stored in short-term memory for immediate use or in long-term memory for future recall (Janusik, 2005).

As we discuss later, people create many obstacles to effective listening. Not all obstacles, however, are the fault of lazy, unethical, or ineffective listeners. Because

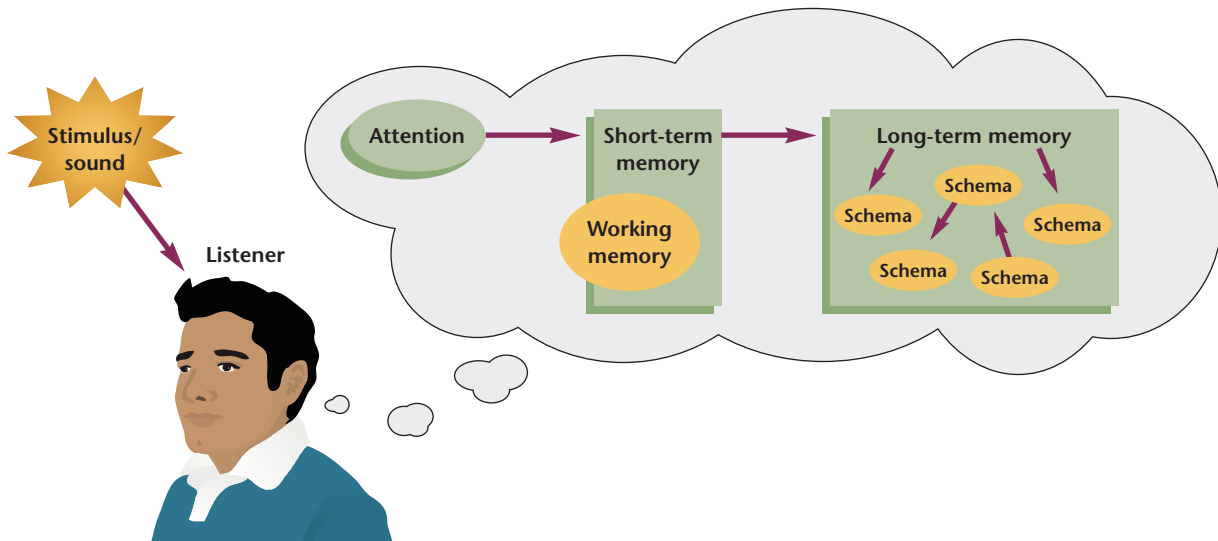


Figure 5.1 The listening process.

listening is a process, natural barriers present themselves at various stages. These natural barriers are explained for each major step in the listening process: attention, working memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory.

## Attention

After the ear receives sound waves in the form of auditory cues, your next task is to assign importance to those cues. You must determine which cues are important and require focused attention, which are potentially important and deserve passive monitoring, and which are unimportant and are ignored. As you are reading this book, you are prioritizing audible cues in your surroundings. For instance, you may pay particular attention to the people sitting next to you talking about their dates the night before while ignoring the television.

When prioritizing different sound cues, some cues are given selective attention while others are given automatic attention. **Selective attention** is the sustained focus we give to stimuli we deem important. We selectively pay attention to our favorite television show, to our friends during conversation, and to the professors in our classes. Selective attention can be impeded by our mind's instinct to pay automatic attention to certain stimuli. **Automatic attention** is the instinctive focus we give to stimuli signaling a change in our surroundings (like a person walking into the room), stimuli that we deem important (our name being shouted from across the room), or stimuli that we perceive to signal danger (like a siren or loud bang). The problem faced by all of us is that automatic attention competes with selective attention. When we are trying to selectively pay attention to one stimulus (like our professor's lecture), other stimuli naturally draw our automatic attention.

### TRY THIS

*In your next class, make a list of all stimuli in the communication environment that could draw your automatic attention. What strategies might you use to eliminate the potential for distraction?*

## Working Memory

Once we have paid selective attention to relevant sounds and stimuli, our brain must initially process and make sense of those

#### selective attention

The sustained focus we give to stimuli we deem important.

#### automatic attention

The instinctive focus we give to stimuli signaling a change in our surroundings, stimuli that we deem important, or stimuli that we perceive to signal danger.

stimuli. **Working memory** is the part of our consciousness that interprets and assigns meaning to stimuli we pay attention to. Our working memory looks for shortcuts when processing information. Rather than trying to interpret each letter in a word, our working memory quickly recognizes the pattern of letters and assigns meaning. Likewise, when we hear the sounds of a word, our working memory recognizes the pattern of sounds rather than trying to process each sound separately. On a larger scale, our working memory can recognize patterns of words. For instance, if you watch the game show *Wheel of Fortune*, your working memory helps you look for patterns of words combined into phrases, even when all of the letters and words are not visible.

Because the recognition of patterns is an essential function of working memory, working memory must work in conjunction with long-term memory. Although we discuss long-term memory in detail later, understand that working memory looks for connections between newly heard information and information stored in long-term memory. If your mind finds connections, patterns are more easily distinguished and listening is more efficient. Not surprisingly, research has found that when children have difficulty with language development they have less efficient working memory (Briscoe & Rankin, 2009). That is, when children do not learn language skills and develop strong vocabularies, their working memory must work harder to decipher new information. Of course, the opposite is also true. Helping children develop strong language skills early in life will likely help them become better listeners later.

### Short-Term Memory

Once interpreted in working memory, information is sent to either short-term or long-term memory. **Short-term memory** is a temporary storage place for information. All of us use short-term memory to retain thoughts that we want to use immediately but do not necessarily want to keep for future reference. You might think of short-term memory as being similar to a Post-it note. You will use the information on the note for a quick reference but will soon discard it or decide to write it down in a more secure location.

We constantly use short-term memory, but it is the least efficient of our memory resources. Classic studies in the field of psychology have documented that short-term memory is limited in both the quantity of information stored and the length of time information is retained (Miller, 1994). In terms of quantity, short-term memory is limited to  $7 \pm 2$  bits of information. A bit of information is any organized unit of information including sounds, letters, words, sentences, or something less concrete like ideas, depending on the ability of working memory to recognize patterns. If your short-term memory becomes overloaded (for average people more than 9 bits of information), you begin to forget. Short-term memory is also limited to about 20 seconds in duration unless some strategy like rehearsal is used. If you rehearse a phone number over and over until you reach your dorm room, you will likely remember it. However, if something breaks your concentration and you stop rehearsing, the number will likely be lost. Unfortunately, many listeners rely too much on short-term memory during the listening process. Researchers in the field of communication have found that individuals recall only 50% of a message immediately after listening to it and only 25% after a short delay (Gilbert, 1988).

### Long-Term Memory

Information processed in working memory can also be stored in long-term memory for later recall. Similarly, information temporarily stored in short-term memory can be

#### working memory

The part of our consciousness that interprets and assigns meaning to stimuli we pay attention to.

#### short-term memory

A temporary storage place for information.



**long-term memory**

Our permanent storage place for information including but not limited to past experiences; language; values; knowledge; images of people; memories of sights, sounds, and smells; and even fantasies.

**schema**

Organizational “filing systems” for thoughts held in long-term memory.

deemed important and subsequently stored in long-term memory. If short-term memory is the Post-it note in the listening process, long-term memory is the supercomputer. **Long-term memory** is our permanent storage place for information including but not limited to past experiences; language; values; knowledge; images of people; memories of sights, sounds, and smells; and even fantasies. Unlike short-term memory, long-term memory has no known limitations in the quantity or duration of stored information.

Explanations of how long-term memory works are only speculative; however, researchers hypothesize that our thoughts are organized according to **schema**, which are organizational “filing systems” for thoughts held in long-term memory. We might think of schema as an interconnected web of information. Our ability to remember information in long-term memory is dependent on finding connections to the correct schema containing the particular memory, thought, idea, or image we are trying to recall.

In theory, people with normal functioning brains never lose information stored in long-term memory. How is it, then, that we often forget things we listen to? When we try to access information in long-term memory, we access schema holding needed information through the use of stimulus cues, which could be words, images, or even smells and tastes. If the cue we receive does not give us enough information to access the corresponding schema, we may be unable to recall the information. Consider, for example, a situation in which you see a person who looks familiar. In this case you recognize the person (a visual cue); however, that stimulus does not provide you with enough information to recall who it is. If you hear the person’s voice or if she or he mentions a previous encounter with you, you may then have enough information to activate the correct schema and recall specific details about her or him.

Long-term memory plays a key role in the listening process. As we receive sounds, our working memory looks for patterns based on schema contained in our long-term memory. Thus our ability to use language, to recognize concepts, and to interpret meaning is based on the schema we accumulate over a lifetime. If we encounter new information that does not relate to preexisting schema, our working memory instructs our long-term memory to create new schema to hold the information. The arrows in Figure 5.1 depict this working relationship between schema and working memory.

## The Importance of Listening in Our Lives

Given our basic understanding of listening, it is clearly an essential skill for effective communicators. A classic study of listening showed that Americans spend more than 40% of their time listening (Rankin, 1926). Weinrauch and Swanda (1975) found that

business personnel, including those with and without managerial responsibilities, spend nearly 33% of their time listening, almost 26% of their time speaking, nearly 23% of their time writing, and almost 19% of their time reading. When Werner (1975) investigated the communication activities of high school and college students, homemakers, and employees in a variety of other occupations, she determined that they spend 55% of their time listening, 13% reading, and 8% writing. Figure 5.2 shows how much time college students spend in various communication activities each day. According to these studies, you spend over half your time (53%) listening either to the mass media or to other people.

The importance of listening is even clearer when we consider how we use it in our personal and professional lives. Listening helps us build and maintain relationships and can even help

### TRY THIS

For one week, keep a communication journal tracking what type of communication activities you engage in during your lunch break (such as talking, reading, listening face-to-face, and listening to the media). At the conclusion of the week, calculate what percentage of your time was devoted to each behavior. How do your results differ from those reported in Figure 5.2?

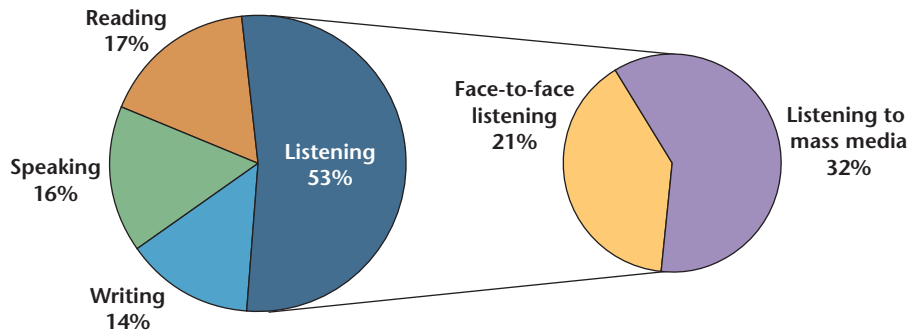


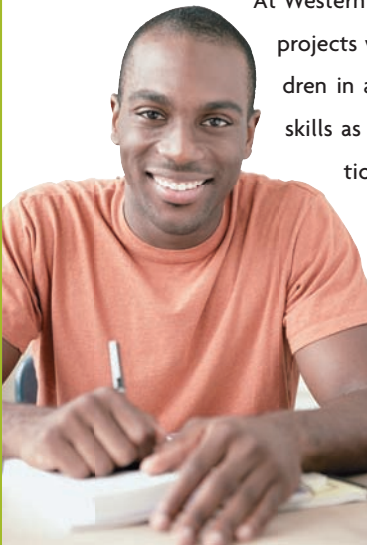
Figure 5.2 Proportions of time spent by college students in communication activities.

us determine whether the person we are talking to is being deceitful (di Batista, 1997). How do we learn to be better listeners in our interpersonal relationships? A recent study reported by our colleagues Andrew Ledbetter and Paul Schrodtt (2008) found that listening skills and behaviors are influenced by certain family communication patterns that we experience earlier in life. As they noted, “when families create an environment where family members are encouraged to openly discuss a variety of topics, children may be more likely to learn how to process complex and ambiguous information without anxiety” (p. 397).

Listening is also recognized as an essential skill for business success (Haigh, 2006). Because of effective listening, we are able to improve workplace relationships and be more productive (Nichols, 2006). Listening is even linked to successful communication within highly technical fields like medicine, in which improved listening skills on

## get INVOLVED!

### SERVICE THROUGH LISTENING



At Western Michigan University the Engineering Design Center for Service Learning sponsors projects where students majoring in education and engineering can do projects with children in area schools. Through these projects college students learn important listening skills as they “translate” advanced concepts for younger students. When their presentation of material is not clear, they must use listening skills to find ways to adapt.

Ideas, skills, and information you learn as part of your major or general education classes can be of interest to community members. Can you find a way to present your knowledge to a community group, younger children, a church, or some other community organization? As you present the information, practice using your listening skills to connect with your audiences; as you do so you will become a better listener, a more effective presenter, and your audience will learn the information more effectively.



▲ Listening for enjoyment is an easy way to relax.

#### active listening

Involved listening with a purpose.

#### empathic listening

Listening with a purpose and attempting to understand the other person.

#### critical listening

Listening that challenges the speaker's message by evaluating its accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility.

the part of doctors are associated with fewer malpractice claims from patients (Lenckus, 2005). If you recall from the story about Dr. Anderson at the beginning of this chapter, he co-creates treatment calendars with patients so that medical appointments can be integrated around important events in their lives. Dr. Pete's approach is important because research shows that careful listening is one of the most often cited problems when cancer patients describe interactions with their doctors (Ok, Marks, & Allegrante, 2008).

## Four Types of Listening

Listening is classified into four main types: active listening, empathic listening, critical listening, and listening for enjoyment. **Active listening** is “involved listening with a purpose” (Barker, 1971). Active listening involves the steps of (1) listening carefully by using all available senses, (2) paraphrasing what is heard both mentally and verbally, (3) checking your understanding to ensure accuracy, and (4) providing feedback. Feedback consists of the listener's verbal and nonverbal responses to the speaker and the speaker's message. Feedback can be positive, whereby the speaker's message is confirmed, or negative, whereby the speaker's message is disconfirmed. Valued in conversation, small-group discussion, and even question-and-answer sessions in public speaking, active listening is a communication skill worth learning.

**Empathic listening** is a form of active listening in which you attempt to understand the other person. You engage in empathic listening by using both mindfulness, which is being “fully engaged in the moment” (Wood, 2002), and empathy, which is the ability

to perceive another person's worldview as if it were your own.

In **critical listening** you challenge the speaker's message by evaluating its accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility. Critical listening and critical thinking really go hand in hand: You cannot listen critically if you do not think critically. Skills in critical listening are especially important because we are constantly bombarded with commercials, telemarketing calls, and other persuasive messages. Later in the chapter we discuss several strategies you can use to listen and think critically.

Finally, **listening for enjoyment** involves seeking out situations involving relaxing, fun, or emotionally stimulating information. Whether you are listening to your favorite musical group or television show, or your friend telling a story, you continue listening because you enjoy it. Besides helping you relax, studies show that listening to enjoyable music can even reduce pain for hospital patients (A dose of music may ease the pain, 2000).

### TRY THIS

*What slights, slurs, or implications through words or gestures would cause you to stop listening and start distracting you from listening to another person? What are the “red flag” words that set you off and keep you from listening?*

## Barriers to Listening

Although you might agree that listening is important, you may not be properly prepared for effective listening. A survey conducted by a corporate training and development firm noted that 80% of corporate executives taking part in the survey rated listening as the most important skill in the workforce. Unfortunately, nearly 30% of those same executives said that listening was the most lacking communication skill among

**TABLE 5.1** BARRIERS TO LISTENING

TYPE OF BARRIER	EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE
<b>NOISE</b>	
Physical distractions	All the stimuli in the environment that keep you from focusing on the message. Example: loud music playing at a party
Mental distractions	The wandering of the mind when it is supposed to be focusing on something. Example: thinking about a lunch date while listening to a teacher
Factual distractions	Focusing so intently on the details that you miss the main point. Example: listening to all details of a conversation but forgetting the main idea
Semantic distractions	Overresponding to an emotion-laden word or concept. Example: not listening to a teacher when she mentions “Marxist theory”
<b>PERCEPTION OF OTHERS</b>	
Status	Devoting attention based on the social standing, rank, or perceived value of another. Example: not listening to a freshman in a group activity
Stereotypes	Treating individuals as if they are the same as others in a given category. Example: assuming all older people have similar opinions
Sights and sounds	Letting appearances or voice qualities affect your listening. Example: not listening to a person with a screechy voice
<b>YOURSELF</b>	
Egocentrism	Excessive self-focus, or seeing yourself as the central concern in every conversation. Example: redirecting conversations to your own problems
Defensiveness	Acting threatened and feeling like you must defend what you have said or done. Example: assuming others’ comments are veiled criticisms of you
Experiential superiority	Looking down on others as if their experience with life is not as good as yours. Example: not listening to those with less experience
Personal bias	Letting your own predispositions, or strongly held beliefs, interfere with your ability to interpret information correctly. Example: assuming that people are generally truthful (or deceitful)
Pseudolistening	Pretending to listen but letting your mind or attention wander to something else. Example: daydreaming while your professor is lecturing



View the video “Senior Seminar” on the *Online Learning Center*, and analyze how various barriers to effective listening were present in the group interaction.

their employees (Salopek, 1999). In the section explaining the connection between listening and thinking we discussed several natural impediments to listening. In this section we explain barriers we create for ourselves in the listening process. Table 5.1 identifies noise, perceptions of others, and yourself as potential listening barriers.

#### listening for enjoyment

Situations involving relaxing, fun, or emotionally stimulating information.



▲ Listeners are sometimes distracted by noise and cannot listen to the speaker's message. Careful attention to the speaker allows listeners to avoid distractions.

The barriers listed in Table 5.1 are common, but as our cultural listening habits change, these barriers evolve and new ones are added. A recent conference sponsored by the International Commission on Biological Effects of Noise noted that the proliferation of noise created by humans—everything from cars and airplanes to iPods and videogames—is starting to cause fatal accidents for adults and poorer achievement in children just because of the sheer number of audible distractions (Stansfield, 2008). Likewise, Lenore Skenazy (2009), writing in *Advertising Age*, complained that smartphones and other personal communication devices might be diminishing ongoing practice with face-to-face communication skills like listening.

## Gender Differences in Listening

Have you ever had a conversation with a person of the opposite sex and thought afterwards that they just did not listen well? If so, you are not alone. Debra Tannen, a linguistics professor and acclaimed author of the book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, suggests that men and women have

### SIZING things UP!

#### Barriers to Listening

Below are several statements describing how you might react to specific listening situations. Read each statement carefully and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree by using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

When listening to others I often . . .

1. Assume that their viewpoint will be similar to other people like them.
2. Respect others' opinions even when they have less experience than me.
3. Think about other things while the person is talking.
4. Get distracted by their physical appearance.
5. Pay close attention but have trouble remembering their main ideas.
6. Feel threatened or like the person is attacking me or my beliefs.
7. Get put off by terms or phrases used by others.
8. Pay less attention to people who are not important.
9. Pay less attention if what they are saying does not pertain to me.

**TABLE 5.2 LISTENING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**

	WOMEN	MEN
<b>PURPOSE FOR LISTENING</b>	Listen to understand the other person's emotions and to find common interests	Listen in order to take action and solve problems
<b>LISTENING PREFERENCES</b>	Like complex information that requires careful evaluation	Like short, concise, unambiguous, and error-free communication
<b>LISTENING AWARENESS</b>	Are highly perceptive to how well the other person understands	Often fail to recognize when others do not understand
<b>NONVERBAL LISTENING BEHAVIORS</b>	Tend to be attentive and to have sustained eye contact with the other person	Tend to be less attentive and to use glances to monitor reactions; use eye contact to indicate liking
<b>INTERRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS</b>	Interrupt less often, with interruptions usually signaling agreement and support	Interrupt more often, with interruptions often used to switch topics

Source: Tannen (2001); Watson, Lazarus, & Thomas (1999); and Weisfield & Stack (2002).

very distinct communication styles that influence everything from how they use vocal inflections to how they listen. For example, Tannen (2001) suggests that men tend to be more instrumental or task-oriented when communicating whereas women tend to be more relationally oriented. Although there are many similarities between men and women, Table 5.2 lists some of the more commonly observed differences relevant to listening.

## TRY THIS

*The next time you interact with a stranger, make note of whether you generally think he or she is truthful or deceitful. What behaviors or impressions led you to that conclusion?*

## How Can You Become a Better Listener?

So far in this chapter, we have emphasized the importance of listening while at the same time pointing out both natural and self-taught barriers to effective listening. Faced with this knowledge, you might wonder how any of us can hope to become effective listeners. After all, the potential barriers are many. Fortunately, each of us can take several steps to overcome these barriers to good listening. In this section we highlight how you can become a better listener by listening critically and using verbal and nonverbal communication effectively.

### Listen and Think Critically

Critical listening and critical thinking go hand in hand: You cannot listen critically without also thinking critically. We have already noted that critical listening is a form of active listening in which you carefully analyze the accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility of a speaker's message. Similarly, **critical thinking** involves analyzing the speaker, the situation, and the speaker's ideas to make critical judgments about the

#### critical thinking

Analyzing the speaker, the situation, and the speaker's ideas to make critical judgments about the message being presented.

**TABLE 5.3** ANALYZING THE SPEAKER'S IDEAS

STRATEGY	EXPLANATION
Identify support	Evaluate the process by which the speaker discovered information or gained knowledge, as well as specific elements of the message content.
Evaluate arguments	Analyze the reasoning process underlying key points made in a speech or statement for use of emotional, logical, and personal proof.

message being presented. Although we discuss critical thinking in terms of its relationship to critical listening, you also use critical thinking when reading, watching television, or analyzing the ingredients of a tasty meal.

One way to think critically is to analyze the communication situation, or the context in which communication is occurring. One of our students recently attended a job interview for a position requiring “excellent public-speaking skills.” As a communication major she was excited about this job prospect. At the interview she found herself surrounded by nearly 50 other applicants. During a presentation she learned that the company sold “natural” products like filtered water, organic toothpaste, and even chemical-free moist wipes for babies. Through a little critical thinking and listening, she quickly figured out that the company was actually a type of pyramid scheme and the “interview” was an attempt to get her to purchase bulk quantities of the products and then “market” those products to her friends and family. The people explaining the products were indeed experts, but her analysis of the situation told her that this job was not the one for her.

The second strategy for engaging in critical listening and thinking is to carefully analyze the speaker’s ideas. Table 5.3 lists the general skills you should develop to do this effectively. As you can see, the first skill is to identify supporting material. When analyzing the message, a good starting point is to determine whether the speaker is using evidence from other sources to support main points. Does the speaker identify the source(s)? Are the sources recognizable as qualified experts on the topic? Do the sources have any potential bias that would diminish their credibility? We view these questions as essential for effective critical listening, especially given the frequent use of Internet sources by speakers. Our experience is that not only are many Internet sources of poor quality but some even intentionally distort information.

Third, you need to determine whether speakers are describing things that they have seen themselves or presenting conclusions that they have drawn themselves, or are reporting the descriptions and conclusions of others. The distinctions between these concepts involve the differences between first-person and second-person observations and inferences. To recognize these differences you should do the following:

1. *Distinguish between observations and inferences.* Observations are descriptions based on phenomena that can be sensed—seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt. Inferences are generalizations from or about information you have received through your senses. You might observe that a number of people who are homeless live in your community. Based on that observation, you might infer that your community does not have enough affordable housing. Observations are more likely to be agreed upon by observers; inferences vary widely in terms of agreement between individuals (Brooks & Heath, 1989).

2. *Distinguish between first-person and second-person observations.* A **first-person observation** is based on something that was personally sensed; a **second-person observation** is a report of what another person observed. First-person observations are typically more accurate because they are direct accounts rather than inferences drawn from others' accounts.

**first-person observation**

Observations based on something that you personally have sensed.

**second-person observation**

A report of what another person observed.

**source credibility**

The extent to which the speaker is perceived as competent to make the claims he or she is making.

A final skill in critical listening is to analyze the credibility of the speaker. **Source credibility** is the extent to which the speaker is perceived as competent to make the claims he or she is making. If you wanted to know what procedures were required to study in Europe for a semester, who would give you the best information? Would you be more likely to trust your roommate, who heard about foreign exchange programs during freshman orientation; your adviser, who had an exchange student a few years back; or the director of international programs on your campus? If your car ran poorly, would you trust your neighbor's advice or that of an auto mechanic? The choice seems obvious in these situations. When assessing the credibility of a speaker, you should determine whether the speaker has qualifications, whether the speaker has experience, and whether the speaker has any evident bias or ulterior motive for taking a certain position.

As you can see, critical listeners must evaluate several aspects of the communication situation, the speaker's message, and even the speaker's credibility. Critical thinking and listening are skills that each of us can develop with practice. The next time you hear a classmate present information, a teacher lecture on a concept, or a friend discuss options for evening entertainment, you have a perfect opportunity to practice critical thinking and listening. As with any skill, diligent practice now will allow those skills to become automatic in the future.

## SKILL BUILDER

*As a college student you have multiple opportunities to practice effective listening skills. Select one of your classes in which the teacher lectures for at least part of the class period. During that time make note of the main points for the lecture as well as any supporting material used to bolster the main point (teachers tend to rely on examples as supporting material). Were there any main points that did not have supporting material? If you find such instances, ask your teacher to provide an example to illustrate what he or she is talking about.*

## Use Verbal Communication Effectively

The notion of verbal components of listening may seem strange to you. You may reason that if you are engaged in listening, you cannot also be speaking. However, transactional communication assumes that you are simultaneously a sender and a receiver. That is, you can make verbal responses even as you are deeply involved in listening. To determine your current competence in this area, consider the skills you regularly practice:

1. *Invite additional comments.* Suggest that the speaker add more details or give additional information. Phrases such as "Go on," "What else?" "How did you feel about that?" and "Did anything else occur?" encourage the speaker to continue to share ideas and information.
2. *Ask questions.* One method of inviting the speaker to continue is to ask direct questions, requesting more in-depth details, definitions, or clarification.
3. *Identify areas of agreement or common experience.* Briefly relate similar past experiences, or briefly explain a similar point of view that you hold. Sharing



ideas, attitudes, values, and beliefs is the basis of communication. In addition, such comments demonstrate your understanding.

4. *Vary verbal responses.* Use a variety of responses, such as “Yes,” “I see,” “Go on,” and “Right” instead of relying on one standard, unaltered response, such as “Yes,” “Yes,” “Yes.”
5. *Provide clear verbal responses.* Use specific and concrete words and phrases in your feedback to the speaker. Misunderstandings can occur if you do not provide easily understood responses.
6. *Use descriptive, nonevaluative responses.* Better to say “Your statistics are from an organization that is biased against gun control” (descriptive) than to say “Your speech was a bunch of lies” (evaluative). Trivializing or joking about serious disclosures suggests a negative evaluation of the speaker. Similarly, derogatory remarks are seen as offensive. Acting superior to the speaker by stating that you believe you have a more advanced understanding suggests an evaluative tone.
7. *Provide affirmative and affirming statements.* Comments such as “Yes,” “I see,” “I understand,” and “I know” provide affirmation. Offering praise and specific positive statements demonstrates concern.
8. *Avoid complete silence.* The lack of any response suggests that you are not listening to the speaker. The “silent treatment” induced by sleepiness or lack of interest may result in defensiveness or anger on the part of the speaker. Appropriate verbal feedback demonstrates your active listening.
9. *Allow the other person the opportunity of a complete hearing.* When you discuss common feelings or experiences, avoid dominating the conversation. Allow the other person to go into depth and detail; give him or her the option of changing the topic under discussion; and let him or her talk without being interrupted.

### Use Nonverbal Communication Effectively

Although you demonstrate active listening through verbal skills, the majority of your active-listening ability is shown through nonverbal communication. The following nonverbal skills are essential to your ability to demonstrate active listening. As you listen to another person, have a friend observe you to determine if you are practicing these skills.

1. *Demonstrate bodily responsiveness.* Use movement and gestures to show your awareness of the speaker’s message. Shaking your head in disbelief, checking the measurements of an object by indicating the size with your hands, and moving toward a person who is disclosing negative information are appropriate bodily responses.
2. *Lean forward.* By leaning toward the speaker, you demonstrate interest in the speaker. A forward lean suggests responsiveness as well as interest. In addition, leaning places you in a physical state of readiness to listen to the speaker.
3. *Use direct body orientation.* Do not angle yourself away from the speaker; instead, sit or stand so that you are directly facing him or her. A parallel body position allows the greatest possibility for observing and listening to the speaker’s verbal and nonverbal messages. When you stand or sit at an angle to the speaker, you may be creating the impression that you are attempting to get away or that you are moving away from the speaker. An angled position also blocks your vision and allows you to be distracted by other stimuli in the environment.

4. *Maintain relaxed but alert posture.* Your posture should not be tense or “proper,” but neither should it be so relaxed that you appear to be resting. Slouching suggests unresponsiveness; a tense body position suggests nervousness or discomfort; and a relaxed position accompanied by crossed arms and legs, a backward lean in a chair, and a confident facial expression suggests arrogance. Your posture should suggest to others that you are interested and that you are comfortable talking with them.
5. *Establish an open body position.* Sit or stand with your body open to the other person. Crossing your arms or legs may be more comfortable, but that posture frequently suggests that you are closed off psychologically as well as physically. In order to maximize your nonverbal message to the other person that you are “open” to him or her, you should sit or stand without crossing your arms or legs.
6. *Use positive, responsive facial expressions and head movement.* Your face and head will be the speaker’s primary focus. The speaker will be observing you, and your facial expressions and head movement will be the key. You can demonstrate your interest by nodding your head to show interest or agreement. You can use positive and responsive facial expressions, such as smiling and raising your eyebrows.
7. *Establish direct eye contact.* The speaker will be watching your eyes for interest. One of the first signs of a lack of interest is the tendency to be distracted by other stimuli in the environment. For example, an instructor who continually glances out the door of her office, a roommate who sneaks peeks at the television program that is on, or a business executive who regularly looks at his watch is, while appearing to listen, indicating lack of interest. Try to focus on and direct your gaze at the speaker. When you begin to look around the room, you may find any number of other stimuli to distract your attention from the speaker and the message.
8. *Sit or stand close to the speaker.* Establishing close proximity to the speaker has two benefits. First, you put yourself in a position that allows you to hear the other person and that minimizes distracting noises, sights, and other stimuli. Second, you demonstrate your concern or your positive feelings for the speaker. You probably do not stand or sit close to people you do not like or respect, or with whom you do not have common experiences. Close physical proximity enables active listening.
9. *Be vocally responsive.* Change your pitch, rate, inflection, and volume as you respond to the speaker. Making appropriate changes and choices shows that you are actually listening, in contrast to responding in a standard, patterned manner that suggests you are only appearing to listen. The stereotypic picture of a husband and wife at the breakfast table, with the husband, hidden behind a newspaper, responding, “Yes, yes, yes” in a monotone while the wife tells him that their son has shaved his head, she is running off with the mail carrier, and the house is on fire provides a familiar example of the appearance of listening while one is actually oblivious to the speaker’s message.
10. *Provide supportive utterances.* Sometimes you can demonstrate more concern through nonverbal sounds such as “Mmm,” “Mmm-hmm,” and “Uh-huh” than you can by





stating “Yes, I understand.” You can easily provide supportive utterances while others are talking or when they pause. You are suggesting to them that you are listening but do not want to interrupt with a verbalization of your own at this particular time. Such sounds encourage the speaker to continue without interruption.

### Check Your Understanding

When we listen to others, we are actually engaging in a specialized form of the perception process you read about in chapter 2. Because listening is a specialized form of perceiving, you should engage in perception checking to ensure that your perceptions match what the speaker intends. In the context of listening, rather than calling this perception checking, we might refer to it as checking your understanding. You can check your understanding by practicing these skills:

1. *Ask questions for clarification.* Before testing your understanding of the speaker’s message, make sure you have a clear idea of what he is saying. Begin by asking questions to gain more information. For specific factual information you may use closed questions (such as “yes-no” questions), and for more general information you may ask open-ended questions (questions pertaining to what, when, where, how, and why). Once you have gained sufficient information, you can ask the speaker to check your understanding against what he intended.
2. *Paraphrase the speaker’s message.* Using “I statements,” you attempt to paraphrase what you think the speaker was saying so that she can determine whether your understanding matches what she intended.
3. *Paraphrase the speaker’s intent.* Using “I statements,” you attempt to paraphrase what you interpret as the intent or motivation of the speaker. After hearing your assumptions about his intent, the speaker may talk with you more to refine your understanding.
4. *Identify areas of confusion.* If there are specific aspects of the message that you are still confused about, mention those to the speaker while you are expressing your initial understanding of the message.
5. *Invite clarification and correction.* Asking the speaker to correct your interpretation of the message will invite additional explanation. The ensuing dialogue will help you and the speaker to more effectively share meaning.
6. *Go back to the beginning.* As necessary, return to the first step in this process to check your new understanding of the speaker’s message, intent, and so on. Good listening is a process without clear beginning and ending points, so you should check your understanding at each stage in the process.

## Effective Listening in Different Situations

### Listening in the Workplace

As our nation has shifted from an industrial-based economy to an information-based economy, effective listening has become recognized as an essential skill for workers. Statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that by 2014 just under

80% of the workforce in the United States will be employed in service-oriented industries like education, health care, retail sales, and state and local government (Berman, 2005). These jobs all have one thing in common—they require employee–customer interaction in which listening skills translate into revenue.

To become a more effective listener in professional situations, you need to apply several of the suggestions mentioned previously. Jennifer Salopek (1999), the president of a corporate training firm, suggests that you do the following:

1. Be aware of when you are not listening.
2. Monitor your nonverbal behaviors to determine whether you are giving appropriate feedback to the speaker.
3. Hear people out and minimize interruptions.
4. Learn to ask nonaggressive questions to elicit more information from the speaker.
5. Summarize what the person said, and check to make sure you understand correctly.

In addition to these suggestions, Bob Gunn (2001), president of a consulting firm for many Fortune 500 companies, notes the importance of empathic listening in professional situations:

Feelings are to the quality of hearing as our sense of smell is to the enjoyment of a great meal or our sense of touch is to the expression of love. You are listening deeply when you become “lost in the words” and find yourself experiencing deep feelings of joy, gratitude, surprise, curiosity, warmth, closeness, wonder, beauty, or appreciation. You are hearing at a more profound level. The stronger the feeling, the more profound the understanding. And the more profound the understanding, the clearer the subsequent course of action. (p. 12)

Gunn’s point is that effective listeners must understand not only what their customers are saying but also what they are feeling. Those who do this effectively are able to build stronger relationships with customers and clients.

## Listening in the Classroom

Take a moment to think about how often, as a student, you find yourself listening to a lecture. If you were to estimate how much of your time is spent listening to lectures, how much would it be? If you said “a lot,” you would not be alone. Researchers have estimated that college students spend at least 10 hours per week attending lectures (Anderson & Armbruster, 1986). If you take a typical 15 credit/hour load, that 10 hours per week translates into about 80% of your time in class being spent listening to lectures (Armbruster, 2000). The prominence of listening in students’ lives led Vinson and Johnson (1990, p. 116) to coin the phrase “**lecture listening**”—the ability to listen to, mentally process, and recall lecture information.

What constitutes effective lecture listening? Although a variety of answers have been offered, educational researcher Michael Gilbert (1988) provides the following general suggestions:

1. *Find areas of interest in what you are listening to.* Constantly look for how you can use the information.
2. *Remain open.* Avoid the temptation to focus only on the lecturer’s delivery; withhold evaluative judgments until the lecture has finished; recognize your emotional triggers and avoid letting them distract you.

### lecture listening

The ability to listen to, mentally process, and recall lecture information.

3. *Work at listening.* Capitalize on your mind's ability to think faster than the lecturer can talk. Mentally summarize and review what has been said, mentally organize information, and find connections to what you already know or are currently learning.
4. *Avoid letting distractions distract.* Monitor your attention and recognize when it is waning. If you are becoming distracted, refocus your attention on the lecturer.
5. *Listen for and note main ideas.* Focus on the central themes of what is being presented, and make notes about those themes. Effective notes outlining the main ideas of a lecture can, in some cases, be more useful than pages of notes containing unorganized details.

In addition to Gilbert's suggestions, communication researcher Dan O'Hair and colleagues (1988) recommend that you practice flexibility in listening. By practicing your listening skills while watching information-packed documentaries or while attending public presentations on campus, you will not only become a more effective lecture listener but will also learn valuable information!

A final lecture listening strategy, one that we view as essential, is to take effective notes. Our own research has found that effective note taking during lectures can increase scores on exams by more than 20%—a difference between receiving a C and an A (Titsworth & Kiewra, 1998). Unfortunately, students typically do not record enough notes during a lecture. Research generally shows that less than 40% of the information in a lecture makes it into students' notes. In short, most students are unable to capitalize on the benefits of note taking simply because their notes are incomplete.

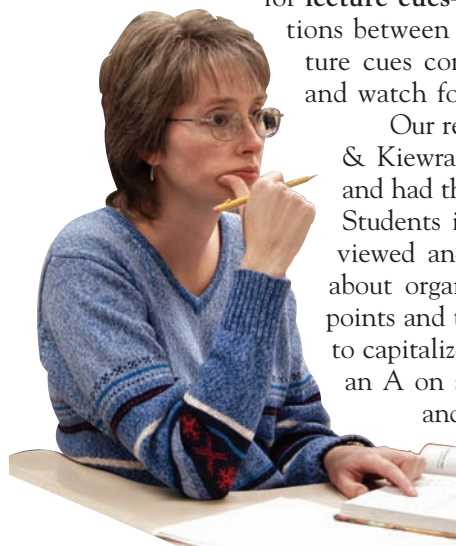
Now that you understand why note taking is so important, how can you become a more effective note taker? Most universities have study skills centers where you can find information on different note-taking formats. Although the exact format for note taking might vary from one person to another, the objective is the same. In your notes your goal should be to record both the outline of the lecture—called organizational points—and the details supporting those points. The most effective way to ensure that you record all of these points is to listen for **lecture cues**—verbal or nonverbal signals that stress points or indicate transitions between ideas during a lecture. Table 5.4 summarizes various types of lecture cues commonly used by teachers. While taking notes you should listen and watch for these types of cues.

Our research has examined the importance of cues for students (Titsworth & Kiewra, 1998). We taught a group of students about organizational cues and had them listen for those cues and take notes during a videotaped lecture. Students in another group were not informed about organizational cues but viewed and took notes during the same lecture. Students who were taught about organizational cues recorded four times the number of organizational points and twice the number of details in their notes. These students were able to capitalize on their note-taking effectiveness; they received the equivalent of an A on a quiz about the lecture. Their counterparts, who were unaware of and did not listen for organizational cues, received the equivalent of a C. Our experiment looked at the effects of teaching students about organizational cues only. Imagine what could happen if these students had been taught about all types of lecture cues! Fortunately, you are now equipped with this information.

#### lecture cues

Verbal or nonverbal signals that stress points or indicate transitions between ideas during a lecture.

▼ Lecture listening is a common communication behavior for students.



**TABLE 5.4** COMMON LECTURE CUES USED BY TEACHERS

TYPE OF CUE	EXAMPLE	MAIN USES
Written cues		
Outlines	Outline of lecture on transparency or PowerPoint slide	Indicate main and subordinate ideas
Words/phrases	Term written on the chalkboard	Stress important terms and accompanying definitions
Verbal importance cues	<i>“Now, and this will be on the exam next week, we will explore . . .”</i>	Stress important concepts deemed essential for recall/understanding
Semantic cues	<i>“Here is an example [definition, explanation, conclusion, implication, or illustration] of uncertainty reduction theory in action . . .”</i>	Signal common types of details that make up the lecture content
Organizational cues	<i>“The third thing I want to discuss today is . . .”</i>	Orally provide indications of main and subordinate points in a lecture
Nonverbal cues	Holding up two fingers when saying <i>“I will discuss two concepts today . . .”</i>	Can serve any of the functions of nonverbal behaviors discussed in the chapter on nonverbal communication

## Listening to Media

Think about how much time you spend watching television; listening to the radio; reading magazines, newspapers, or books; reading and writing e-mail; chatting online; or just surfing the web. Many of us might avoid that question because the answer might frighten us. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) notes that children and adolescents spend more than 20 hours per week watching TV, which translates into approximately 3 hours per day. When including other forms of media, such as listening to music, playing video games, and using the Internet, this daily intake of media jumps to over 6½ hours per day, or over 42 hours per week. By the time you started your first college class (around the age of 18), you had viewed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence on TV alone. This intake of mediated messages does not diminish. By the time you reach age 70, it is estimated that you will have spent the equivalent of 7–10 years watching TV.

Given the quantity of mediated communication we are exposed to each day, we must become critical consumers of such information. Think how much money you would spend if you “bought in” to every commercial you saw, or think of how much time it would take for you to read every e-mail message you get (including “junk” e-mail). Simply put, good listening behaviors are essential because mediated communication is so prevalent.

One way to be an effective listener in a mediated culture is to have information literacy. **Information literacy** is defined by the American Library Association (2001) in the following way: “To be information literate an individual must recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the information needed.” According to this definition, information-literate individuals are able to think critically, know when and how to find more information, and know how to evaluate information.

### information literacy

The ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the information needed.

## cultural note

### Differences in Active Listening

The way individuals actively listen can vary from culture to culture. College students in Finland, for example, listen carefully and take notes but do not respond overtly while being addressed by the professor. In fact, they remain quite expressionless. In some Native American tribes and in some Hispanic groups, people avert their eyes when listening; but in groups such as northern whites and blacks, people tend to maintain eye contact while actively listening. How would you describe the norms of listening in your culture, community, or school?

Mediated communication is not limited to advertising and television. In 2005 an estimated 1.1 billion people worldwide used the Internet (ClickZ, 2004). How do people use the Internet? Communication scholars at UCLA conducted a comprehensive study of various issues related to Internet use. They found that nearly 55% of Americans use the Internet for e-mail and that people feel the Internet increases their ability to stay in contact with others. Additionally, just over one quarter of Internet users indicated that they have online friends whom they would not have met through other means (UCLA Internet Report, 2000). The implication of these data is that the Internet, once a form of mass communication, has become an important tool for interpersonal communication as well.

When communicating online with others, how can you be an effective listener? The principal problem with online communication—whether the mode is e-mail, chat rooms, listservs, or discussion groups—is that nonverbal communication is difficult. Recall that nonverbal communication provides significant clues about another person's emotions and feelings. Without the ability to see and hear the other person, how can you tell what that person is really thinking? To successfully listen for relational messages online, you must look for obvious clues such as **emoticons**—typographic symbols showing emotional meaning. Examples of emoticons include a “☺” at the end of a paragraph and ALL CAPITAL LETTERS to indicate “shouting.” Because nonverbal communication is more difficult online, it is important to check your perceptions before responding to messages.

#### emoticons

Typographic symbols showing emotional meaning.

### Listening in a Second Language



Many of the suggestions provided in this chapter are common for both native and ESL speakers. However, if you are a non-native speaker, some understanding of how to further develop your listening skills can speed your progress as an effective listener. Research suggests that second-language listening development requires two skills: vocabulary comprehension and metacognitive awareness (Vandergrift, 2006). Vocabulary comprehension is more than just memorizing lists of terms. Rather, vocabulary is strengthened by recognizing the sounds of words and associating those sounds with their meaning. Being immersed in a new culture will assist you in developing such connections, particularly if you seek out and engage in sustained conversations with others. You can also use television and other media to broaden your listening experiences and assist in vocabulary development.

In addition to developing your vocabulary, you should also try to develop your metacognitive skills. Metacognition is your ability to use “mental strategies” to assist in quickly determining the meaning of words. Learning to decipher words by drawing inferences on their meaning from the context and other words around them is one such strategy. Another example of metacognition is drawing parallels between English vocabulary and your native vocabulary. Through such strategies you will make quicker inferences about what new terms mean and will be able to listen more efficiently.

Even if ESL students do not enact formal listening strategies like vocabulary comprehension and metacognitive awareness, recent research has discovered that simply talking with others is an effective strategy for promoting listening skills. Results of a recent experiment explored whether ESL students listened to news reports more effectively after receiving training on how to use various listening strategies (Cross, 2009). That experiment found that there were no significant differences between ESL students receiving the training and those receiving no training. The researcher speculated that in the group not receiving training, students talked among themselves prior to the listening exercises, which equipped them with effective informal strategies. The lesson learned from this study is this: recognizing that you are in a difficult listening situation and talking with others about how to listen more effectively may be just as effective as undergoing formal listening training for some students.

Of course, if you have difficulty listening because the other person is speaking rapidly or using words that you have not heard, you should feel comfortable telling the person. Adaptation to language differences is the responsibility of everyone involved in a communication situation, and you should not take on the entire challenge of trying to make the interaction succeed.

## How Can You Be an Ethical Listener?

Although effective listening requires you to adapt your verbal, nonverbal, and perception-checking skills to specific situations like the workplace, classroom, and mediated environments, you must also take care to enact ethical listening behaviors. To be an ethical listener, you should practice the following behaviors (adapted from Rehling, 2004):

1. *Recognize the sources of your own conversational habits.* Your family, school, and other life experiences have allowed you to develop certain habits that in some situations could be strengths and in others could represent areas for improvement. Recognizing those habits will allow you to more fully adapt to those with whom you are communicating.
2. *Monitor your communication to recognize when you are engaging in poor listening behaviors.* Perhaps the most important step to becoming an ethical listener is recognizing that you must work hard to be a good listener—a step that begins with an awareness of what you are doing in the situation.
3. *Apply general ethical principles to how you respond.* Planning your responses so that you are respectful to others is an example of how your own personal ethics can influence your listening behaviors.
4. *Adapt to others.* Recognize that other people also have unique communication styles and that you might need to adapt your listening behaviors so that you can fully understand what they are trying to say.



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Hearing is the physical act of receiving a sound. We hear all of the noises around us. Listening is the active process of receiving, paying attention to, assigning meaning to, and responding to sounds. Listening is an active process whereas hearing is reflexive.
- ▶ Understanding listening is important because effective listening behaviors are related to success in our personal relationships, our workplace productivity, and even our ability to think clearly.
- ▶ Listening is generally divided into active, empathic, critical, and enjoyment listening. Active listening, which is listening with a purpose, includes both empathic and critical listening. Empathic listening is when you are attempting to understand another person. For example, hearing your best friend complain about the behaviors of a significant other involves empathic listening. Critical listening requires evaluating a speaker's message for accuracy, meaningfulness, and usefulness. Listening to a salesperson's pitch requires careful critical listening behaviors. In addition to listening for pragmatic reasons, we also listen to things like music for enjoyment purposes.
- ▶ A variety of internal and external barriers prevent many of us from being effective listeners. One barrier is noise, which includes both physical distractions and internal distractions. Physical distractions are any audible noises in the communication environment. Internal distractions can include mental, factual, or semantic distractions. Perceptions of others and your own behaviors can also become barriers to effective listening.
- ▶ Critical thinking involves careful analysis of both the communication situation and the message of the speaker. Analyzing the situation requires that you carefully understand the communication situation in which you are involved. Analyzing the message involves evaluating the arguments and supporting material presented by the speaker, whether the speaker is presenting observations or inferences, and whether or not the speaker is credible.
- ▶ Verbal and nonverbal communication can be used to help you improve your listening behaviors. Asking questions, inviting additional comments, using descriptive responses, and providing affirming statements are all examples of effective verbal strategies. Being nonverbally responsive, using positive facial expressions, making direct eye contact, and providing positive vocal utterances are effective nonverbal strategies. Use of such strategies will encourage the speaker to continue speaking and providing you with information so that you can check your understanding.
- ▶ General verbal and nonverbal communication strategies can be adapted to specific listening situations including the workplace, classroom, and mediated environment.
- ▶ Ethical listening means that you should recognize and monitor your own communication style, apply general ethical principles to your responses, and adapt your communication style to others.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Active listening  
Automatic attention  
Critical listening  
Critical thinking  
Emoticons  
Empathic listening  
First-person observation

Hearing  
Information literacy  
Lecture cues  
Lecture listening  
Listening  
Listening for enjoyment  
Long-term memory

Schema  
Second-person observation  
Selective attention  
Short-term memory  
Source credibility  
Working memory

## Study Questions

1. Hearing is a \_\_\_\_\_ process, and listening is a \_\_\_\_\_ process.
  - a. mental; physical
  - b. mental; psychological
  - c. physical; mental
  - d. physical; physical
2. Which of the following statements is true?
  - a. Personal and business relationships are not affected by listening.
  - b. When communicating, college students spend over half of their lives listening.
  - c. Listening constitutes only a small fraction of our communication activities.
  - d. Listening does not contribute to recognizing deceit.
3. After your brain has sorted sound waves by importance, it processes the material in a part of your consciousness termed
  - a. working memory
  - b. selective attention
  - c. long-term recall
  - d. short-term memory
4. When you are listening and attempting to understand the other person's worldview, what type of listening are you utilizing?
  - a. active
  - b. empathic
  - c. critical
  - d. for enjoyment
5. If you are thinking about what happened last weekend at college while listening to your mom on the phone, you are exhibiting what type of barrier to listening?
  - a. stereotypes
  - b. egocentrism
  - c. personal bias
  - d. mental distraction
6. Which gender tends to listen in order to solve problems, is less attentive to nonverbal cues, and interrupts to switch topics?
  - a. men
  - b. women
  - c. both genders
  - d. neither gender
7. Critical thinking
  - a. focuses solely on the details instead of the main point
  - b. ignores the context in which communication is occurring
  - c. is important when making judgments about the message being presented
  - d. is only associated with listening
8. Asking questions to clarify information, paraphrasing messages, and identifying confusing areas are examples of
  - a. barriers to listening
  - b. listening for enjoyment
  - c. techniques for checking your understanding of a message
  - d. information literacy
9. Suggestions for lecture listening include
  - a. focusing on the lecturer's delivery and avoiding summarizing and reviewing the information
  - b. letting your attention stray in order to think creatively, listening for details, and ignoring lecture cues
  - c. avoiding taking notes so you can focus on the lecture and the message delivery
  - d. finding areas of interest to you, avoiding distractions, and listening for main ideas
10. The ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information is an important trait known as
  - a. critical thinking
  - b. information literacy
  - c. hearing
  - d. selective attention

### Answers:

1. (c); 2. (b); 3. (a); 4. (b); 5. (d); 6. (a); 7. (c); 8. (c); 9. (d); 10. (b)

## Critical Thinking

1. Identify and define some barriers to listening that you have been aware of in your own experiences. Were you able to overcome the barriers?
2. Which of the verbal and nonverbal communication skills do you make use of in your conversations? Which of them do others use when conversing with you? Are there any that you like or dislike more than others in either situation?

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## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define interpersonal relationships and interpersonal communication.
2. Explain the importance of interpersonal relationships.
3. Describe the dark side of interpersonal relationships.
4. Explain the importance of friendships.
5. Name and explain the three stages in interpersonal relationships.
6. Identify some of the reasons people begin relationships.
7. Reveal ways to maintain positive relationships over time.
8. List some motivations for terminating relationships.
9. Name four essential interpersonal communication behaviors.



# INTERPERSONAL



**Interpersonal relationships can be complicated,** and they

sometimes require a lot of work. In this chapter you will learn about interpersonal relationships and interpersonal communication. A great deal of research has been conducted in this area of communication, and you may want to take an advanced course that focuses exclusively on interpersonal communication to learn more. For now we highlight some of the basic elements of interpersonal relationships and interpersonal communication. You will learn the stages of relational development, maintenance, and deterioration. You will also learn why people initiate relationships, maintain them, and end them. You will study such essential concepts as self-disclosing, using affectionate and supportive communication, influencing others, and developing a unique relationship. Although interpersonal communication is challenging, you will learn how to improve your communication in interpersonal relationships.

# COMMUNICATION

**What is a friend?** With whom do you share a sexual relationship? These questions were not so difficult to answer in the past, but today they have become complicated with social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook and with a new phenomenon known as “friends with benefits.” In the past, a friend was a person with whom we had face-to-face conversations and with whom we shared details of our life. Sexual partners may have been restricted to one person, or to a relatively small number of people, with whom we had first established a loving and trusting relationship and with whom, perhaps, we intended to marry or to be committed over our lifetimes.

Today our definitions have shifted. People may count dozens, or even hundreds, of people as their “friends.” College students may experience a sexual relationship with someone they consider to be a friend, but with whom they have no long-term commitment. The advantage of these new relationships includes the ease with which they can be begun or ended. The disadvantage is that these relationships may be shallow or unfulfilling.

Scholars are fascinated by these new developments. They see them as raising some important issues about the definitions of interpersonal relationships and interpersonal communication. For what reasons do people form their online relationships? How do they know who they can trust to have a sexual relationship? How do people interact exclusively online rather than in face-to-face settings? What is their relationship with a friend with whom they have had a sexual relationship after the sex is gone? Can people manage to move between online and offline friendships? Can they move in and out of sexual relationships with friends?

*These questions about online friendships and friends-with-benefits relationships are part of the fabric of our society today. In this chapter you will learn about interpersonal communication that cuts across more traditional relationships as well as these developing relational forms. We will discover why we have interpersonal relationships, how we communicate within them, and how relationships are maintained and enriched.*

## The Nature of Communication in Interpersonal Relationships

### What Is Interpersonal Communication?

In the first chapter interpersonal communication was defined by the context, or the situation. In other words, interpersonal communication was defined as “the process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening.” When defined in this manner, interpersonal communication would include our interactions with strangers, with salespeople, and with waiters, as well as with our close friends, our lovers, and our family members. This definition is very broad.

Interpersonal communication may also be viewed as communication that occurs within interpersonal relationships (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). This idea suggests that interpersonal communication can be limited to those situations in

which we have knowledge of the personal characteristics, qualities, or behaviors of the other person. Indeed, Miller and Steinberg assert that when we make guesses about the outcomes of conversations based on sociological or cultural information, we are communicating in a noninterpersonal way. When we make predictions based on more discriminating information about the other specific person, we are communicating interpersonally. When we communicate with others on the basis of general social interaction rules such as engaging in turn taking, making pleasantries, and discussing nonpersonal matters, we are engaging in impersonal or nonpersonal communication. When we communicate with others based on some knowledge of their uniqueness as individuals and a shared history, we are communicating interpersonally.

None of our interpersonal relationships are quite like any of our other interpersonal relationships. A friendship that you might have had in high school is not the same as your new friendships in college. Your relationship to your mother is not the same as your relationship to your father. Even if you have several intimate relationships with people, you will find that none of them is quite the same. On the one hand, our interpersonal relationships are mundane; on the other, they can also be the “sites for spiritual practice and mystical experience” (Crawford, 1996, p. 25).

Nonetheless, we have accumulated a great deal of knowledge on how to communicate more successfully in our interpersonal relationships (Julien et al., 2003). This chapter will explore that knowledge. We will consider those abilities that are essential in developing and developed relationships. But first, let us consider why we engage in interpersonal relationships.

## What Are Interpersonal Relationships?

On the simplest level, relationships are associations or connections. Interpersonal relationships, however, are far more complex. **Interpersonal relationships** may be defined as associations between at least two people who are interdependent, who use some consistent patterns of interaction, and who have interacted for an extended period of time. Consider the different elements of this definition in more detail.

- *Interpersonal relationships include two or more people.* Often, interpersonal relationships consist of just two people—a dating couple, a single parent and a child, a married couple, two close friends, or two co-workers. Interpersonal relationships can also involve more than two people—a family unit, a group of friends, or a social group.
- *Interpersonal relationships involve people who are interdependent.* Interdependence refers to people’s being mutually dependent on each other and having an impact on each other. Friendship easily illustrates this concept. Your best friend, for example, may be dependent on you for acceptance and guidance. You, on the other hand, might require support and admiration. When individuals are independent of each other, or when dependence occurs only in one direction, we do not define the resulting association as an interpersonal relationship.
- *Individuals in interpersonal relationships use some consistent patterns of interaction.* These patterns may include behaviors generally understood across a variety of situations, as well as behaviors unique to the relationship. For example, a husband may always greet his wife with a kiss. This kiss is generally understood as a sign of warmth and affection. On the other

### interpersonal relationships

Associations between at least two people who are interdependent, who use some consistent patterns of interaction, and who have interacted for an extended period of time.



hand, the husband may have unique nicknames for his wife that are not understood outside the relationship.

- *Individuals in interpersonal relationships generally have interacted for some time.* When you nod and smile at someone as you leave the classroom, when you meet a girlfriend's siblings for the first time, or when you place an order at a fast-food counter, you do not have an interpersonal relationship. Although participants use interpersonal communication to accomplish these activities, one-time interactions do not constitute interpersonal relationships. We should note, however, that interpersonal relationships might last for varying lengths of time—some are relatively short, and others continue for a lifetime.

### MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*In his book Relational Communication, William Wilmot (1995) discusses various metaphors we have for relationships. For instance, relationships can be described as work, in that two people must negotiate and engage in a process of give-and-take; as a journey, in that people progress along a path as they move through a relationship; as a force, in that relationships are powerful, mystical, and perhaps even risky endeavors; and as a game, in that romance and perhaps friendship are viewed as a series of scripts from which individuals have to select the correct lines to win the contest. These metaphors have important implications for how people approach relationships. What do you think some of those implications are? What metaphor do you think best captures your own view of relationships?*

### The Importance of Interpersonal Relationships

According to William Schutz (1976), we have three basic interpersonal needs that are satisfied through interaction with others:

1. The need for inclusion, or becoming involved with others
2. The need for affection, or holding fond or tender feelings toward another person
3. The need for control, or having the ability to influence others, our environment, and ourselves

Although we may be able to fulfill some of our physical, safety, and security needs through interactions with relative strangers, we can fulfill the other needs only through our interpersonal relationships.

The interdependent nature of interpersonal relationships suggests that people mutually satisfy their needs in this type of association. Interdependence suggests that one person is dependent on another to have some need fulfilled and that the other person (or persons) is dependent on the first to have the same or other needs fulfilled. For example, a child who is dependent on a parent may satisfy that parent's need for control. The parent, in turn, may supply the child's need for affection in hugging, kissing, or listening to the child.

**Complementary relationships**—those in which each person supplies something the other person or persons lack—provide good examples of the manner in which we have our needs fulfilled in interpersonal relationships. A romantic involvement

#### complementary relationships

Relationships in which each person supplies something the other person or persons lack.



▲ Interpersonal relationships fulfill basic needs.

between a popular male and an intelligent female is an example of a complementary relationship, since the woman may find herself involved in the social events she desires and the man may find himself increasingly successful in his classes. Another example of a complementary relationship is a friendship between an introverted individual and an extroverted one. The introvert may teach her friend to be more self-reflective or to listen to others more carefully, while the extrovert might, in exchange, encourage her to be more outspoken or assertive.

Our needs also may be fulfilled in **symmetrical relationships**—those in which the participants mirror each other or are highly similar. A relationship between two intelligent individuals may reflect their need for intellectual stimulation. Two people of similar ancestry might marry in part to preserve their heritage.

Relationships are so important that we seek them out in electronic outlets as well as in face-to-face encounters. Consider the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech in April 2007. Thirty-two people lost their lives at the hands of a VT student.

**symmetrical relationships**

Relationships in which participants mirror each other or are highly similar.

## SIZING *things* UP

### Interpersonal Motives

We enter into interpersonal relationships for a variety of reasons. Below you will read several statements that describe possible reasons for joining interpersonal relationships. Indicate how likely you are to enter into an interpersonal relationship for each reason using the following scale:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Unlikely
- 3 = Likely
- 4 = Frequently

I enter into interpersonal relationships . . .

1. Because I can have influence over others.
2. So that I can share emotions with others.
3. To feel part of a group.
4. To be involved in things with other people.
5. To gain affection from others.
6. To bring control to my life.
7. So that I can have more influence over my surroundings.
8. Because I need to know that people like me.
9. Because I want to be included in different activities.

The news of the events in Blacksburg, Virginia, raced around the world through postings on the Internet.

Most interesting, from the standpoint of interpersonal relationships, are the thousands of blog entries that were written to reach out to other people. Grieving, normally conducted in face-to-face settings, occurred online. People shared their remorse and anger. They also said goodbye to friends and colleagues by posting responses on the blogs of those who they knew to have died.

Whether the other person or persons are similar to us or highly different, our needs are generally fulfilled through our relationships with them.

### Conflict in Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships do not always progress smoothly. From time to time, you might experience conflict with a friend or partner. Why does conflict occur in these relationships? Sometimes you might disagree about large issues such as politics or smaller issues such as who should perform certain tasks. You simply do not share the same point of view.

Conflict is inevitable and normal in interpersonal relationships; indeed, conflict can be constructive and creative. Conflict can be healthy when it is used to resolve differences and to “clear the air.” On the other hand, conflict can also be dysfunctional. You or your friend might have grown up in a family in which sequences of conflict were ever present and the only way you know how to have a conversation

is by fighting. Or, you might have had parents who never discussed differences and the only way you know how to manage is by walking away or not talking about what bothers you.

Conflict is dysfunctional when you avoid talking about problems, withdraw, or become sullen. Conflict is also dysfunctional when you take any criticism or suggestions as a personal attack. Do you fight fairly or do you attack the other person rather than raising the issue that is at stake? If you feel out of control when you are engaged in an argument with a family member, you may experience conflict as dysfunctional. Finally, conflict can be dysfunctional when you store up many complaints and then attack your roommate with all of them. In Chapter 8 you can read some general conflict management skills that may be of further help.

If you have experienced conflict as dysfunctional, you can begin to experience it more positively when you follow some straightforward guidelines. First, you need to remain calm. You should also express your feelings in words rather than in actions like breaking objects, driving recklessly, or using alcohol. Try to be specific about what is bothering you. Rather than bringing up multiple grievances of the past, try to deal with only one issue at a time. Consider your language and avoid words like “never,” and “always” in describing the problem—particularly when it is about your roommate’s actions. Do not exaggerate or invent additional problems that are not central to the discussion. Finally, you may find that it is important to establish some common ground rules that both you and your partner adopt.

### The Dark Side of Interpersonal Relationships

Conflict is only one aspect of interpersonal relationships that seem to represent a “dark side” to these most personal affiliations. Although you may know that your interpersonal relationships are generally pleasurable and positive, you might also have experienced painful and negative liaisons. Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) have provided the most comprehensive treatment of the shadowy side of relationships. What are some of the qualities of negative relationships? Obsession that includes fatal attraction and jealousy certainly creates negative outcomes. Similarly, misunderstanding, gossip, conflict, and codependency can lead to harmful results. Abuse, which can include sexual, physical, mental, and emotional abuse, is truly harmful to individuals and destructive of relationships. Abusive relationships have probably always existed, but their presence seems more visible today as TV programs focus on the multiple kinds of abuse that occur in both marital and non-marital relationships.

This chapter focuses primarily on positive interpersonal relationships and on how to improve interpersonal relationships. We will consider factors that seem to lead to more positive outcomes. However, note that interpersonal relationships can take a decidedly negative turn. In addition, some of the qualities that we associate with healthy relationships—self-disclosing, affectionate communication, mutual influence, and development of a unique relationship—can all become extreme and, therefore, unhealthy.

Too often textbooks speak exclusively about the positive aspects of interpersonal relationships. Readers are mistakenly led to believe that by practicing skills of openness and empathy and learning problem-solving and conflict resolution techniques, they will have successful and satisfying relationships. This unrealistic perspective leads to disillusionment when the person puts these ideas into action and does not find satisfying and successful interpersonal relationships. Effective communication,



▲ Successful interpersonal relationships are based on effective communication.

as you have been learning, is very challenging, and interpersonal communication may be the most challenging context of all.

## Self-Disclosure in the Development of Interpersonal Relationships

### self-disclosure

The process of making intentional revelations about yourself that others would be unlikely to know and that generally constitute private, sensitive, or confidential information.

One change that occurs as relationships become deeper and closer lies in the intentional revealing of personal information. **Self-disclosure** is the process of making intentional revelations about yourself that others would be unlikely to know and that generally constitute private, sensitive, or confidential information. Self-disclosure consists of information that is intentionally provided. Pearce and Sharp (1973) distinguish among self-disclosure, confession, and revelation. They define self-disclosure as voluntary, confession as forced or coerced information, and revelation as unintentional or inadvertent communication.

Jourard (1964) suggests that self-disclosure makes one “transparent” to others, that disclosure helps others to see a person as a distinctive human being. Self-disclosure goes beyond self-description. More specifically, your position on abortion, your close relationship with your grandfather, your sexual history, your deepest fears, your proudest moments, and your problems with drugs or alcohol would be considered self-disclosure by most definitions. Self-disclosure is not always negative, but it is generally private information.

### *Why Is Self-Disclosure Important?*

Self-disclosure is important for three reasons: First, self-disclosure allows us to develop a greater understanding of ourselves. Consider the Johari window depicted

in Figure 6.1. Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham created this diagram to depict four kinds of information about a person. The open area (I) includes information that is known to you and to other people. Included would be your approximate height and weight, which are obvious to an observer. In addition, information that you freely disclose, such as your hometown, major, or age, is included in this quadrant. The blind area (II) consists of information that is known to others but unknown to you. Your personality characteristics that others perceive but that you do not recognize or acknowledge are included. The hidden area (III) includes information that you know about yourself but that others do not know. Any information that is hidden and that you do not self-disclose is included here. Finally, the unknown area (IV) comprises information that is unknown to you and to others. If you have not been diagnosed with a terminal disease, for instance, neither you nor others know when you will pass on.

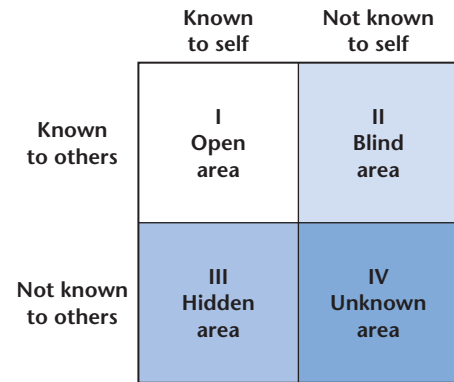
The Johari window is not unchanging in size; rather, the quadrants can expand or contract. The Johari window may also have a different shape with different family members, friends, or acquaintances. For example, you might have a very large open area when you are considering the relationship between you and your closest friend. The hidden area may be very large when you consider the relationship among you and your classmates. As the size of one of the quadrants changes, so do all the others.

Self-disclosure allows you to develop a more positive attitude about yourself and others. Self-disclosure allows you to develop more meaningful relationships with others. Have you ever experienced a problem or faced a difficult situation? Most of us have, and we know that sharing our fears or telling others about our anguish provides comfort. For example, imagine that you committed a traffic violation and were caught. You might feel very guilty for doing the wrong thing, for having to pay a large fine, and for risking the loss of your driver's license. If you can find the courage to talk about your feelings to a friend, you might find that you are not alone, that almost everyone receives a traffic fine at one time or another.

Similarly, if you have recently experienced the loss of a family member, you may find that talking about your feelings and sharing your grief will lead to positive growth for you. Hastings (2000) found that self-disclosure is a powerful form of communication in grieving and in healing a fractured identity.

Through self-disclosure, relationships grow in depth and meaning. Partners in romantic relationships, for example, report greater feelings of security when self-disclosure between them is intentional and honest (Le Poire et al., 1997). When you self-disclose more to others, they will most likely disclose more to you. On the other hand, the inability to self-disclose can result in the end of a relationship. Without the opportunity for self-disclosure and active listening, relationships appear to be doomed to shallowness, superficiality, and termination.

At the same time, self-disclosure can be used inappropriately. Have you ever sat on an airplane next to a stranger who revealed highly personal information to you? Have you ever dated someone who insisted on sharing private information too early in the relationship? Have you ever had friends who told you negative information about themselves long before you knew virtually anything else about them? In the next section we will consider some of the findings about self-disclosure that may provide guidelines for your self-disclosing behavior.



**Figure 6.1** Johari window

SOURCE: Luft, 1984.

### ***What Factors Affect Appropriate Self-Disclosure?***

*Disclosure generally increases as relational intimacy increases.* We do not provide our life story to people we have just met. Instead, in the developing relationship, we reveal an increasing amount of information. We might begin with positive information that is not highly intimate and then begin to share more personal information as we learn to trust the other person. In this way our disclosure tends to be incremental, or to increase over time.

*Disclosure tends to be reciprocal.* This conclusion is related to the previous one. When people offer us information about themselves, we tend to return the behavior in kind. Indeed, when people reciprocate self-disclosure, we tend to view them positively; when they do not, we tend to view them as incompetent (Cozby, 1972, 1973; Hosman & Tardy, 1980). Dindia, Fitzpatrick, and Kenny (1997) studied dyadic interaction between women and men and strangers and spouses. They concluded that in conversations, disclosure of highly intimate feelings was reciprocal. Reciprocity is also shown in nonverbal behaviors. Those who engaged in low-intimacy conditions also reciprocated by becoming less nonverbally pleasant and fluent as well as more verbally hostile. They also became more vocally anxious and less composed after their partners decreased intimacy.

Reciprocal disclosure generally does not occur in families. While parents have an expectation of self-disclosure from their children and adolescents, they do not perceive a need to reciprocate. A variety of factors affect adolescents' disclosures to their parents. Adolescents do not generally feel the need to disclose to their parents, and they are even more reluctant to disclose if their behavior is not sanctioned by their parents (Darling, Cumsille, Caldwell, & Dowdy, 2006; Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006). Grandparents may become the target of self-disclosures since they are sometimes seen as more empathetic and positive (Tam, Hewstone, Harwood, Voci, & Kenworthy, 2006).

*Negative disclosure is directly related to the intimacy of the relationship; however, positive disclosure does not necessarily increase as the relationship becomes more intimate.* What does this mean? As we become closer to another person, we are more likely to reveal negative information about ourselves. Positive information, on the other hand, flows through conversations from the earliest developmental stages throughout the lifetime of the relationship. Hence, negative information increases over time, but positive disclosure does not necessarily increase.

*Disclosure may be avoided for a variety of reasons.* Self-disclosure does not flow freely on all topics. Indeed, relational partners may avoid self-disclosure for reasons of self-protection, relationship protection, partner unresponsiveness, and social appropriateness. As Afifi and Guerrero observe, "Some things are better left unsaid" (1998, p. 231). At the same time, topics that are taboo under some conditions may be appropriate later, when conditions change (Roloff & Johnson, 2001).

People do not always avoid self-disclosure for noble reasons. College students who were in close relationships were asked if they disclosed their sexual histories before engaging in sex. While nearly all the students surveyed felt they were knowledgeable about safe sex, over 40% did not realize that revealing one's sexual history is a safe-sex practice. One-third of those who were sexually active had not disclosed their past sexual history with at least one partner prior to becoming sexually involved. And at least one-fifth of the sexually active students purposefully misrepresented their sexual history to their sex partners (Lucchetti, 1999).

*Disclosure varies across cultures.* Self-disclosure is not uniformly valued or disvalued around the world. For example, Chinese professionals view interpersonal communication

differently in Chinese organizations and in American businesses. They view Chinese interactions to be characterized by blunt assertiveness, smooth amiability, and surface humility. They view American workplaces to be composed of sophisticated kindness, manipulative “stroking,” and casual spontaneity (Wang & Chang, 1999). Koreans and Americans avoid making requests of others for different reasons. Koreans are concerned with avoiding negative evaluation from the hearer and avoiding hurting the other person’s feelings, while Americans are more concerned with clarity (Kim & Bresnahan, 1994). These differences most likely transfer to differences in disclosures as well.

*Disclosure varies by co-cultures.* Males and females do not disclose to the same extent. Females intend to self-disclose more than do males, and, in fact, they do so. Males disclose more negative information than do females, while females disclose more honest information on the Internet than do males (Punyanunt-Carter, 2006). Males and females show some similar patterns in self-disclosure in that men use their male best friends and women use their female best friends equally as confidants.

*Relational satisfaction and disclosure are curvilinearly related.* Satisfaction is lowest with no disclosure and with excessive disclosure; it is highest when self-disclosure is provided at moderate levels. Consider your own personal relationships. Does this conclusion appear to be accurate?

### Guidelines for Self-Disclosure

1. Gradually increase disclosure as your relationship develops.
2. Reveal information to others as they reveal information to you.
3. Do not disclose negative information until your relationship is established.
4. Do not disclose information that will cause you personal harm.
5. Be sensitive to cultural differences in your self-disclosure.
6. Be aware of co-cultural differences in self-disclosure.
7. Be willing to self-disclose in interpersonal relationships.

## The Importance of Friendships in Interpersonal Relationships

Friendship is important as it contributes to our well-being. People who have harmonious sibling relationships and same-gender friends report the highest levels of well-being (Sherman, Lansford, & Volling, 2006). While we celebrate romantic relationships, we do not similarly honor friendships. Rawlins (1992) notes that we ought to have a “friendship day” because our friendships are at least as important as our romantic relationships.

What does friendship mean? Friendships can be based on shared activities or on the level of information that we exchange with others. Young adolescents report that their friendships are based on shared activities, whereas emerging adults report that their friendships are based on self-disclosure (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). The communication of private information appears to gain in importance as people mature.

Friendships also change over time. Most people identify both family members and nonfamily members as friends. As people age, family members become more salient as friends (Pahl & Pevalin, 2005). For many older men, their only friend is their wife (Rawlins, 1922), though the same is not true for older women.

As you develop, your friendships are perceived to improve. Do friendships actually improve over time? While we cannot be sure, we do know that people *perceive*



their friendships to be better over time (Way & Greene, 2006). Perhaps people come to understand the importance of friendship as they mature.

The quality of friendships is affected by other psychological predispositions. For example, for individuals, attachment styles seem to predict friendships. People who are securely attached to others have lower levels of conflict with their friends and are able to rise above problems in their friendships. People who are avoidant, or not attached, experience higher levels of conflict and lower levels of companionship (Saferstein, Neimeyer, & Hagans, 2005).

Rawlins (1992) provides a six-stage model of how friendships develop. The first stage, role-limited interaction, includes an encounter in which individuals are polite and careful with their disclosures. Second, friendly relations occur when the two people determine that they have mutual interests or share other common ground. Third, moving toward friendship allows them to introduce a personal topic or to set up times to get together. Fourth, in nascent friendship they think of themselves as friends and begin to establish their own private ways of interacting. Fifth, the friends feel established in each other's lives, in what is termed a stabilized friendship. Finally, friendships may move to a waning friendship stage when the relationship diminishes. Not all friendships, however, reach this sixth stage.

Friendships are maintained differently depending on the intent of the relational partners. Rawlins (1992) notes that issues of romantic attraction must be negotiated early in a relationship. Guerrero and Chavez (2005) studied friends who both wanted the relationship to become romantic (mutual romance), friends neither of whom wanted the friendship to become romantic (platonic), and friends one of whom desired romance but felt that the partner did not (desiring or rejecting romance). They found that people in the mutual romance situation generally reported the most relationship maintenance behavior. People who were in the platonic or the rejecting-romance situations had fewer routine contacts and activities, were more likely to talk about other romantic situations, and were less flirtatious. People who were in the desiring-romance and mutual romance situations reported the most relationship talk. Clearly, friendships are dynamic and may lead to romantic relationships.

Friendships are not necessarily defined the same way in other cultures. People in collectivist cultures tend to have more intimate, but fewer, friendships. As people have more contact with others in the world, however, these patterns are showing signs of change. For example, Indonesian people, traditionally from a collectivistic culture, now display extensive social contacts (French, Bae, Pidada, & Okhwa, 2006).

A new development, made possible by mediated communication, is friendships on the Internet. However, these friendships are perceived as less close and less supportive than are friendships that originate in face-to-face contact. Internet friends are also less likely to be engaged in joint activities (Mesch & Talmud, 2006).

### **New Types of Friendships**

In the chapter opener we identified two new types of friendship: online friendships made possible through social networking sites and friends-with-benefits relationships. Let us consider each of these types of friendship. Social networking sites such as MySpace, YouTube, Tagged, hi5, and Facebook allow people to communicate with each other with messages, photos, and videos. Users of these networks were originally more likely to be younger rather than older (Lucky, 2009). However, one humorous editorial suggests that Facebook is actually for old people: "We're no longer bitter about high school. . . . We never get drunk at parties. . . . We're too old to remember

e-mail addresses. . . . We're not cool and we don't care" (Grossman, 2009).

Facebook claims that they have over 175 million active users. The majority of these users are not in college and the fastest growing demographic is 30 years old and older. Although we might believe Facebook is distinctly American, over 70% of users of Facebook are outside of the United States. Finally, the average Facebook user has 120 friends on their site.

Some people use networking sites to find offline friends from their past while others use these sites to find new people with whom to communicate. In addition, a feature that invites people to become "friends" with one of their friends ("friend of a friend;" or FOAF) allows additional networking opportunities (Finin, Ding, Zhou, & Joshi, 2005). The ease in using social networking sites allows people to interact with large numbers of people.

Why do people choose to have online friends? Although extraversion and openness to new experiences have some predictive power in identifying people who are likely to use social networking, no clear personality factors distinguish social networkers from others (Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, & Orr, 2009). Perhaps people are motivated to create online friends because they have a sense of safety and security—they do not need to meet the other person in a face-to-face setting. Others might perceive that online friendships are more exciting than day-to-day relationships. Finally, some people might be attracted to social networking sites because they can create a more idealized self—someone who is more attractive and has a different personality than they have.

While people may have dozens of online friends, they rarely have large numbers of friends with benefits. Friends with benefits (FWB) consist of couples who are not romantically involved, but who agreed to have a sexual relationship. Although studies vary in the percentage of college students who are involved in such relationships, the most conservative study suggested that over half (51%) of them have been, or currently are, involved in an FWB relationship (Puentes, Knox, & Zusman, 2008). One study found that women are more interested in having a friend while men are more interested in the benefits of such a relationship (McGinty, Knox, & Zusman, 2007).

How do FWB relationships conclude? Bisson and Levine (2009) found that about 36% of the couples quit having sex, but they remained friends; 28% stayed friends and remained sexually active; 26% claimed that they were no longer friends nor lovers; and about 10% of the couples had a relationship that became completely romantic. Generally FWB do not talk at all about romance or the possibility of falling in love, but it is important for people who wish to engage in this kind of relationship to set clear rules and boundaries. They also need to be clear with their friend about their goals with the relationship. Finally, they need to choose their partner wisely: someone they trust, someone they enjoy being with, and someone who is looking for a similar experience.



### Cross-Cultural Relationships



Because our culture is becoming increasingly diverse, the likelihood that you will be part of a cross-cultural friendship, or even romantic relationship, is far greater now than ever before. In many respects, cross-cultural

relationships work like any other type of relationship—we enter into them for many of the same reasons; the processes of self-disclosure work the same; we even initiate and maintain them using many of the same skills.

One difference between same- and cross-cultural relationships is that we may feel more tentative in initiating a dialogue with a person from another culture. Perhaps this is because we are afraid of language barriers or accidentally saying something wrong. In other situations, such as when two people are assigned to a residence hall room as roommates, the relationship may be forced upon them. In either case, understanding how to develop a strong cross-cultural relationship is important. One approach to establishing such a relationship is to view it as a cooperative learning opportunity in which both participants work together to achieve a mutually shared understanding while learning about each other's cultures (Ronesi, 2003). In approaching the relationship in this way, try to do the following:

1. *Have meaningful personal interaction.* If you feel uncomfortable in the initial stages of interaction, you may be tempted to stick to very safe topics of conversation. Try to talk about some more personal and meaningful topics as well. For instance, what are the similarities and differences between your families? What religions do you practice? What are your hometowns like? What work experiences have you had? By talking about more personal topics like these, you will begin to learn about each other and start the self-disclosure cycle.
2. *Maintain equal status.* Research shows that when one person assumes a role of “leader” or “teacher,” the relationship will have more trouble developing. Both members of the relationship should recognize that each has something unique to offer in terms of knowledge, creativity, openness, listening, and so on. Remembering to keep the new relationship focused on interpersonal closeness rather than task concerns can help prevent a perception of inequality in the early stages of the relationship.
3. *Find ways to build interdependence.* Any relationship will be stronger if both individuals bring something to the relationship. If each can find ways to help the other, interdependence will form, and the bond of the relationship will grow stronger.
4. *Respect individual differences.* People from different cultures are like anyone else; some are shy while others are outgoing; some are very cerebral while others are very practical; some like romantic comedies while others like action shows—the list goes on and on. You should not be surprised that individual differences will occasionally cause disagreement. Remember that such differences do not mean that you cannot make a cross-cultural relationship work; it may simply mean that you don't like certain personality characteristics. Just as with friends from your own culture, you occasionally have to overlook minor disagreement in light of the many other areas of agreement.

### The Stages in Interpersonal Relationships

Communication and relationship development are symbiotic; that is, communication affects the growth of relationships, and the growth of relationships affects communicative behavior (Miller, 1976).

## Relational Development

Knapp and Vangelisti (2000) identified 10 interaction stages of interpersonal relationships. Baxter (1983, 1984) and others have experimentally attempted to validate these stages. The model that Knapp and Vangelisti presented generally appears valid. Furthermore, this developmental model helps organize and explain relational changes. The first five stages cover **relational development**—the process by which relationships grow.

- *Stage 1: Initiating.* Is the short beginning period of an interaction. This stage involves first impressions, the sizing up of the other person, and attempts to find commonality.
- *Stage 2: Experimenting.* Occurs when the two people have clearly decided to find out more about each other, to quit scouting, and to start getting serious about each other. This stage includes sharing personal information at a safe level: what music, people, classes, professors, and food they like or dislike.
- *Stage 3: Intensifying.* Involves active participation, mutual concern, and an awareness that the relationship is developing because neither party has quit and both people are encouraging its development.
- *Stage 4: Integrating.* Means the two people start mirroring each other's behavior in manner, dress, and language. They merge their social circles, designate common property, and share interests and values.
- *Stage 5: Bonding.* Occurs when the two people commit to each other. They may exchange personal items as a symbol of commitment; they may participate in a public ritual that bonds them, as in the case of marriage; or they may vow to be friends for life and demonstrate that commitment by always being present at important points in each other's life.

### relational development

In Knapp's model the process by which relationships grow.

## Relational Maintenance

Once individuals have bonded in a relationship, they enter a stage of **relational maintenance** in which they begin establishing strategies for keeping the relationship together. Although Altman and Taylor, as well as Knapp and Vangelisti, briefly considered relational maintenance, they did not do so in much detail. Wilmot (1980) suggests that relationships stabilize when the partners reach a basic level of agreement about what they want from the relationship. In addition, relationships can stabilize at any level of intimacy, and even “stabilized” relationships may have internal movement.

While the developmental model created by Altman and Taylor and extended by others would suggest that relational maintenance represents a plateau or leveling-off of the relationship, most evidence suggests that the maintenance phase is not best represented by a flat line. Instead, people become more intimate or closer at some periods and more distant and less close at other times. The maintenance phase of a relationship might be more appropriately depicted as a jagged, rather than a straight, line.

Indeed, Baxter and her colleagues (Baxter, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Dindia & Baxter, 1987) and other researchers (Hause & Pearson, 1994; Lowrey-Hart & Pearson, 1997; Pawlowski, 1998) have developed and demonstrated the importance of dialectical theory in interpersonal relationships. **Dialectic** refers to the tension that exists between two conflicting or interacting forces, elements, or ideas. When dialectic theory is applied to interpersonal relationships, we acknowledge that relationships often incorporate contradictions or contrasts within them and that relationships are

### relational maintenance

In Knapp's model the process of keeping a relationship together.

### dialectic

The tension that exists between two conflicting or interacting forces, elements, or ideas.

**TABLE 6.1** BAXTER'S DIALECTIC TENSIONS

INTEGRATION	SEPARATION
"Let's move in together."	"When we get married, I plan on keeping my maiden name and continuing in my career."
STABILITY	CHANGE
"I'm glad we've never moved."	"I'm feeling restless. I think it is time to plan a vacation!"
EXPRESSION	PRIVACY
"I did absolutely the dumbest thing last night. Let me tell you."	"I would rather not explain how I spent the weekend."

**contradictions**

In dialectic theory the idea that each person in a relationship might have two opposing desires for maintaining the relationship.

always in process. By **contradictions** we mean that each person might have two opposing desires for maintaining the relationship—you want to be with your partner, but you also have a need for space and time away from him or her. By process we mean that relationships are always changing. Thus relational maintenance cannot be depicted as a flat line, but rather one that has peaks and valleys.

What are some of the primary dialectics identified by Baxter? Three emerged in the early work. The dialectic of integration/separation suggests the tension between wanting to be separate entities and wanting to be integrated with another person. The dialectic of stability/change suggests the tension between wanting events, conversations, and behavior to be the same and desiring change. The dialectic of expression/privacy suggests the tension between wanting to self-disclose and be completely open and wanting to be private and closed. Table 6.1 summarizes Baxter's primary dialectics.

**Relational Deterioration****relational deterioration**

In Knapp's model the process by which relationships disintegrate.

The last five stages identified by Knapp and Vangelisti (2000) occur during **relational deterioration**—the process by which relationships disintegrate.

- *Stage 1. Differentiating.* Occurs when the two partners start emphasizing their individual differences instead of their similarities. Rather than going to movies together, he plays basketball with his friends and she golfs with her friends. Some separate activities are healthy in a relationship, but in differentiation the pulling apart is to get away from each other.
- *Stage 2. Circumscribing.* Is characterized by decreased interaction, shorter times together, and less depth to sharing. The two people might go to public events together but do little together in private. Each person figuratively draws a circle around him- or herself, a circle that does not include the other person. The exchange of feelings, the demonstrations of commitment, and the obvious pairing are disappearing.
- *Stage 3. Stagnating.* Suggests a lack of activity, especially activity together. Interactions are minimal, functional, and only for convenience. The two people now find conversation and sharing awkward instead of stimulating.

During this stage each individual may be finding an outlet elsewhere for developmental stages.

- *Stage 4. Avoiding.* Brings reluctance to interact, active avoidance, and even hostility. The two former partners are now getting in each other's way, each seeing the other as an obstacle or a limitation. The amount of their talk may actually increase, but the content and intent are negative. Arguing, fighting, disagreeing, and flight mark their interactions.
- *Stage 5. Terminating.* Occurs when the two people are no longer seen by others or themselves as a pair. They increasingly dissociate, share nothing, claim common goods as individual property, and give back or get rid of the symbols of togetherness. Divorce, annulment, and dissolution are manifestations of this stage, as are people who no longer live together, former friends who have nothing to do with each other, and roommates who take separate and distant quarters.



▲ Relational deterioration is marked by differentiating behavior.

Knapp and Vangelisti (2000) acknowledge that individuals do not progress in a linear way through the stages of development and deterioration (summarized in Table 6.2). They propose that people move within stages to maintain their equilibrium or stability. In other words, people might behave in a way that is more characteristic of one stage even though they are generally maintaining the interaction patterns of another stage.

In addition, communication skills can alter the relational trajectory. In relationships that are dysfunctional or deteriorating, communication can help to heal or

**TABLE 6.2 AN OVERVIEW OF RELATIONAL DETERIORATION STAGES**

PROCESS	STAGE	REPRESENTATIVE DIALOGUE
COMING APART	1. Differentiating	"I just don't like big social gatherings." "Sometimes I don't understand you. This is one area where I'm certainly not like you at all."
	2. Circumscribing	"Did you have a good time on your trip?" "What time will dinner be ready?"
	3. Stagnating	"What's there to talk about?" "Right. I know what you're going to say, and you know what I'm going to say."
	4. Avoiding	"I'm so busy, I just don't know when I'll be able to see you." "If I'm not around when you try, you'll understand."
	5. Terminating	"I'm leaving you . . . and don't bother trying to contact me." "Don't worry."

remedy problems. In new relationships communication may stimulate relational development and growth. Aging relationships may be functional or dysfunctional. Communication skills allow us to subscribe to realistic hope in our relationships.

Finally, individuals do not move through each of these stages with everyone they meet. Research has shown that people base decisions to develop relationships on such factors as physical attractiveness, personal charisma, and communication behaviors (Friedman, Riggio, & Casella, 1988; Sabatelli & Rubin, 1986). In general, we are more likely to attempt to develop relationships with people who are attractive, emotionally expressive, extroverted, and spontaneous. In the next section we will consider some of the theories that suggest why we select some people with whom to relate and why we neglect, or even reject, other people.

## Motivations for Initiating, Maintaining, and Terminating Relationships

### Motivations for Initiating Relationships

What happens in initial interactions with people? While millions of people exist in this world, we have interpersonal relationships with a relatively small number of them. How do you determine which people you will select to be your friends, lovers, or family members? How are you attracted to them? Why do you cultivate relationships with them? How does communication figure into the equation?

First, **proximity**—the location, distance, or range between persons and things—is obvious but important. You are probably not going to have relationships with people from places you have never been. You are most likely to find others where you spend most of your time. For this reason a roommate can easily become a friend. Co-workers, too, often become friends (Sias & Cahill, 1998). People who attend the same religious services, belong to the same social clubs, or are members of the same gang are most likely to become friends. People who share a major or a dormitory, cafeteria, car pool, or part of the seating chart in a class are also likely candidates. To underline the potency of proximity, consider that changes in location (high school to college and college to job) often change relationship patterns.

Second, we select, from all the people we see, the ones we find high in **attractiveness**, which includes physical attractiveness, how desirable a person is to work with, and how much “social value” the person has for others (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). In other words, a person who is desirable to work with, who seems to have “social value” in that others also show interest in him or her, and who physically looks good to us is attractive (Pearson & Spitzberg, 1990). Attractiveness is not universal. The attractiveness and the importance of particular physical features vary from culture to culture (Hetsroni & Bloch, 1999) and from person to person. Because of perceptual differences, you will not be looking for the same person as everyone else.

**Responsiveness**, the idea that we tend to select our friends and loved ones from people who demonstrate positive interest in us, is another feature of attraction. Not everyone responds positively to us, but someone who does is likely to get our attention. Few characteristics are more attractive than someone who actively listens to us, thinks our jokes are funny, finds our vulnerabilities endearing, and sees our faults as amusing. In short, we practically never select our friends from among those who dislike us.

#### proximity

The location, distance, or range between persons and things.

#### attractiveness

A concept that includes physical attractiveness, how desirable a person is to work with, and how much “social value” the person has for others.

### TRY THIS

List the features of attractiveness of your best friend, your boyfriend or girlfriend, or your lover or spouse.

#### responsiveness

The idea that we tend to select our friends and loved ones from people who demonstrate positive interest in us.



▲ We select friends from among people who are responsive to us.

**Similarity**, the idea that our friends and loved ones are usually people who like or dislike the same things we do, is another feature of attractiveness. People in interpersonal relationships often look, act, or think similarly. Whatever we consider most important is the similarity we seek, so some friends or people in loving relationships are bound by their interests, others by their ideology, and still others by their mutual likes and dislikes. A hard-core environmentalist is unlikely to be close personal friends with a developer, whereas the developer is likely to select friends from people in the same business, country club, and suburb. Thousands of people find their friends in the same circle where they work: clerical workers with clerical workers, managers with managers, and bosses with bosses. Similarity is a powerful source of attraction.

**Complementarity** is the idea that we sometimes bond with people whose strengths are our weaknesses. Whereas you may be slightly shy, your friend may be assertive. In situations that call for assertiveness, she may play that role for you. A math-loving engineer may find friendship with a people-loving communication major, who takes care of the engineer's social life while the engineer helps his friend with math courses. Having a friend or loved one who is too much like you can result in competitiveness that destroys the friendship.

### Motivations for Maintaining Relationships

After you have gotten to know someone, why do you continue to relate to him or her? You may begin to relate to dozens of people, but you do not continue friendships, family relationships, or love relationships with everyone with whom you start a relationship. Consider the friends you had in elementary school or high school. Do you maintain any of those friendships now? Have you established an intimate relationship with someone but broken up with her or him? Do you have family members with whom you are close and others with whom you hardly speak? Let us consider some of the motivators that encourage continuing a relationship.

#### similarity

The idea that our friends and loved ones are usually people who like or dislike the same things we do.

#### complementarity

The idea that we sometimes bond with people whose strengths are our weaknesses.



Although we initially develop a relationship on the basis of such factors as attractiveness and personal charisma, we maintain relationships for different reasons. Maintained relationships invite certain levels of predictability, or certainty (Perse & Rubin, 1989). Indeed, we attempt to create strategies that will provide us with additional personal information about our relational partners (Berger & Kellermann, 1989). We are also less concerned with partners' expressive traits (such as being extroverted and spontaneous) and more concerned with their ability to focus on us through empathic, caring, and concerned involvement (Davis & Oathout, 1987). Indeed, as relationships are maintained, partners not only become more empathic but also begin to mirror each other's behavior.

### Co-Cultural Differences

Motivations for maintaining relationships are not simple. Many co-cultural differences affect our maintenance behaviors. For example, women use more maintenance strategies than do men (Ragsdale, 1996). People with different ethnicities express different primary needs in their interpersonal relationships. According to Collier (1996), "Latinos emphasized relational support, Asian Americans emphasized a caring, positive exchange of ideas, African Americans emphasized respect and acceptance, and Anglo Americans emphasized recognizing the needs of the individual" (p. *i*). People from different generations view intergenerational communication differently (Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000). In addition, people display different levels of nonverbal involvement and intimacy with their romantic partners (Guerrero, 1996).

### Satisfying Relationships

Couples can achieve satisfying and long-term relationships, however. Pearson (1996) looked at couples who had been happily married for more than 40 years. She found that many of these marriages were characterized by stubbornness ("This marriage will succeed no matter what"), distortion ("She is the most beautiful woman in the world"), unconditional acceptance (regardless of faults), and the continuous push and pull of autonomy or independence versus unity or interdependence. Maintaining positive, satisfying relationships is not easy, but the people who are the most satisfied with their relationships are probably those who have worked hardest at maintaining them. Communicatively, people in long-term and satisfied relationships are distinctive from those in short-term or unhappy relationships. Sillars, Shellen, McIntosh, and Pomegranate (1997) found that people in long-term and satisfied relationships are more likely to use joint rather than individual identity pronouns ("we" and "us" rather than "I" or "me").

#### hurtful messages

Messages that create emotional pain or upset.

### TRY THIS

*All of us have terminated relationships. Consider a relationship that you terminated within the last year or two. What factors caused you to terminate it?*

### Motivations for Terminating Relationships

Although our goal may be to maintain satisfying relationships, this outcome is not always possible. Relationships do not last. About half of all marriages end in divorce, and in second and third marriages, the failure rate is even higher. Why do interpersonal relationships end? What factors encourage people to seek the conclusion, rather than the continuation, of a relationship? We consider a few of these factors here.

**Hurtful messages**—messages that create emotional pain or upset—can end a relationship. Hurtful messages occur in most relationships, even those in which couples are very satisfied, and do not always end in disruption of the relationship. However, if

hurtful messages become a pattern or are so intense that one partner cannot forget them, they can be disruptive. Why do some hurtful messages create significant relational problems while others do not? Duck and Pond (1989) suggest that the relational history, the closeness of the couple, and their satisfaction with the relationship all affect how people perceive and respond to their own interaction.

Hurtful messages may be more or less harmful to the relationship depending on the reaction of the second person. Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) determined that people responded in one of three ways: active verbal responses (for example, attacking the other, defending oneself, or asking for an explanation), acquiescent responses (for example, apologizing or crying), and invulnerable responses (for instance, laughing or ignoring the message). People who felt extremely hurt were more likely to use acquiescent responses than were those who were less hurt. People who were less hurt more often used invulnerability than did those who felt extremely hurt. They also found that relational satisfaction was positively related with active verbal responses.

**Deceptive communication**—the practice of deliberately making somebody believe things that are untrue—can also lead to relational dissatisfaction and termination. Probably, all relational partners engage in some level of deception from time to time. The “little white lie,” the nonrevelation of the “whole truth,” and the omission of some details are commonplace. However, deliberate and regular deception can lead to the destruction of trust and the end of the relationship.

**deceptive communication**

The practice of deliberately making somebody believe things that are not true.

**NCA Ethics Credo**



*We believe that truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason are essential to the integrity of communication.*

People may tell familiar lies (stories that are manufactured and that they tell again and again), or they may tell unfamiliar lies (untruths that are constructed on the spot). When they do so, they vary their behavior depending on whether they are telling familiar or unfamiliar lies by altering the length of their pauses, their eye gaze, and the amount of smiling and laughing in which they engage. Observers, however, cannot detect these alterations (di Battista, 1997). In short, we do not seem to be very accurate in determining deceptive behaviors.

**Aggressiveness** occurs when people stand up for their rights at the expense of others and care about their own needs but no one else's. Aggressiveness might help you get your way a few times, but ultimately, others will avoid you and let their resentment show. People who engage in aggressive behavior may do so because of negative self-concepts or because they have learned this pattern of behavior growing up. Martin and Anderson (1997) show that both sons and daughters have patterns of verbal aggression that are similar to their mother's.

**aggressiveness**

Assertion of one's rights at the expense of others and care about one's own needs but no one else's.

Aggressiveness is not the same as argumentativeness. **Argumentativeness**, defined as the quality or state of being argumentative, is synonymous with being contentious or combative. People who are argumentative are not verbally aggressive (Semic & Canary, 1997). Indeed, argumentative people may value argument as a normal social communicative activity. Argumentation varies across the life span (Schullery & Schullery, 2003). Argumentativeness patterns are shown to be similar between mothers and their children (Martin & Anderson, 1997).

**argumentativeness**

The quality or state of being argumentative; synonymous with contentiousness or combativeness.

**Defensiveness** occurs when a person feels attacked. Jack Gibb (1991) suggests that trust is essential to healthy relationships. But trust must be established between

**defensiveness**

Occurs when a person feels attacked.

individuals, and not be based on roles, positions, or status. In other words, people should come to relationships without all of the trappings of the roles they play. Reducing defensiveness is essential to building trust.

Gibb distinguished between behaviors that encourage defensiveness and those that reduce defensiveness. He identified evaluation, control, neutrality, superiority, certainty, and strategy as promoting defensive behaviors in others:

- *Evaluation* occurs when an individual makes a judgment about another person or his or her behavior.
- *Control* suggests that the speaker does not allow the second person to join in the discussion of how a problem should be solved.
- *Neutrality* means that the originator of the message does not show concern for the second person.
- *Superiority* occurs when the first person treats the second as a person of lower status.
- *Certainty* denotes a lack of openness to alternative ideas.
- *Strategy* refers to the employment of manipulative and premeditative behavior.

Gibb then categorized the following behaviors as reducing defensiveness: description, problem orientation, empathy, equality, provisionalism, and spontaneity. People who use *description* report their observations rather than offering evaluative comments. People with a *problem orientation* do not act as though they have the solution, but are eager to discuss multiple ideas. *Empathy* implies concern for others, as shown through careful listening for both the content and the intent of the other's message. *Equality* means that the communicator demonstrates that he or she is neither superior nor inferior to the second person. *Provisionalism* suggests that the communicator does not communicate certainty or a total conviction, but is open to other ideas. *Spontaneity* implies naturalness and a lack of premeditation.

Gibb suggests that people replace those behaviors that create defensiveness with those that reduce it. Table 6.3 depicts the paired concepts. For example, rather than telling someone that he is late for a meeting and you do not appreciate waiting, you might note the time that he arrived and inquire empathically about his circumstances. Rather than being indifferent toward others and nonverbally suggesting that you are superior, you might make inquiries about them and provide messages expressing your multiple similarities.

## SKILL BUILDER

Rewrite the following statements in a way that would decrease defensiveness. Use the categories generated by Gibb. For example, you would replace evaluation with description.

1. "What's wrong with you anyway?"
2. "Who's responsible for the mess in the library?"
3. "I don't really care what you do."
4. "We're not leaving here until I say we're leaving."
5. "We don't need to meet. I know how to solve the problem."
6. "I don't need your help."

**TABLE 6.3** JACK GIBB'S CONTRIBUTION TO REDUCING DEFENSIVENESS

CREATE DEFENSIVENESS	REDUCE DEFENSIVENESS
Evaluation	Description
Control	Problem orientation
Neutrality	Empathy
Superiority	Equality
Certainty	Provisionalism
Strategy	Spontaneity

## Essential Interpersonal Communication Behaviors

Many of the communication behaviors discussed in this text are important in interpersonal communication. You need to be aware of factors like perception, have a good self-concept, provide clear verbal and nonverbal cues to others, and be able to listen and empathize as others provide messages to you. Some additional communication behaviors are associated with effective interpersonal communication. In an interpersonal relationship you show affection and support, you influence others, and you develop the unique nature of the interpersonal relationship. In this section we consider these three interpersonal communication areas: affectionate communication; influence, which includes compliance-gaining and interpersonal dominance; and the development of the exclusive relationship.

### Using Affectionate and Supportive Communication

Affection, the holding of fond or tender feelings toward another person, is essential in interpersonal relationships. You express your affectionate feelings for others in interpersonal relationships in a variety of ways. Often these expressions are nonverbal as you touch, hug, kiss, or caress another person. You also engage in verbal statements of affection such as “I care about you,” “I really like being with you,” or “I love you.”

A number of variables affect the appropriateness of statements of affection. Therefore, affectionate communication may be viewed as risk-laden. Among the factors that you will consider when you choose to offer affectionate statements to a relational partner are your own and your partner's sex, the kind of relationship you have (platonic or romantic), the privacy and emotional intensity of the situation, and your predispositions (Floyd, 1997a, 1997b; Floyd & Morman, 1998, 2000). Telling another person that you love him or her may hold significantly different meanings depending on your sex, your partner's sex, your past relationships, the degree of privacy of the situation in which you choose to share your feelings, and the other person's feelings about you.

Although generally positive, the expression of affection may not always be so. If the receiver of the affectionate message does not reciprocate, the sender may be embarrassed or feel that she or he has lost face. Floyd and Burgoon (1999) found that, indeed, expressions of liking do not always result in positive relational outcomes. Recall a time when you expressed affection toward another person and she or he did not return the same warmth. How did you feel? In general, when people



Analyze the use of effective and supporting communication by watching the video clip titled “Opposites Attract” on the *Online Learning Center*.

have particular expectancies about communicative behavior and those expectancies are not met, both disruption and adaptation follow (LePoire & Yoshimura, 1999).

Supportive communication is also important in interpersonal communication. Support may include giving advice, expressing concern, and offering assistance. Although people generally respond well to supportive communication, the type of support preferred may vary as a result of the receiver's age (Caplan & Samter, 1999) and the support provider's goals (MacGeorge, 2001). In times of distress, comforting messages (suggesting a diversion, offering assistance, and expressing optimism, for example) encourage people to feel less upset. At the same time, the recipients of such messages may also feel demeaned. The distressed person is most likely to feel less upset when the comforting message is offered by a close friend rather than an acquaintance (Clark, Pierce, Hzu, Toosley, & Williams, 1998). Comfort, then, is viewed as most positive in close interpersonal relationships rather than in more distant ones.

### Influencing Others

Later in this book we will discuss influencing others in public communication settings. For now, we consider the notion of influencing others in interpersonal settings. In general, influence is the power that a person has to affect other people's thinking or actions. In interpersonal communication, influence has been studied widely. One body of research has focused on compliance-gaining and compliance-resisting. **Compliance-gaining** may be defined as those attempts made by a source of messages to influence a target "to perform some desired behavior that the target otherwise might not perform" (Wilson, 1998, p. 273). Compliance-gaining occurs frequently in interpersonal communication. We ask a friend for advice, we ask a parent for financial assistance, or we encourage a relational partner to feel more committed. Children become more skillful at identifying situational and personal cues in possible compliance-gaining as they develop, with girls showing more sensitivity than boys (Marshall & Levy, 1998).

**Compliance-resisting** occurs when targets of influence messages refuse to comply with requests. When resisting requests, people often offer reasons for their refusal (Saeki & O'Keefe, 1994). People who are more sensitive to others and who are more adaptive are more likely to engage in further attempts to influence (Ifert & Roloff, 1997). Indeed, they may address some anticipated obstacles when they initiate their original request and they may adapt later attempts to influence by offering counterarguments.

For example, if you are asking a friend to borrow his car, you might consider some of the reasons he might refuse. He might state that he needs his car at the same time, that the last time you borrowed his car you returned it with no gas, or that the only time he ever hears from you is when you want something from him. In your initial message you might suggest to him that you believe you have been neglecting him and that you want to spend some time together and, in addition, that you have not been as considerate as you could be with him. When he suggests that he needs his car at the same time that you do, you might offer to use his car at a different time.

### Developing a Unique Relationship

Interpersonal relationships are defined by their uniqueness. In a sense relational couples create a "culture of two" (Betcher, 1987). They may have unique names for each other and shared experiences that others do not have with them, and they may develop distinctive patterns of interaction. Bruess and Pearson (1993) found that couples who created **personal idioms**—or unique forms of expression and

#### compliance-gaining

Those attempts made by a source of messages to influence a target "to perform some desired behavior that the target otherwise might not perform."

#### compliance-resisting

The refusal of targets of influence messages to comply with requests.

#### personal idioms

Unique forms of expression and language understood only by individual couples.

## e-note

## Testing Your Interpersonal Skills

**www.queendom.com** is a website for multiple tests on relationships, personality, health, careers, and intelligence. Although validity and reliability information on the tests is not provided, the tests are an interesting starting point to think about how your personality and relationship scores might affect your interpersonal relationships and communication with others. Relevant to this chapter are tests on arguing, assertiveness, commitment readiness, communication skills, conflict management, coping skills, jealousy, relationship attachment, relationship satisfaction, romantic personality, romantic space, and self-disclosure. You might wish to take one or more of these tests with someone with whom you have an interpersonal relationship. Share your responses with each other, and determine the perceived accuracy of the test results with your partner. Does your partner see you differently than or similarly to how you perceive yourself? How could differences in perception affect your relationship?

language understood only by them—expressed high relational satisfaction. Did your parents have a unique name for you that no one else used? Do you have a way of referring to an event with an intimate that no one else understands? Do you have a way of expressing a thought, idea, or need to a friend that no one else can decipher? All of these are personal idioms.

Through playful interaction and the creation of **rituals**—formalized patterns of actions or words followed regularly—couples create a shared culture. Rituals may become so routine that we do not realize they are comprised in the fabric of a relationship. However, if a relational partner does not enact them, uneasiness often follows. For example, can you recall a time when your partner failed to call you, say “I love you,” bring you flowers or a gift, or enact another regular behavior? Although the importance of the ritual was perhaps never verbalized, you probably felt hurt or neglected.

Bruess and Pearson (1997) suggest that the following rituals are important characteristics of long-term interpersonal relationships:

- *Couple-time rituals*—for example, exercising together or having dinner together every Saturday night
- *Idiosyncratic/symbolic rituals*—for example, calling each other by a special name or celebrating the anniversary of their first date
- *Daily routines and tasks*—for example, if living together, one partner always preparing the evening meal and the other always cleaning up afterward
- *Intimacy rituals*—for example, giving each other a massage or, when apart, talking on the telephone before going to bed
- *Communication rituals*—for example, getting together for lunch every Friday afternoon or going out to a coffee bar with a significant other
- *Patterns, habits, and mannerisms*—for example, meeting her need to be complimented when going out for a fancy evening, and meeting his need to be reassured before family events
- *Spiritual rituals*—for example, attending services together or doing yoga together in the evening

**rituals**

Formalized patterns of actions or words followed regularly.



## The Possibilities for Improvement

Can you improve your communication in interpersonal relationships? Until relatively recently, many people felt that learning to relate more effectively to others was impossible. Today, however, most individuals feel such a possibility does exist. Are such changes easy? Generally, they are not. You should not expect that an introductory course in communication will solve all of your relational problems. Self-help books that promise instant success will probably result only in disillusionment. Courses on assertiveness training, relaxation techniques, and marital satisfaction provide only part of the answer. Improving relationships is a lifelong process that nobody perfects but that many people can pursue for their own benefit.

### Bargaining

#### bargaining

The process in which two or more parties attempt to reach an agreement on what each should give and receive in a transaction between them.

Often we engage in bargaining in our interpersonal relationships. **Bargaining** occurs when two or more parties attempt to reach an agreement on what each should give and receive in a transaction between them. Bargains may be explicit and formal, such as the kinds of agreements you reach with others to share tasks, to attend a particular event, or to behave in a specified way. Bargains may also be implicit and informal. For example, in exchange for receiving a compliment from him every day, you might agree not to relate embarrassing stories about your boyfriend. You may not even be aware of some of the unstated agreements you have with others with whom you communicate.

A study on interpersonal bargaining (Deutsch & Kraus, 1962) identified three essential features of a bargaining situation:

1. All parties perceive the possibility of reaching an agreement in which each party would be better off, or no worse off, than if no agreement were reached.
2. All parties perceive more than one such agreement that could be reached.
3. Each party perceives the others as having conflicting preferences or opposed interests.

What are some examples of bargaining situations? You may want to go out with friends when your spouse would prefer a quiet evening at home. A woman might prefer to go hiking, whereas her husband is more eager to take a cruise. One person could use the word *forever* to mean a few days or weeks, whereas another assumes the word refers to a much longer period of time. In each of these instances, the disagreement can be resolved through bargaining.

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) underlined the importance of bargaining in interpersonal communication:

Whatever the gratifications achieved in dyads, however lofty or fine the motives satisfied may be, the relationship may be viewed as a trading or bargaining one. The basic assumption running throughout our analysis is that every individual voluntarily enters and stays in any relationship only as long as it is adequately satisfactory in terms of rewards and costs.

### Learning Communication Skills

If you wish to improve your communication within your interpersonal relationships, you must commit yourself to learning a variety of communication skills. You must understand the importance of perceptual differences among people, the role of

self-concept in communication, the nature of verbal language, and the role of nonverbal communication. You must be willing to share yourself through self-disclosure, and you must be willing to attempt to understand other people through careful and conscientious listening. In addition, you must recognize that even when you thoroughly understand these concepts and are able to implement them in your behavior, your interactions with others may not be successful. Communication is dependent on the interaction between two communicators, and one person cannot guarantee its success. Others may have conflicting goals, have different perspectives, or communicate incompetently.

Learning individual communication concepts and specific communication skills is essential to effective interaction. You also need to understand the impact of these skills. For example, you do not communicate at home the way you do in the classroom. Self-disclosure, which is especially appropriate and important within the family context, may be out of place in the classroom. Preparation and planning are important in an interview, but they may be seen as manipulative in a conversation between partners.

### Maintaining Behavioral Flexibility

In addition to being improved by an understanding of communication concepts, skills, and settings, our interactions may be greatly enhanced by an underlying approach to communication behavior called **behavioral flexibility**—the ability to alter behavior to adapt to new situations and to relate in new ways when necessary

#### TRY THIS

*Define behavioral flexibility, and determine to what degree you exhibit this trait.*

(Pearson, 1983). Behavioral flexibility allows you to relax when you are with friends or to be your formal self while interviewing for a job. The key to behavioral flexibility may be self-monitoring, always being conscious of the effect of your words on the specific audience in a particular context.

Flexibility is important in a variety of fields. For example, biologists and botanists have demonstrated that extinction of certain living things occurs because of an organism's inability to adapt to changes in the environment. Psychologists have suggested that women and men who are **androgynous**—who possess both stereotypically male and stereotypically female traits—are more successful in their interactions than are people who are unyieldingly masculine or absolutely feminine. Flexibility in gender roles is more useful than a static notion of what being a man or a woman means in our culture. For instance, if you are a single parent, you may be called on to behave in a loving and nurturing way to your child, regardless of your sex. If your goal is to be a successful manager in a large corporation, you may have to exhibit competitiveness, assertiveness, and a task orientation, regardless of your sex. As you move from interactions with co-workers to interactions with family and friends, you may need to change from traditionally “masculine” behaviors to those that have been considered “feminine.”

Behavioral flexibility is especially important in interpersonal communication because relationships between people are in constant flux. For example, the family structure has gone through sharp changes in recent years. In addition, the United States has an increasingly older population. Changes in the labor force also require new skills and different ways of interacting with others. People travel more often and move more frequently. Four million unmarried couples cohabit (Singletary, 1999). As a result of these types of changes, people may interact differently today.

#### behavioral flexibility

The ability to alter behavior to adapt to new situations and to relate in new ways when necessary.

#### androgynous

Refers to persons who possess stereotypically female and male characteristics.



What kinds of changes can you expect in your own life that will affect your relationships with others? You may change your job 10 or more times. You may move your place of residence even more frequently. You probably will be married at least once, and possibly two or three times. You probably will have one child or more. You will experience loss of family members through death and dissolution of relationships. You may have a spouse whose needs conflict with your own. Other family members may view the world differently than you and challenge your perceptions. When your life appears to be most stable and calm, unexpected changes will occur.

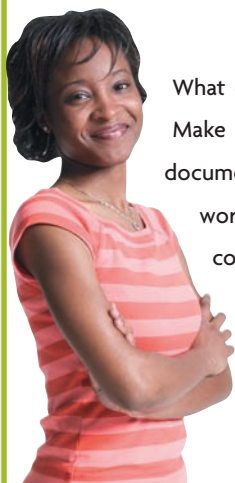
How can behavioral flexibility assist you through life's changes? A flexible person draws on a large repertoire of behaviors. Such an individual is confident about sharing messages with others and about understanding the messages that others provide. The flexible person is able to self-disclose when appropriate but does not use this ability in inappropriate contexts. The flexible person can demonstrate listening skills but is not always the one who is listening. The flexible person can show concern for a child who needs assistance, can be assertive on the job, can be yielding when another person needs to exercise control, and can be independent when called on to stand alone. The flexible person does not predetermine one set of communication behaviors he or she will always enact. The flexible person is not dogmatic or narrow-minded in interactions with others.

To remember that changes are not always negative is important. In fact, considerable change is positive. For instance, when you graduate from college, the changes that occur are generally perceived as positive. When you enter into new relationships, you generally feel better about your life.

But even positive change can be stressful. Gail Sheehy, author of *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life* (1976), wrote:

We must be willing to change chairs if we want to grow. There is no permanent compatibility between a chair and a person. And there is no one right chair. What is right at one stage may be restricting at another or too soft.

## get INVOLVED!



What did students at Brigham Young University in Hawaii do for their service-learning projects? In Make a Difference Day, they renovated and beautified Kahuku High School, a project filmed as a documentary for BYU-TV. They also coached students in preparing for the Special Olympics and worked with patients in the Kahuku Hospital Social Work Department. Each of these activities contributed to the community and provided opportunities for the students to enhance their interpersonal communication skills.

You can use the Internet to search for similar opportunities near your school and community.

# Chapter Review & Study Guide

## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Interpersonal communication is the process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening.
- ▶ Interpersonal relationships provide one context in which people communicate with each other. Interpersonal relationships are associations between at least two or more people who are interdependent, who use some consistent patterns of interaction, and who have interacted for a period of time. Interpersonal relationships are established for a variety of reasons.
- ▶ Most interpersonal relationships are positive, but interpersonal relationships also include conflict and may have a dark side.
- ▶ Self-disclosure is the process of making intentional revelations about oneself that others would be unlikely to know and that generally constitutes private, sensitive, or confidential information.
- ▶ Friendships, one type of interpersonal relationship, are taking new forms in the twenty-first century.
- ▶ Most relationships go through definable stages of development, maintenance, and deterioration. Why do people initiate relationships?
  - Attraction and similarity are important.
  - Other factors include proximity, responsiveness, complementarity, and social exchange.
- ▶ Relationship maintenance is challenging.
  - Although some aspects of maintenance seem to generalize across most relationships, co-cultural differences affect our maintenance behaviors.
  - People can achieve satisfying relationships.
- ▶ Why do people terminate relationships? Hurtful messages, deceptive communication, and aggressiveness may have a destructive effect on interpersonal relationships.
- ▶ Although interpersonal communication behaviors cannot be prescribed, three communication behaviors are essential to competent interpersonal communication.
  - Affectionate communication includes the expression of fond or tender feelings toward another person.
  - One goal of interpersonal communicators is to influence others in their interpersonal relationships.
  - We develop our unique relationship through personal idioms and playful interactions.
- ▶ We can improve relationships through communication by developing behavioral flexibility.



## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Aggressiveness

Androgynous

Argumentativeness

Attractiveness

Bargaining

Behavioral flexibility

Complementarity

Complementary relationships

Compliance-gaining

Compliance-resisting

Contradictions

Deceptive communication

Defensiveness

Dialectic

Hurtful messages

Interpersonal relationships

Personal idioms

Proximity

Relational deterioration

Relational development

Relational maintenance

Responsiveness

Rituals

Self-disclosure

Similarity

Symmetrical relationships

## Study Questions

- Which is *not* an element of an interpersonal relationship?
  - It includes at least two or more people.
  - It involves people who are interdependent.
  - Its patterns of interaction are inconsistent.
  - Individuals in an interpersonal relationship have interacted for some time.
- Interpersonal relationships are important because
  - they fulfill our needs for inclusion, affection, and control
  - physical, safety, and security needs cannot be met elsewhere
  - dependence is vital
  - we need to interact with people having similar interests
- An extrovert being friends with an introvert demonstrates which type of relationship?
  - symmetrical
  - complementary
  - negotiated
  - no relationship
- Obsession, jealousy, gossip, and mental abuse are examples of
  - healthy interpersonal communication
  - marital relationships
  - the negative qualities and harmful effects of some interpersonal relationships
  - positive problem-solving techniques
- Which of the following statements regarding friendship is true?
  - Friendships remain unvarying and unchanged over time.
  - All friendships are maintained identically, regardless of relational partners' intent.
  - The quality of friendship is affected by other psychological predispositions.
  - For many older women, their only friend is their husband.
- If two people in a relationship start to merge their social circles and purchase items together, they are exhibiting actions in the
  - relational development stage
  - relational maintenance stage
  - relational deterioration stage
  - relational dialectical stage
- We may begin a relationship with someone based on how desirable that person is to work with in the classroom. This type of motivation refers to
  - responsiveness
  - similarity
  - complementarity
  - attractiveness
- A motivation for terminating a relationship by deliberately making somebody believe untrue things is labeled
  - deceptive communication
  - aggressiveness
  - argumentativeness
  - defensiveness
- Your childhood nickname and the pet name your significant other calls you are examples of
  - compliance-gaining
  - personal idioms
  - rituals
  - contradictions
- Which of the following is very important in interpersonal communication, given that relationships between people are constantly changing?
  - bargaining
  - self-concept
  - behavioral flexibility
  - dialectic tensions

### Answers:

1. (c); 2. (a); 3. (b); 4. (c); 5. (c); 6. (a); 7. (d); 8. (a); 9. (b); 10. (c)

## Critical Thinking

- Consider a friendship you have or had. Explain that friendship in terms of the interpersonal relationship stages. Give examples that describe each stage.
- How have you maintained your relationships with various people over time? If you have come close to terminating a relationship, how was it regained? Using terminology from the text, what was the reason for the near-termination?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain why you should study intercultural communication.
2. Distinguish between cultures and co-cultures.
3. Provide examples of co-cultural strategies.
4. Explain potential intercultural communication problems.
5. Identify broad cultural characteristics.
6. Practice strategies for improving communication with people from other cultures and co-cultures.



# INTERCULTURAL



**This chapter introduces you to communication between cultures and co-cultures.** Being an effective communicator means interacting positively with people from various racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The goal of this chapter is to increase your confidence in your ability to communicate with people of other cultures and co-cultures. The chapter stresses the importance of communicating effectively in an ever-changing world. It explains cultures and co-cultures, reveals strategies used by co-cultures to interact with dominant cultures, identifies broad characteristics of several cultures, and provides strategies for improving intercultural communication. When you have completed this chapter, you should know more about people outside your own group, and you should feel more confident about communicating successfully with others.

# COMMUNICATION



**On a calm, warm evening I stood** on the roof of an apartment complex with my friend Pranay, watching as fireworks exploded in every direction. Was this display on the Fourth of July? No. In fact, I was on the opposite side of the world—in India—celebrating Diwali, “The festival of lights,” a Hindu tradition.

An Indian by nature and an American by nurture, I was on my first trip back to India since my adoption by a white couple in infancy. I knew nothing of Indian culture or the Hindu traditions, but that shortcoming did not stop me from feeling the sheer excitement of the once-a-year event.

Before entering my host’s home for the evening, I was treated to beautifully colored decorations like a floor mat in front of the door. Powder in vibrant colors of yellow, orange, purple, and pink was intricately arranged in a perfect circle surrounded by scented candles and colorful flower petals. “What is this?” I said, stunned by this beautiful work of art. “It’s to keep the evil spirits out,” said my friend Pranay as we entered his relative’s gorgeous flat.

“Diwali is the celebration of good over evil,” Pranay’s father told me as we sat around a large wooden table encircled with aunts, uncles, and cousins. As we dined on fine Indian cuisine, little ones scampered around waving sparklers back and forth as they giggled and screamed. They were about as clueless to the significance of the day as I was, but they were clearly enjoying every minute.

“Try this,” someone would say, as I eagerly gorged on the sweets and dishes that arrived only moments earlier. Indian hospitality, like world-famous Indian food, is incomparable. I felt blessed and honored to be a welcome guest at an awe-inspiring celebration. Whether we are Christian or Hindu or any other religion under the sun, all of us share unique traditions that unite communities and bond families together as they celebrate life and happiness.

*In an increasingly diverse country we need to communicate with cultures and co-cultures around the world. After all, most cultures from around the world are already in America. This chapter seeks to help you understand and even welcome differences that make our culture one of the best in the world.*

This vignette was composed by Daniel Kalis, a child of India who was adopted in infancy and who grew up as one of the only people of color in a small town in Minnesota. He is a journalism major with a gift for writing.

## Why Is the Study of Intercultural Communication Important?

### intercultural communication

The exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally.

Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) define **intercultural communication** as “the exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally.” Not long ago, intercultural communication involved only missionaries, jet-setting business executives, foreign correspondents, and political figures. Now, however, developments in technology and shifts in demographics have created a world in which intercultural communication is common. Events on September 11, 2001, changed our perceptions of travel and of other cultures. Americans were surprised to find that they were hated;

they soon discovered that they knew little about Islamic religion or about Afghanistan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Intercultural communication is essential because of our increasing exposure to people of other cultures and co-cultures. More people are exposed to different global cultures through vacation travel, transnational jobs, international conflicts, military and humanitarian service, and the presence of immigrants, refugees, and new citizens.

More people are also exposed to different co-cultures—from ethnic groups, to neighborhood gangs, to partisan political groups, to gay and lesbian societies. Some of you will work and live every day with people different from yourself. Others of you will only occasionally encounter unfamiliar groups. But today chances are excellent that you will need to know the basics of intercultural communication presented in this chapter. The first reason, then, why you should study intercultural communication is that communication with people from other cultures and co-cultures is increasingly common.

A second reason to study intercultural communication is money. Today we sell our corn, wheat, and cars in Asia; and we buy coffee from Colombia, bananas from Costa Rica, and oil from Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Our clothing comes from China and Panama, our shoes are made in Mexico, and our cars may have been assembled in Germany, Hungary, or Canada. Business that was previously domestic is now global. The students of today will find themselves working with people from many different cultures because of our global economy.

A third reason to study intercultural communication is, simply, our curiosity about others. We are curious about people who don't look like us, sound like us, or live like us. We wonder why one woman always wears a long dress and veil, why someone would prefer polkas to rap, why a man wears a turban, and why some people do not eat meat. We are curious about arranged marriages, rituals like funerals and weddings, and sports like sumo wrestling, kick boxing, and cricket. We express disbelief that fanatics in an otherwise peace-loving religion promise heaven to suicidal followers as a reward for murdering innocent people. We do not understand religious fanatics and paramilitary groups in our own country who stockpile weapons to attack our own government. Intercultural communication includes better understanding of cultural and co-cultural friends and enemies.

A fourth reason to study intercultural communication is the convergence of technologies. For most of the twentieth century, intercultural activity required an expensive flight or phone call. Now people can cheaply communicate with each other around the world on the Internet. Phone, video, and audio merge into a system that can allow for sight and sound. Cell phones, pagers, and handheld computers bring communication technology to our fingertips. The new technologies have transformed interpersonal and face-to-face communication. We are now what Marshall McLuhan predicted: a global village.

A fifth reason to study intercultural communication is the influx of foreign-born immigrants, aliens, and refugees that has changed the face of America. In metropolitan Washington, DC, your waiter is from Colombia, South America; your cab driver is from Ethiopia; the porter is from the Sudan; the dry cleaner is from Korea; and the barber is a Vietnamese woman. The story is similar for Miami, New York City, Detroit, and Chicago. If not a melting pot, America is now (and always was) an exotic salad with many cultures contributing to its overall flavor. You can communicate better with people from other cultures if you know something about theirs.



Watch “The Right Kind of Care” video on the Online Learning Center to see a realistic example of intercultural communication.

## What Are Cultures and Co-Cultures?

### culture

A unique combination of rituals, religious beliefs, ways of thinking, and ways of behaving that unify a group of people.

### co-culture

A group that exists within a larger, dominant culture but differs from the dominant culture in some significant characteristic.

You have just learned that intercultural communication is the exchange of information between people of different cultures, but you may be uncertain about the definitions of culture and co-culture. A **culture** is a unique combination of rituals (such as greeting and parting), religious beliefs, ways of thinking (such as the earth was created), and ways of behaving (such as women can marry at 14 years of age in Iran) that unify a group of people. Often we perceive cultural differences (see chapter 2 on perception) as emerging from nation-states (France, the Czech Republic), religious groups (Muslims, Buddhists, Amish), tribal groups (Kurds, Ibos, Potawatomi Nation), or even people united by a cause (Palestinians, the Taliban, al-Qaeda).

A **co-culture** exists within a larger, dominant culture but differs from the dominant culture in some significant characteristic. An Afghani who moves to America moves from a culture (Afghanistan) to a co-culture (an Afghani in America). An able-bodied, wealthy white male would quickly move from the dominant culture to a co-culture if he became handicapped in an automobile accident. Co-cultures are based on varied criteria: females because they are not equal to men in pay, power, or prestige; poor people because they are united in powerlessness; and gays because they lack rights and privileges. An individual can belong to many co-cultures. An American adolescent female immigrant from Panama who is a Roman Catholic earning minimum wage belongs to at least five co-cultures, but no one would say she is of the dominant culture in America.

Next we are going to explore some methods used by co-cultures to communicate with dominant cultures. An example would be a gay male who works in an office with a dominant culture of straight men and women. What choices does that person have in relating to other workers? The next section explains the goals of assimilation, accommodation, and separation.

### The Goals of Co-Cultural Communication

Some of the earlier studies of co-cultures focused on how little influence women had even when they were part of workforce teams. Kramarae (1981), for instance, called women a “muted group” because their ideas were undervalued, underestimated, and sometimes unheard. Like the “transparent man” in the musical *Chicago*—a person whom nobody noticed, addressed, or remembered—women were muted when their presence and voices were unheard or unheralded.

Co-cultures are often called “marginalized groups” because they live on the edges of the dominant culture; in other words, they exist on the margins. Who are the marginalized groups? Orbe (1996) calls them “nondominant groups” and categorizes them as “people of color, women, gays/lesbians/bisexuals, people with disabilities, lower/working class, and the young and the elderly.” Who are the likely members of the dominant culture? Orbe quotes Folb’s (1994) list of the dominant as male, European American, heterosexual, able-bodied, youthful, middle/upper class, and/or Christian groups. Others dominant in our culture are the college-educated, people in the professions, homeowners, married couples, and people paid by the month instead of by the hour.

### TRY THIS

*Think of times when you were a marginalized, nondominant person trying to communicate with someone from the dominant culture—for example, when you were a child trying to bargain with your parent, when you were an employee negotiating with your employer, when you were explaining an unpaid bill, or when you were appealing a grade. What strategies did you use to influence someone with an advantage over you?*

Usually, marginalized, nondominant groups seek three possible goals in relation to dominant groups: assimilation, accommodation, or separation. The **assimilation goal** means that the marginalized group attempts to fit in with the dominant group. They wear suits; you wear a suit. They don't have body piercing; you forgo the ear, lip, and eyebrow rings. They talk sports; you learn the names of the teams and players.

The **accommodation goal** means that the marginalized group manages to keep its co-cultural identity while striving for positive relationships with the dominant culture. For example, a woman brings her lesbian partner to the company picnic, makes no secret of the relationship at work, but does not flaunt her lesbianism to her heterosexual colleagues. A fundamentalist Christian woman never cuts her hair, always wears long dresses, and never wears makeup, but respects the right of co-workers to have their own religious beliefs without interference from her.

A third goal, **separation**, is achieved when the marginalized group relates as exclusively as possible with its own group and as little as possible with the dominant group. A number of very conservative religious groups like Hasidic Jews, the Amish, and black Muslims are examples. But marginalized individuals can live separate lives in the midst of the dominant culture by relentlessly focusing on work, studiously avoiding any but the most necessary interactions, and never socializing outside work with any colleagues.

The separation goal can be carried to an extreme with an “in your face” attitude about the nondominant group's identity. Some skinheads are openly racist, some black and Hispanic groups are openly antiwhite, and some paramilitary groups are openly antigovernment. Queer Nation blatantly forces straight people to recognize the existence of gayness by outing prominent individuals. Such strategies are aggressive and confrontational and signal that the group does not want to be transparent.

#### assimilation goal

The marginalized group attempts to fit in with the dominant group.

#### accommodation goal

The marginalized group manages to keep co-cultural identity while striving for positive relationships with the dominant culture.

#### separation goal

The marginalized group relates as exclusively as possible with its own group and as little as possible with the dominant group.



▲ Co-cultural identity is maintained by distinctive clothing and other adornments.

## SKILL BUILDER

*To what co-culture(s) do you belong? What strategies do you and others like you adopt in relating to the dominant culture? Think about verbal and nonverbal messages that your co-culture exchanges with those individuals outside your group.*

## What Are Some Intercultural Communication Problems?

Intercultural communication is subject to all the problems that can hamper effective interpersonal communication. Intercultural relationships are especially hindered by many of the perceptual distortions discussed in chapter 2, “Perception, Self, and Communication.” How we select, organize, and interpret visual and message cues is

even more important between cultures than among friends. Attribution and perceptual errors are more likely to occur between persons with many differences. Several additional problems may occur during intercultural interactions. Becoming aware of these issues can help you avoid them or reduce their effects. Keep in mind that although the barriers identified here can be problematic, they do not occur in every exchange.

### Ethnocentrism

#### ethnocentrism

The belief that your own group or culture is superior to other groups or cultures.

The largest problem that occurs during intercultural communication is that people bring the prejudices of their culture to the interaction. **Ethnocentrism** is the belief that your own group or culture is superior to all other groups or cultures. You are ethnocentric if you see and judge the rest of the world only from your own culture's perspective. Some common examples include thinking that everyone should speak English, that people in the United States should not have to learn languages other than English, that the U.S. culture is better than Mexico's, or that the Asian custom of bowing is odd (Dodd, 1998). Each of us operates from an ethnocentric perspective, but problems arise when we interpret and evaluate other cultures in terms of our own. Generally, a lack of interaction with another culture fosters high levels of ethnocentrism and encourages the notion of cultural superiority. Ethnocentrism makes others feel defensive.

#### cultural relativism

The belief that another culture should be judged by its own context rather than measured against your culture.

In ethnocentrism you use your own culture as the measure that others are expected to meet; **cultural relativism** is the belief that another culture should be judged by its own context rather than measured against your culture. Saying that the Asian custom of bowing is odd overlooks the long history of bowing to one another as a sign of respect. To communicate effectively with people from different cultures, you need to accept people whose values and norms may be different from your own. An effective communicator avoids ethnocentrism and embraces cultural relativism.

### Stereotyping

Ethnocentrism is not the only perceptual trap you can fall into in intercultural communication. Equally dangerous is the tendency to stereotype people in cultural and co-cultural groups. Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) define a stereotype as "a generalization about some group of people that oversimplifies their culture." The stereotype of a gay male is an effeminate fellow, but gay people are just as likely to be truckers, physicians, and athletes. Similarly, Jews are both wealthy and poor, Asians are both gifted at math and not, and black Americans are sometimes great athletes but sometimes not. Consider a former student who was ethnic Korean, whose last name was Schlumpberger (very German), and who had grown up in St. Paul, Minnesota. He could not speak Korean, had not been in the country since his birth, and grew up in a Caucasian family. So much for judging from appearances.

Why do people stereotype? Bruno (1999) observes, "The tribal drum beats in all societies, warning members of the tribe against the dangers of the others, those who are not members of the tribe, even those who are different within a society. The drum's messages result in different tribal behavior, from religious warfare in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, to Neo-Nazi racial purification in Germany and America" (p. 855). Bruno notes

that prejudice may be bold or subtle and can even occur among physicians against the disabled people they treat.

Allport (1958) originally observed that people are more likely to stereotype individuals and groups with whom they have little contact. For example, you might have a whole set of beliefs about Middle Eastern Muslim women, many of whom cover their bodies and faces and walk well behind their husbands. You may not realize that one of your neighbors is actually Muslim but does not follow some of the strict traditions of her religion.

Sometimes stereotyping occurs because people have had a negative or positive experience with a person from another culture or co-culture. In one investigation people stereotyped black people after only one observation of a negative behavior. In another, simply hearing about an alleged crime was sufficient to stereotype blacks (Henderson-King & Nisbett, 1996). Clearly, people are willing to stereotype with very little evidence.

How do people feel about receiving either negative or positive comments that reflect on their social group rather than on them as individuals? In general, people respond negatively to negative comments that are about them either as an individual or as a member of a social group. They also respond negatively when the comment was about them as a member of the social group, was positive, but reflected a stereotype. Participants in this study reported that even positive stereotypes caused increased anger and a desire to avoid or attack the speaker (Garcia, Miller, Smith, & Mackie, 2006).

What can an individual do who feels that another is stereotyping him or her? A study that tested the effectiveness of confrontation found that this strategy actually helps. While confrontations elicited negative emotions and evaluations toward the person doing the confronting, they also resulted in fewer stereotypic comments from the initial speaker. This may be due to the negative self-directed affect that was felt by the stereotyping speaker (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006).

## Prejudice

While ethnocentrism is thinking your culture is better than others and stereotyping is acting as if all members of a group are alike, **prejudice** is a negative attitude toward a group of people just because they are who they are. Often the groups on the receiving end of prejudice are marginalized groups—people in poverty, people of color, people who speak a language other than English, gay men and lesbian women—but sometimes the group receiving the prejudice is actually larger than the group that exhibits the prejudice. For example, many countries, including the United States, show prejudice against women (lower pay, the glass ceiling) even though they are a majority. Women experience sexist incidents—demeaning and degrading comments and sexual objectification—much more so than men, and women experience depression, anger, and lower self-esteem because of such incidents (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). In still other countries people who are a numerical minority control the fates and show prejudice toward a group that is larger but weaker (e.g., Saddam Hussein's Iraq).

Prejudice is often based on ignorance. That is, the dominant culture chooses not to know much about the target of its prejudice, or the dominant group sees the



### prejudice

A negative attitude toward a group of people just because they are who they are.

objects of their prejudice as being in the place they belong. Women and African Americans have made some headway against prejudice, but “mistakes” indicate that prejudices persist: the man—not a woman—must be the manager or owner, the African-American man by the luxury car must be someone’s driver, and that Mexican must be a day laborer. How many African-American married couples have you seen with their adopted white child? Education may be the best route to reducing prejudice so one of the goals of this textbook is to help educated people overcome ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and prejudice. That will not occur, however, if you protect your prejudices against any outside interference.

## What Are Some Characteristics of Different Cultures?

Accepting that your own culture is not superior to another person’s culture is one way to improve intercultural communication. Another way is by understanding some of the values and norms of other cultures. For example, suppose you are an American teaching in Japan (a *collectivist* culture). Your students’ first assignment is to give a speech before the class. After you give them the assignment, they automatically form groups, and each group selects a spokesperson to give the speech. In the United States (an *individualistic* culture), students would be unlikely to turn a public-speaking assignment into a small-group activity unless specifically directed to do so. If you don’t know anything about the norms and customs of the Japanese culture, you might be totally baffled by your students’ behavior.

In this section you will learn about four characteristics of cultures: individualistic versus collectivist cultures, uncertainty-accepting versus uncertainty-rejecting cultures, implicit-rule versus explicit-rule cultures, and M-time versus P-time cultures (see Figure 7.1). Keep in mind that the characteristics discussed here are general tendencies; they are not always true of a culture, and they are not true of everyone in a culture.

### Individualistic Versus Collectivist Cultures

Much of what is known about individualistic and collectivist cultures comes from a study by Hofstede (1980) that involved more than 100,000 managers from 40 countries. Although neither China nor Africa was included, the study is a classic in its comprehensiveness.

**Individualistic cultures** value individual freedom, choice, uniqueness, and independence. These cultures place “I” before “we” and value competition over cooperation, private property over public or state-owned property, personal behavior over group behavior, and individual opinion over what anyone else might think. In an individualistic society people are likely to leave the family home or the geographic area in which they were raised to pursue their dreams; their loyalty to an organization has qualifications; they move from job to job; and they may leave churches that no longer meet their needs. Loyalty to other people has limits: Individualistic cultures have high rates of divorce and illegitimacy. According to the Hofstede (1980) study, the top-ranking individualistic cultures are the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands.

#### individualistic cultures

Cultures that value individual freedom, choice, uniqueness, and independence.



Figure 7.1 Cultural differences.

**Collectivist cultures**, on the other hand, value the group over the individual. These cultures place “we” before “I” and value commitment to family, tribe, and clan; their people tend to be loyal to spouse, employer, community, and country. Collectivist cultures value cooperation over competition, and group-defined social norms and duties over personal opinions (Coleman, 1998). An ancient Confucian saying captures the spirit of collectivist cultures: “If one wants to establish himself, he should help others to establish themselves first.” The highest-ranking collectivist cultures are Venezuela, Pakistan, Peru, Taiwan, and Thailand (Hofstede, 1980).

**collectivist cultures**

Cultures that value the group over the individual.



View an animation of this illustration on the *Online Learning Center*.



## cultural note

### Interpret the Meaning of Common Sayings

Examine carefully the sayings below, and by yourself or with classmates, determine whether they reflect a collectivist or an individualistic culture:

1. When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.
2. God helps those who help themselves.
3. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
4. The ill-mannered child finds a father wherever he goes.

**Answers:**

1. An Ethiopian proverb, collectivist.
2. An American saying, individualistic.
3. An American saying, individualistic.
4. An African saying, collectivist.

SOURCE: Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998.

#### uncertainty-accepting cultures

Cultures that tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity.

#### uncertainty-rejecting cultures

Cultures that have difficulty with ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity.

#### implicit-rule culture

A culture in which information and cultural rules are implied and already known to the participants.

## Uncertainty-Accepting Versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

**Uncertainty-accepting cultures** tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity. Some of these cultures already have a mixture of ethnic groups, religions, and races. They are more likely to accept political refugees, immigrants, and new citizens from other places. They are less likely to have a rule for everything and more likely to tolerate general principles. Uncertainty-accepting cultures include the United States, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Singapore, Hong Kong, Ireland, and India (Hofstede, 1980). Interestingly, Singapore is a country that is more tolerant of uncertainty and diversity but has many rules, including one prohibiting chewing gum. This oddity should serve as a reminder that these characteristics are generalizations and therefore are not found consistently in every culture.

**Uncertainty-rejecting cultures** have difficulty with ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity. These cultures are more likely to have lots of rules, more likely to want to know exactly how to behave, and more likely to reject outsiders such as immigrants, refugees, and migrants who look and act differently than them. Among the most common uncertainty-rejecting cultures are Japan, France, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, Peru, Chile, Russia, China, and Argentina (Samovar, Porter, & Stefani, 1998).

This uncertainty-rejection can lead to communication problems. For example, an increasing number of Asian people now reside in the United States. Teachers who are conferring with Asian parents may find that their communicative style is different from that of European-Americans with whom they meet. Lee and Manning (2001) report that Asian parents do not start talking immediately in a teacher–parent conference. Instead, they rely on the teacher’s tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, posture, walk, and treatment of time and space to learn about how the teacher feels about their child. The nonverbal cues help the Asian parents reduce their uncertainty.

## Implicit-Rule Versus Explicit-Rule Cultures

An **implicit-rule culture** is one in which information and cultural rules are implied and already known to the participants. For example, a traditional Arab woman

knows that one of the rules of her culture is that she is to walk a few paces behind her husband. People from an implicit-rule culture tend to be more polite, less aggressive, and more accommodating. Implicit-rule cultures typically are found in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America (Dodd, 1998).

An **explicit-rule culture** is one with explicit information, policies, procedures, and expectations. For example, in U.S. families parents often discuss beforehand with their small children how the children are to act during a visit from someone of importance. People from an explicit-rule culture tend to be more combative, less willing to please, and less concerned about offending others. Explicit-rule cultures typically are found in Northern and Western Europe and the United States (Dodd, 1998).

You might think about the difference between an implicit-rule culture and an explicit-rule culture in this way: In an implicit-rule culture the social rules are part of who and what you are. They are learned over time from others and are no more discussed than washing your hands or brushing your teeth are in America. In an explicit-rule country, rules are often developed, discussed, and negotiated as you go along.

#### explicit-rule culture

A culture in which information, policies, procedures, and expectations are explicit.

## M-Time Versus P-Time Cultures

The last intercultural characteristic we will consider here is another of Hall's (1983) concepts for differentiating among cultures of the world. **M-time**, or monochronic time schedule, compartmentalizes time to meet personal needs, separates task and social dimensions, and points to the future (Ting-Toomey, 1997). M-time is dominant in Canada, the United States, and Northern Europe.

These cultures see time as something that can be compartmentalized, wasted, or saved. Americans might schedule times to work out, to keep appointments, to go to meetings, and to take the family to a fast-food restaurant. Time is segmented, dedicated to work or social experiences (but usually not both), and plotted toward future events and activities. Within this scheme, getting to any appointment on time is treated with considerable importance.

If you travel to other parts of the world including most countries in Latin America and the Middle East, you will probably experience being an M-time person in a P-time world. You may feel psychologically stressed as others always seem to be late. On the other hand, you may note that they also focus only on you when you are conversing with them. They are not distracted by schedules or other commitments.

#### M-time

The monochronic time schedule, which compartmentalizes time to meet personal needs, separates task and social dimensions, and points to the future.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Diversity training has become a multimillion-dollar industry in the United States, with consultants numbering in the thousands. Training and related proactive efforts to address diverse workers and customers are often lumped under the umbrella of “managing” diversity. Kirby and Harter (2003) urge practitioners to consider the implications of using a “managerial” metaphor to understand and enact workforce diversity. What symbolic power is present in the metaphor of “managing” diversity? If metaphors can function to indirectly argue for a particular attitude toward a subject, what attitudes does the language of “managing” diversity imply? How might managerial language both enable and constrain organizational members’ perceptions about working with a diverse workforce and customer base? Consider the implications of alternative metaphors: “respecting” diversity, “honoring” diversity, and “tolerating” diversity.*

**P-time**

The polychronic time schedule, which views time as “contextually based and relationally oriented.”

**P-time**, or polychronic time schedule, views time as “contextually based and relationally oriented” (Ting-Toomey, 1997, p. 395). For P-time cultures time is not saved or wasted; instead, time is only one factor in a much larger and more complicated context. Why halt a conversation with an old friend to hurry off to an appointment on a relatively unimportant issue?

Relationships in some contexts trump time considerations. P-time cultures orchestrate their relational and task obligations with the fluid movements of jazz, whereas M-time cultures treat life like a march in which people strive mainly to stay on schedule and be efficient, and value tasks over relationships. Typical P-time cultures are found in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, France, Africa, and Greece. America is predominantly M-time because of the strong European influence, but some co-cultures within the United States exhibit P-time tendencies.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Individualism-Collectivism Scale

In this chapter you learned that people from different cultures, and even people from the same culture, can differ across several different cultural dimensions. This scale helps you learn how you might compare with others on one such dimension—individualism and collectivism. Read each statement carefully and use the following scale to indicate how well the statement describes you:

- 1 = Does not describe me at all
  - 2 = Does not describe me very well
  - 3 = Describes me somewhat
  - 4 = Describes me well
  - 5 = Describes me very well
1. I often “do my own thing.”
  2. The well-being of my co-workers is important to me.
  3. One should live one’s life independently.
  4. If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
  5. I like my privacy.
  6. If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means.
  7. I prefer to be direct and forthright when discussing with people.
  8. It is important to maintain harmony with my group.
  9. I am a unique individual.
  10. I like sharing little things with my neighbors.
  11. What happens to me is my own doing.
  12. I feel good when I cooperate with others.
  13. When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities.
  14. My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.
  15. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.
  16. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.

Source: Sengilis, T. M., Trandis, H. C., Bhawuk, P. S., & Geifand, M. J. (1995). Horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism: A theoretical and measurement refinement. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 29, 240–275.

Businesspeople in P-time cultures do conduct business, but they do it very differently than those in M-time cultures. A businessperson might have a large waiting room outside of her or his office. Several people will be in that waiting room, and they use the space and time to meet with each other and to resolve issues. A great deal of business in M-time cultures is conducted in public rather than in a series of private meetings.

Table 7.1 summarizes the concepts we discussed in this section. Most of the information is adapted from Carley Dodd's (1998) book titled *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*.

**TABLE 7.1 SUMMARY OF CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS**

INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES TEND TO:	COLLECTIVIST CULTURES TEND TO:
Value individual freedom; place "I" before "we." Value independence. Value directness and clarity. <i>Examples:</i> United States, Australia, Great Britain	Value the group over the individual; place "we" before "I." Value commitment to family, tribe, and clan. Value cooperation over competition. <i>Examples:</i> Venezuela, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand
UNCERTAINTY-ACCEPTING CULTURES TEND TO:	UNCERTAINTY-REJECTING CULTURES TEND TO:
Be willing to take risks. Avoid rules, seek flexibility, and reject hierarchy. Value individual opinion, general principles, and common sense <i>Examples:</i> United States, Great Britain, Denmark	Be threatened by ideas and people from outside. Establish formal rules for behavior; prefer stability, hierarchy, and structure. Embrace written rules, regulation, and rituals. <i>Examples:</i> Japan, France, Spain, Greece, Argentina
EXPLICIT-RULE CULTURES TEND TO:	IMPLICIT-RULE CULTURES TEND TO:
See cultural rules as explicit; explain and discuss procedures. Separate person and issue. Be straightforward; people have to cope with embarrassment or insult. <i>Examples:</i> Northern and Western Europe, United States	See cultural rules as already known to participants. See person and issue as one. Prefer "saving face" to soothe an insulted person. <i>Examples:</i> Middle East, Africa, Latin America
M-TIME CULTURES TEND TO:	P-TIME CULTURES TEND TO:
Compartmentalize time. Say that they can waste or save time. Separate work and social time, task and relational time. <i>Examples:</i> North America, Northern Europe	Factor in time as one element of a larger context. Value social relationships and time considerations together. Orchestrate family and social responsibilities and task dimensions. <i>Examples:</i> Latin America, Middle East, Asia, France, Africa

## What Are Some Strategies for Improving Intercultural Communication?

Effective intercultural communication often takes considerable time, energy, and commitment. Although some people would like “10 easy steps” to effective intercultural communication, no foolproof plan is available. However, the strategies presented here should provide you with some ways to improve intercultural communication and avoid potential problems. Having some strategies in advance will prepare you for new situations with people from other cultures and co-cultures and will increase your confidence in your ability to communicate effectively with a variety of people.

1. *Conduct a personal self-assessment.* How do your own attitudes toward different cultures and co-cultures influence your communication with them? One of the first steps toward improving your intercultural communication skills is an honest assessment of your own communication style, beliefs, and prejudices.
2. *Practice supportive communication behaviors.* Supportive behaviors, such as empathy, encourage success in intercultural exchanges; defensive behaviors tend to hamper effectiveness.
3. *Develop sensitivity toward diversity.* One healthy communication perspective holds that you can learn something from all people. Diverse populations provide ample opportunity for learning. Take the time to learn about other cultures and co-cultures before a communication situation, but don't forget that you will also learn about others simply by taking a risk and talking to someone who is different from you. Challenge yourself. You may be surprised by what you learn.
4. *Avoid stereotypes.* Cultural generalizations go only so far; avoid making assumptions about another's culture, and get to know individuals for themselves.
5. *Avoid ethnocentrism.* You may know your own culture the best, but that familiarity does not make your culture superior to all others. You will learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of your own culture by learning more about other cultures.

NCA Ethics  
Credo



*We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.*

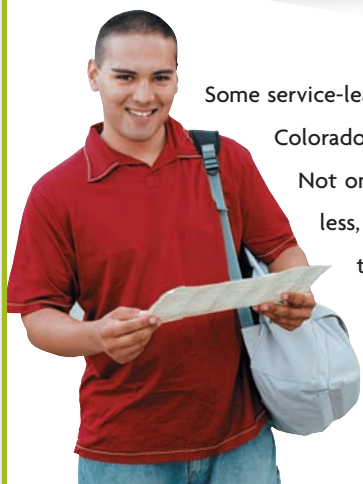
6. *Develop code sensitivity.* Code sensitivity refers to the ability to use the verbal and nonverbal language appropriate to the cultural or co-cultural norms of the individual with whom you are communicating. The more you know about another's culture, the better you will be at adapting.
7. *Seek shared codes.* A key ingredient in establishing shared codes is being open-minded about differences while you determine which communication style to adopt during intercultural communication.
8. *Use and encourage descriptive feedback.* Effective feedback encourages adaptation and is crucial in intercultural communication. Both participants should be willing to accept feedback and exhibit supportive behaviors. Feedback should be immediate, honest, specific, and clear.



▲ Freedom of expression and a diversity of perspective are fundamental to a civil society.

9. *Open communication channels.* Intercultural communication can be frustrating. One important strategy to follow during such interactions is to be patient as you seek mutual understanding.
10. *Manage conflicting beliefs and practices.* Think ahead about how you might handle minor and major differences, from everyday behavior to seriously different practices like punishments (beheading, stoning), realities (starvation, extreme poverty), and beliefs (male superiority, female subjugation).

## get INVOLVED



Some service-learning projects move out from the local community to the global community. At Colorado Christian University students are expected to complete volunteer service hours.

Not only do students minister to severely injured and elderly patients, feed the homeless, and mentor with inner-city youth, but their university supports global mission trips which encourage students to establish relationships with people from around the world. An actual intercultural experience in another nation unlike our own can make this chapter on intercultural communication come alive in an unforgettable experience.



Of course, the most effective strategy for improving your intercultural communication competence is practice. Fortunately, the increasing diversity of our own culture means that intercultural communication practice can take place with the people at the corner market, at your place of employment, or even with the student sitting next to you in class. To learn from these many instances of intercultural communication, you must learn to be reflexive. **Reflexivity** means being self-aware and learning from interactions with the intent of improving future interactions. That is, you are able to assess the interaction, identify what went well in the conversation and what could have been done better, and then learn from those observations. Through reflexivity you will not only improve your intercultural communication skills, but will also become a more effective communicator in nearly every situation.

**Reflexivity**

Being self-aware and learning from interactions with the intent of improving future interactions.



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ The study of intercultural communication is important because:
    - We are increasingly exposed to people of other cultures and co-cultures.
    - We have an economic need to relate to others.
    - We are curious about others.
  - ▶ Co-cultures communicate with the dominant culture with different goals.
    - The three goals of co-cultural communication with the dominant culture are separation, accommodation, and assimilation.
  - ▶ Ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and prejudice result in communication problems in both intercultural and co-cultural interactions.
  - ▶ Cultural barriers can be reduced by learning the norms and values of other cultures.
  - ▶ Cultures can be characterized by variations such as:
    - Individualistic versus collectivist cultures.
    - Uncertainty-accepting versus uncertainty-rejecting cultures.
- Implicit-rule versus explicit-rule cultures.
  - M-time versus P-time cultures.
- ▶ You can strive to improve your own communication competence by:
    - Conducting a personal self-assessment.
    - Practicing supportive communication behaviors.
    - Developing sensitivity toward diversity.
    - Avoiding stereotypes.
    - Avoiding ethnocentrism.
    - Developing code sensitivity.
    - Seeking shared codes.
    - Using descriptive feedback.
    - Opening communication channels.
    - Managing conflicting beliefs and practices.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Accommodation goal  
Assimilation goal  
Co-culture  
Collectivist cultures  
Cultural relativism  
Culture

Ethnocentrism  
Explicit-rule culture  
Implicit-rule culture  
Individualistic cultures  
Intercultural communication  
M-time

Prejudice  
P-time  
Reflexivity  
Separation goal  
Uncertainty-accepting cultures  
Uncertainty-rejecting cultures

## Study Questions

1. Which of the following statements is *not* true?
  - a. The convergence of technologies has created a “global village.”
  - b. Communication with people from other cultures or co-cultures is becoming increasingly uncommon.
  - c. The influx of foreign-born immigrants, aliens, and refugees has changed the face of America.
  - d. Intercultural communication is vital because we are increasingly exposed to people from other cultures and co-cultures.
2. How does a culture differ from a co-culture?
  - a. A co-cultural group does not differ from the dominant culture in significant characteristics.
  - b. A co-cultural group exists within a larger culture, but some significant characteristics differ.
  - c. A cultural group exists within a co-cultural group.
  - d. They do not differ in any way.



3. When marginalized groups try to fit in with the dominant group, they are attempting to achieve
  - a. accommodation
  - b. separation
  - c. distinction
  - d. assimilation
4. When people bring prejudices of their culture to intercultural interactions, they are being
  - a. ethnocentric
  - b. stereotypical
  - c. accommodating
  - d. collectivist
5. When people stereotype, they
  - a. judge another person's culture by its own context
  - b. make a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture
  - c. believe their own culture is superior to other cultures
  - d. avoid making degrading comments with relation to sexual objectification
6. Cultures that are more concerned with individuality, competition, and private property are members of which type of culture?
  - a. collectivist
  - b. relativistic
  - c. individualistic
  - d. assimilated
7. People in which type of culture openly discuss behavioral expectations?
  - a. uncertainty-accepting
  - b. monochronic
  - c. explicit-rule
  - d. collectivist
8. When you have a negative attitude about other people just because they are who they are, you are demonstrating
  - a. prejudice
  - b. ignorance
  - c. ethnocentrism
  - d. stereotyping
9. Those who schedule their days, are early for appointments, and plan for the future are probably members of a(n)
  - a. M-time culture
  - b. P-time culture
  - c. uncertainty-accepting culture
  - d. explicit-rule culture
10. If you are trying to improve your intercultural communication, you should do which of the following?
  - a. Be ethnocentric.
  - b. Avoid shared codes.
  - c. Close communication channels.
  - d. Conduct a personal self-assessment.

### Answers:

1. (b); 2. (b); 3. (d); 4. (a); 5. (b); 6. (c); 7. (c); 8. (a); 9. (a); 10. (d)

## Critical Thinking

1. To which co-cultures do you belong? Describe some of the characteristics of them. Then examine how they are similar and how they differ.
2. Consider the cultural characteristics discussed in this chapter. Which cultures do you identify with most or prefer?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain various dimensions of workplace communication including different types of organizations and communication networks within organizations.
2. Create an effective résumé and cover letter.
3. Take steps to effectively prepare for employment interviews ranging from creating a self-inventory and personal network to planning for postinterview negotiations.
4. Enact skills relevant to workplace communication competence including immediacy, supportiveness, strategic ambiguity, and interaction management.
5. Engage in effective conflict management practices with others in your workplace.
6. Practice effective customer service behaviors.
7. Recognize and practice ethical workplace communication behaviors.



# WORKPLACE



**The very fabric of our social, cultural, and economic** worlds is intertwined with various organizations including schools, clubs, places of worship, and the workplace. Our ability to communicate effectively and ethically within these various organizations determines, in large part, our opportunities for personal, social, and economic advancement. In this chapter you will learn about various skills related to workplace communication. Although we focus on the workplace, many of these skills are relevant to the many other organizations to which you belong.

# COMMUNICATION

**Nearly three-fourths of the taxi** drivers at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport face a dilemma each day. On the one hand, they want to provide good service to their customers and make enough money to support their families. On the other hand, if they are to follow the strictures of their religion, they feel they must refuse service to certain customers.

This dilemma arises from the fact that these cab drivers are immigrants from Somalia and adherents of Islam. They believe that transporting travelers who are obviously carrying alcohol violates their religion. Their refusal is not based on intoxication or the open containers; it is based on their interpretation of Islam's denouncement of alcohol consumption. The number of refusals has grown to more than 5000 a year (van Biema & Pickett, 2007). Needless to say, the actions of the taxi drivers have been a source of controversy.

At first, the airport administration tried to solve the problem by allowing cabs that prohibited alcohol to put a special-colored light on their roof. But this did not sit well with travelers. Some groups claimed that the travelers' rights were being violated and that such preferential treatment for the taxi drivers was not justified in publicly licensed transportation. The airport administration backpedaled from the roof light solution and now suspends drivers who refuse riders toting alcohol. The Muslim-American cab drivers have to decide whether to violate their religious beliefs or face the possibility of losing their livelihood.

*Communication in the workplace involves more than learning how to be pleasant with customers, clients, and co-workers. As individuals with our own values and moral stances, we bring to the workplace certain assumptions and expectations, which may conflict with the assumptions and expectations of others in the workplace, as the cab drivers discovered. Communicating what you expect and what you value to others, and handling the potential conflicts that might arise, are vital skills to learn as you enter a new employment situation. In this chapter you will learn about communication in the workplace—how it works and what skills are needed to make the transition into a new organization and to manage conflict successfully and ethically.*

## What Is Workplace Communication?

Each of us belongs to several different organizations. For example, you may belong to one or more business organizations, perhaps as an employee, supervisor, or even investor. Because you are reading this book, you are most likely a college student and therefore are a member of an educational organization. You may also belong to a church, student clubs, and community service organizations, and, of course, we are all members of local, state, and national government organizations. In short, our workplace is one of many organizations to which we belong. Organizations exist because people's lives have become sufficiently complex that they must cooperate with one another. In other words, **organizations** are social collectives, or groups

### organizations

Social collectives, or groups of people, in which activities are coordinated to achieve both individual and collective goals.

of people, in which activities are coordinated to achieve both individual and collective goals.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Theorists who study workplace communication often rely on metaphors to describe organizational life. These metaphors can take on mythic, larger-than-life qualities. For instance, organizations can be compared to families, machines, and even living creatures. What do these metaphors suggest about communication in the workplace? What do they reveal about communication? How might some metaphors create potential misunderstandings? In small groups, develop a different metaphor for organizational life, and discuss its implications for understanding communication.*

Being communicatively competent in the workplace involves understanding how the context of the organization influences communication processes and how the symbolic nature of communication differentiates it from other forms of organizational behavior. We define **organizational communication** as the ways in which groups of people both maintain structure and order through their symbolic interactions and allow individual actors the freedom to accomplish their goals. This definition recognizes that communication is the primary tool to influence organizations and gain access to organizational resources. To better understand key characteristics of workplace communication, you should recognize that there are different types of organizations and different types of communication networks within organizations.

### Types of Organizations

Talcott Parsons (1963) classified organizations into four primary types: economic, political, integration, and pattern maintenance. Although some organizations might overlap these categories, we usually can classify organizations according to their primary functions in society.

Organizations with an **economic orientation** tend to manufacture products and/or offer services for consumers. Most profit-oriented businesses like Target, Ford Motor Company, and even Tim's Family Bar-B-Que restaurant in Kansas City are oriented toward economic production. Because such organizations succeed or fail based on their ability to sell products to consumers, communication within these workplace settings must work to enhance productivity while at the same time persuade consumers of the value of their products.

Organizations with a **political orientation** generate and distribute power and control within society. Elected local, state, and federal officials; police and military forces; even financial institutions like the Federal Reserve Bank—all are examples of political organizations. Because political organizations must adhere to governing principles—the U.S. Constitution, for example—communication centers on the connection between practices and principles. For instance, the president must answer to Congress to justify the use of military force.

Organizations with an **integration orientation** help to mediate and resolve discord among members of society. Our court system, public interest groups, and conflict management centers are all examples of integration-oriented organizations. One unique characteristic of communication within integrative organizations is the necessity of impartiality. A judge, for example, must not be biased in the way she

#### organizational communication

The ways in which groups of people both maintain structure and order through their symbolic interactions and allow individual actors the freedom to accomplish their goals.

#### economic orientation

Organizations that manufacture products and/or offer services for consumers.

#### political orientation

Organizations that generate and distribute power and control within society.

#### integration orientation

Organizations that help to mediate and resolve discord among members of society.



▲ Complex organizations require members to perform specialized roles. Such specialization is often reflected by organizational structure.

#### pattern-maintenance orientation

Organizations that promote cultural and educational regularity and development within society.

#### communication networks

Patterns of relationships through which information flows in an organization.

#### formal communication

Messages that follow prescribed channels of communication throughout the organization.

#### downward communication

Messages flowing from superiors to subordinates.

#### upward communication

Messages flowing from subordinates to superiors.

## Communication Networks

Competent workplace communicators understand that the workplace comprises multiple communication networks. **Communication networks** are patterns of relationships through which information flows in an organization. Stohl (1995) describes communication networks as capturing “the tapestry of *relationships*—the complex web of *affiliations* among individuals and organizations as they are woven through the collaborative threads of communication” (p. 18). Communication networks emerge in organizations based on formal and informal communication (Stohl & Stohl, 2005).

**Formal communication** consists of messages that follow prescribed channels of communication throughout the organization. The most common way of depicting formal communication networks is with organizational charts like the one in Figure 8.1. Organizational charts provide clear guidelines as to who is responsible for a given task and which employees are responsible for others’ performance. Figure 8.1 is a typical organizational chart for a bureaucratic structure. It shows, for instance, that Alexi reports to her boss, Cliff, and Julie reports to Sue.

Organizational charts demonstrate that communication can flow in several directions: downward, upward, and horizontally. **Downward communication** occurs whenever superiors initiate messages to subordinates. Ideally, downward communication should include such things as job instructions, job rationale, policy and procedures, performance feedback, and motivational appeals. Messages flowing from subordinates to superiors are labeled **upward communication**. Obviously, effective decision making depends on timely, accurate, and complete information traveling upward from subordinates. Messages between members of an organization with equal power are labeled **horizontal communication**. Horizontal communication is important to organizational success when used to coordinate tasks, solve problems, share information, and resolve conflict. Horizontal communication receives much more attention in participatory organizational structures in which employees have more

or he talks to criminal defendants, and public interest groups must demonstrate that their objective benefits all of society and not just a few individuals.

Organizations with a **pattern-maintenance orientation** promote cultural and educational regularity and development within society. Organizations that function to teach individuals how to participate effectively in society, including families, schools, and religious groups, promote pattern maintenance. Communication within organizations focused on pattern maintenance emphasizes social support. Your family or your church, for instance, functions to provide you with personal and spiritual support. Even schools support individuals by helping them learn.

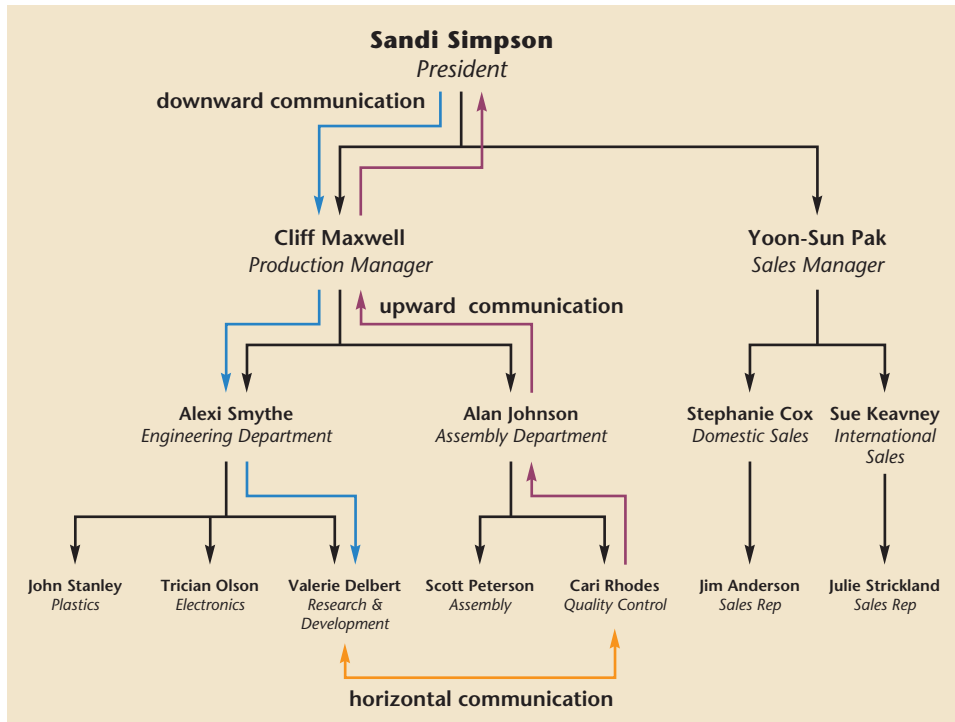


Figure 8.1 Formal communication flow.

opportunity to formally participate in decision making (such as quality circles or autonomous work teams).

**Informal communication** is generally considered to be any interaction that does not generally follow the formal structure of the organization but emerges out of natural social interaction among organization members. Whereas formal communication consists of messages the organization recognizes as official, informal messages do not follow official lines. The concept of emergent organizational networks represents the informal, naturally occurring patterns of communication relationships in organizations (Susskind, Schwartz, Richards, & Johnson, 2005).

To hear people refer to informal interactions as grapevine communication is not uncommon. Information introduced into the grapevine travels quickly because messages are uninhibited by structural constraints. Although we publicly tend to discredit the grapevine, research has consistently shown that grapevine communication is amazingly accurate. Scholars have consistently reported 78–90% accuracy figures in their studies of grapevine communication in organizational settings (e.g., Caudron, 1998).

Competent workplace communicators take care in understanding the various communication networks within their organization. Much inefficiency can be avoided simply by following correct channels for communication. Moreover, effective workplace communicators understand the nature of both formal and informal communication. Managers who take time to develop and listen to sources of informal information are better equipped to understand employees' attitudes and concerns. When entering an organization, such as when you start your first job, asking other employees about communication practices is smart because you not only discover formal procedures but also make contact for informal sources of information.

#### horizontal communication

Messages between members of an organization with equal power.

#### informal communication

Any interaction that does not generally follow the formal structure of the organization but emerges out of natural social interaction among organization members.



**organizational communities**

Groups of similar businesses or clubs that have common interests and become networked together to provide mutual support and resources.

Communication networks can also extend beyond organizations. **Organizational communities** are established when *several organizations—similar businesses, clubs, community-service organizations, etc.—have overlapping interests and become networked together to provide mutual support and resources* (Monge, Heiss, & Margolin, 2007). An example of an organizational community might be a group of organic farms in your area acting together to make connections with local restaurants and grocery stores to sell their goods.

## How Should You Prepare Written Credentials?

Your written credentials should be designed to gain the attention of job interviewers. As you create your résumé and cover letter, remember that the purpose of employment interviews is to make decisions about the degree of fit between people and jobs. Collectively, your credentials should illustrate your ability to successfully do the job.

### Résumés

Writing a résumé is a project that takes time and effort. You should view the process of compiling a résumé as an investment that pays off in numerous ways. The soul-searching involved in creating a résumé functions to focus your life accomplishments and future goals. A résumé puts you into employment databases and, if it is successful, lands you interviews. Résumés also serve employers in numerous ways. Résumés allow employers to predict the future performance of job candidates, simplify the hiring process, and serve as a reference source for the postinterview period (Henricks, 2000). To successfully create a résumé, you must consider style, content, and format.

### Style

The style of a résumé involves the overall tone created by your linguistic and aesthetic choices. We recommend that the style of your résumé reflect your personality in a concise and professional way, be confident but not arrogant, and accurately highlight your credentials. Next, we provide several stylistic suggestions and illustrate them in the sample résumé provided in Figure 8.2.

First, writing résumés using complete sentences and the pronoun “I” is unnecessary. Descriptive clauses are sufficient as long as they are understandable. Many experts recommend beginning descriptive clauses with action verbs such as *planned*, *supervised*, and *conducted* (Henricks, 2000). These words catch employers’ attention because they are concrete and indicate what you have done. Some commonly used action verbs are listed in Table 8.1. Should you use past- or present-tense verbs? The tense depends on whether you are currently performing the particular job duties. Use present-tense verbs for present employment and activities, and past-tense verbs for historical information.

Whenever possible, you should quantify information. The following examples illustrate how to quantify information to illustrate the scope of your accomplishments:

Managed a \$30,000 budget for Lambda Chi Alpha.

Supervised 10 customer service representatives.

Increased sales by 200%.

Employers look for accomplishments like these because they are concrete, measurable, and significant.

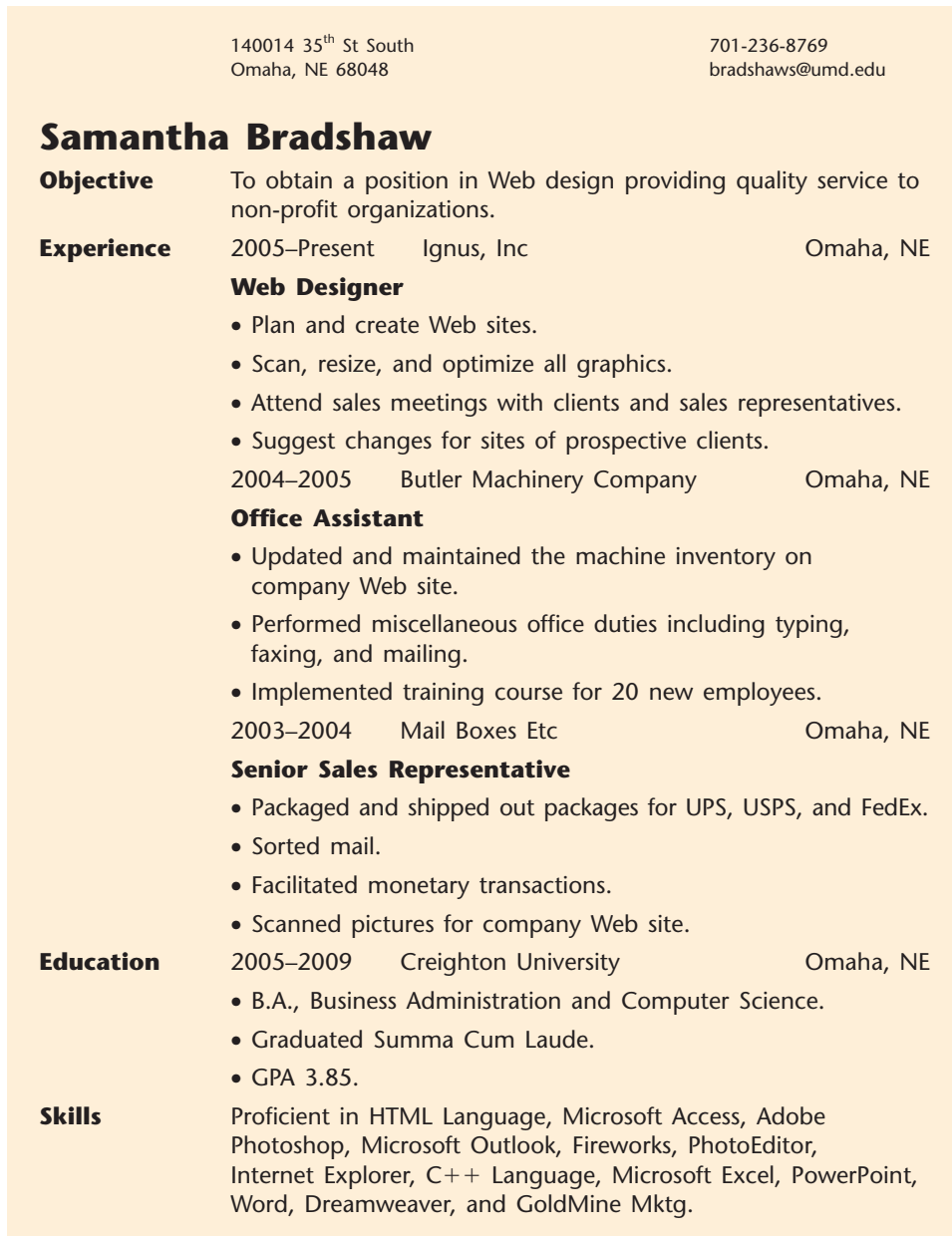


Figure 8.2 Sample chronological résumé.

Be consistent. Whenever you make stylistic decisions, adhere to them. If you use bullets to present your job duties, use bullets throughout your résumé. If you put periods at the end of your bulleted descriptions, make sure you consistently use periods. If you indent one job title five spaces and underline, make sure all your job titles are indented five spaces and underlined.

Be concise. Remember that you do not have to put everything in a résumé. In fact, view your résumé as an appetizer. You can tell about the main course in the interview. Unless you have more than seven years of work experience, most experts agree that your résumé should not be longer than one page (Henricks, 2000).

**TABLE 8.1** ACTION VERBS FOR RÉSUMÉS

Accomplished	Formulated	Ordered	Succeeded
Adapted	Generated	Participated	Supervised
Administered	Handled	Performed	Supplied
Analyzed	Headed	Persuaded	Supported
Balanced	Identified	Prepared	Tabulated
Disbursed	Managed	Revised	Uploaded
Examined	Modified	Searched	Verified
Executed	Notified	Selected	Volunteered
Explained	Obtained	Sponsored	Won
Filed	Offered	Streamlined	Wrote

Be neat. Given that employers have very limited time to spend reading your résumé, the overall impression it creates is important. Employers judge you and your capabilities based in part on the physical appearance of your résumé. Poorly proof-read, sloppy documents are difficult to ignore and will decrease your chances of securing an interview.

### Content

The content of résumés for college students typically includes contact information as well as your objectives, education, experience, skills, and campus activities or community involvement. Without contact information the rest of your résumé is useless. On every résumé you send out, you must include complete information about how to contact you, including an e-mail address.

#### objective statement

An articulation of your goals.

An **objective statement**, or an articulation of your goals, is usually the first information on the résumé, just below your contact information. Objective statements are important because they allow you to tailor your credentials and goals to the needs of a particular organization and job description (Bennett, 2005). In addition to describing your personal goals, you should consider what the organization needs or what types of issues it faces when you are writing your objective statement. The following are examples of objective statements:

To apply programming skills in an environment with short deadlines and demanding customers.

To achieve consistent improvement in sales profitability of units under my supervision.

Employers also want to see your educational credentials. They do not necessarily believe that your college professors taught you everything you need to know to succeed at their company. Rather, your credentials show that you had the intellect to go to college, the determination to complete high school, and the capability of learning new things and finishing complex projects. In summarizing your education, you should include degrees awarded, completion dates (or anticipated completion dates), schools attended, majors and minors, and honors or scholarships. Employers always look at your education, but the further along you are in your career, the smaller the role your education plays on your résumé. Instead, experience becomes more important.



For help preparing business documents, explore the business documents templates on the *Online Learning Center*.

With few exceptions employers will focus much of their attention on your past jobs, whether you are a freshly minted college graduate or an experienced individual changing jobs or careers. Employers look at the types of jobs you have held, job tenure, job duties, and accomplishments. When describing your work experience, make sure you include a job title, the name of the organization, dates of employment, and a description of your major responsibilities and achievements. Remember to use action verbs (see Table 8.1) and to quantify accomplishments whenever possible.

When adapting your résumé to a particular job, you should take care to include key words and phrases from the actual job description. In larger organizations, electronic databases are used to search through hundreds of résumés to find perfect matches between jobs and people—much like what happens when you use Google to search for a web page (Amare & Manning, 2009). As a result, if your résumé contains more key terms from the job advertisement, the chance that an actual person reviews your résumé is increased.

Most résumés also include a skills section highlighting abilities ranging from the ability to use Microsoft Word to fluency in multiple languages. The skills section of your résumé should be tailored to the job description of the position for which you are applying.

Many college students end their résumé with a discussion of their campus activities and/or community involvement. When discussing membership in groups, do not stop at merely listing the group. Rather, indicate your level of involvement, including participation on committees and leadership positions. Involvement in campus and community organizations is important because involvement translates, in the mind of many employers, to workplace citizenship.

### **Format**

Now that you are familiar with stylistic and content choices, you need to consider how to organize information on your résumé. College students typically rely on chronological, functional, and/or online formats.

The **chronological résumé**, which organizes your credentials over time, is what most people envision when they think of a résumé. A résumé based on time has long been the standard and, despite technological advances allowing for electronic résumés, continues to be the most widely accepted format (Henricks, 2000). The core concept of the chronological résumé is accomplishments over time. To refer to a résumé as “reverse chronological” would be more appropriate, because in describing your work experience (and education), you begin with your last or present job and continue back to past jobs. Figure 8.1 is an example of a chronological résumé.

Whereas the chronological format organizes your experience based on “when” you acquired it, the **functional résumé** organizes your experience by type of function performed. If you have had a variety of jobs (such as teaching, sales, and advertising), the functional résumé allows you to group jobs by the skills developed and duties performed. Graduating college students will use a functional résumé to group “professional experience” separately from “other work experience,” which may include jobs that do not directly relate to your career goal but nonetheless illustrate your work ethic.

The impact of the Internet is evident in many facets of our lives, including our professional roles. For that reason you may need to have an online résumé, prepared in plain text (ASCII), hypertext markup language (HTML), or another format and posted on the web. Plain-text résumés have limited formatting options.

#### **chronological résumé**

A document that organizes your credentials over time.

#### **functional résumé**

A document that organizes your credentials by type of function performed.

## e-note

## Creating Electronic Résumés

You can create an electronic résumé by scanning your current résumé and converting it to a .pdf or .html file, or simply by creating these files from scratch. Files in .pdf format require a free computer program called Adobe Acrobat Reader to view. Files in .html formats are essentially web pages. Although nearly every computer has the necessary software to view .html files, the options for formatting the look of your résumé are more limited in .html files as compared with .pdf files. The following websites provide more information on creating electronic résumés:

[www.eresumes.com/eresumes\\_read.html](http://www.eresumes.com/eresumes_read.html)

[www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html](http://www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html)

[susanireland.com/eresumework.htm](http://susanireland.com/eresumework.htm)

For instance, you cannot center, bold, or italicize text. Résumés that use HTML formatting can include all sorts of fancy formatting. As more advanced technologies develop, other ways of transmitting résumés online will emerge. For more information on creating electronic résumés, we suggest that you consult several online sites that describe how to create an electronic résumé as identified in the accompanying e-note.

## Cover Letters

### cover letter

A short letter introducing you and your résumé to an interviewer.

A **cover letter** is a short letter introducing you and your résumé to an interviewer, and it typically accompanies your résumé. Cover letters are persuasive documents that function as an introduction, sales pitch, and overview of your qualifications as related to the job description. Cover letters are important because they help ensure that your résumé is read and help target your appeal for a particular job. As with any persuasive document, a cover letter has four main sections: (1) attention, (2) interest, (3) desire, and (4) action (Krizan, Merrier, & Jones, 2002).

After headings that contain your address and the interviewer's address, your cover letter should gain the attention of the reader. At this point you should specify the position for which you are applying, indicate how you heard about it, and provide a general overview of your qualifications. In the second paragraph you need to arouse the reader's interest and demonstrate your desire for the job. At this point you want to describe your major experiences and strengths as they relate to the job. If possible, mention one or two accomplishments that illustrate your proficiency and effectiveness. The main idea is to create interest and show how your skills and qualifications can be of value to the organization. You can refer the reader to the enclosed résumé for more detail on your qualifications and experience. In the third paragraph you need to suggest action. Restate your interest in the position or organization and your desire for a face-to-face meeting. Finally, express your appreciation for the reader's time and/or consideration.

When writing a résumé, you rarely use full sentences or poetic flair. A cover letter, however, provides an opportunity to demonstrate your writing skills. The design attributes of your cover letter should be consistent with your résumé, including typefaces, fonts, type sizes, line spacing, and paper choice. Figure 8.3 provides a conventional outline for generating a cover letter.

	<b>HEADING</b>	
	Name	
	Address	
	City, State, Zip Code	
	Phone	
	e-mail address	
<b>INSIDE ADDRESS</b>		<b>DATE</b>
Name, Title		
Department, Organization		
Address		
City, State, Zip Code		
<b>SALUTATION:</b>	Use title and last name if available (e.g., Dear Dr. Smith or Dear Ms. Jones). Do not use a first name unless you know the person well and are sure this is acceptable. If you do not have a name, use the title (e.g., Dear Employment Manager).	
<b>PARAGRAPH I:</b>	Gain <i>attention</i> and state <i>purpose</i> —indicate the position or type of work for which you are applying. Mention how you heard about the opening or the organization. You may also want to provide a general overview of your qualifications for the position (functions as a preview statement for your letter).	
<b>PARAGRAPH II:</b>	Arouse <i>interest</i> and demonstrate <i>desire</i> —summarize qualifications and describe enclosure. Here you want to describe your major strengths as they relate to the position you are seeking. If possible, mention one or two recent accomplishments that illustrate your proficiency and effectiveness. The main idea is to create interest and show how your skills and qualifications can be of value to the organization. Refer the reader to the enclosed résumé for more detail on your qualifications and experience.	
<b>PARAGRAPH III:</b>	Suggest <i>action</i> . Restate your strong interest in the position or organization and your desire for a face-to-face meeting. Include a statement about how the reader may contact you. Finally, express your appreciation for the reader's time and/or consideration.	
<b>COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE</b> (Sincerely yours,)		
(Leave 3 blank lines)		
<b>NAME</b>		
<b>POSTSCRIPT</b> (Enclosure; Enc.)		

Figure 8.3 Generic format for a cover letter.

## Employment Interviews

Getting a job is work in itself. Self-knowledge and the ability to express what you believe to be true about yourself are essential in an interview. You should have a clear understanding of the career field in which you plan to spend your productive years, as well as some insight into the effects that current social and economic conditions may have on that field. Background information about the company or

organization for which you would like to work and the position for which you are applying are also factors to consider before the interview. In this section you will learn about these issues including how to prepare for and participate in an interview as well as how to enact postinterview strategies.

### Taking Self-Inventory

What do you really know about yourself? When was the last time you took inventory of your assets and liabilities? Could you express these qualities intelligently? Answers to these questions are essential when you are preparing for a job interview. One way of approaching this difficult task is to ask yourself what your friends, family, and co-workers would say about you. What words would they use to describe you, and why? What successes and failures would they attribute to you? Why do you need this self-assessment just to get a job? The answer is simply that you cannot talk intelligently about yourself if you do not know much about yourself.

In an employment interview no one speaks for you but you. No one knows your best features better than you do, and no one will benefit from your description of those assets more than you will. As an intelligent interviewee you must begin your preparation for a job search with a thorough assessment of your skills, interests, attributes, and achievements. Although not exclusive of other possible areas to explore, consider tallying the following:

- Your work and educational experiences
- Your motivations and goals
- Your strengths and weaknesses
- Your likes and dislikes
- Your skills
- Your roles in campus extracurricular activities
- Your professional experience, if any (including co-op programs and internships)
- Your interests and hobbies
- Your talents, aptitudes, and achievements
- What is important to you in a position and an organization

### TRY THIS

Several online career counseling sites provide numerous resources including interactive tests to give you an idea about possible career directions and articles dealing with various career issues. In his text *Job-Hunting on the Internet*, Richard Bolles (1999) recommends John Holland's SDS (Self-Directed Search), which can be accessed at [www.self-directed-search.com](http://www.self-directed-search.com). Go to this link and complete the interactive career test.

Be thorough in your analysis so that when you get ready to participate in a job interview, you will be able to define and describe the benefits you can bring to an organization. Ideally, you should then be able to summarize what you know about yourself in a single, detailed answer to the most commonly used first question in an employment interview: "Tell me about yourself."

On your journey to self-awareness, know that resources are available to help you. Most college campuses have career counseling centers dedicated to helping you better understand your passions and skills, as well as offering information about potential career paths. The Riley Guide at [www.rileyguide.com](http://www.rileyguide.com) has a good summary of career counseling sites available on the Internet.

### Creating a Network

Many people assume that the key to landing a good job is having a good résumé. Though partly true, this conventional wisdom

is also incomplete: The key to finding great jobs is having a great network. A **network** is an intricate web of contacts and relationships designed to benefit the participants—including identifying leads and giving referrals (Bolles, 2000). People in your network, including family, friends, people you have met at social functions, and people you have worked and studied with, can assist you in identifying job leads and introducing you to yet others who can become a part of your network.

Because many college students have not yet had significant work experience, developing a network is critical to postcollege employment. Although some people are automatically part of our network—family and friends, for instance—we must cultivate others. Here are general strategies you can use to develop your network:

1. *Create an inventory of your network.* You should talk with people in your network who have significant work experience to make them aware that you are in the job market. They may give you leads or other contacts.
2. *Contact the career services office on your campus.* Most campuses offer several job fairs throughout the academic year or provide other networking opportunities. Taking advantage of these face-to-face meeting opportunities can be a very productive use of your time.
3. *Contact and join student chapters of professional organizations on your campus.* In communication, for instance, students often join clubs like the National Communication Association, the Association for Women in Communication, the Public Relations Society of America, or the Society for Professional Journalists. Campus chapters of these organizations provide very useful networking opportunities for members.
4. *Consider an internship.* If you are early in your academic career, an internship can provide valuable networking opportunities. Most colleges and universities offer options for students to earn course credit for internships—you should talk with your academic adviser about such options on your campus.
5. *Volunteer.* Simply taking the time to volunteer in your community can open many doors. Besides giving you the satisfaction that comes from helping others, your hard work and dedication will not go unnoticed by others. Volunteering for a community organization will allow you to get to know many different types of people in your community, thus expanding your network.
6. *Take advantage of the Internet.* Joining professional discussion boards and posting your résumé online will allow you to be “visible” in the growing virtual cybercommunity. Using the Internet is perhaps the best and most practical way to establish a network in places around the country or even the world.

### network

An intricate web of contacts and relationships designed to benefit the participants.

## Searching for a Job

After you have reflected on your career interests and abilities, you can embark on the exciting, sometimes frustrating, journey of a job search. The U.S. job market has more than 16 million employers. How do you gain access to those employers who are hiring? According to Richard Bolles (2000) in *What Color Is Your Parachute?* the conventional job-hunting methods of networking, using placement offices on college campuses, and using employment agencies have the highest rates of success. Thanks to technological advances, we can now add another job-hunting method: electronic job banks. An aggressive job-hunting approach uses all available methods.





## e-note

## Online Job Searches

One key to success with online searching is using regional job sites that allow you to focus your efforts by geographic location. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains an employment information database for each state at [www.bls.gov/oco/oco20024.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco20024.htm). Likewise, the Riley Guide, at [www.rileyguide.com](http://www.rileyguide.com) provides links to several domestic and international job databases.

Another key to success is using online job listings from state employment service offices. America's Job Bank, at [www.jobbankinfo.org](http://www.jobbankinfo.org) is maintained by the U.S. Public Employment Service and links 1,800 state employment service offices in the United States.

Finally, through various online sites you can access job listings from newspaper classified ads. The following websites allow you to search daily classified ads from newspapers across the country:

[www.careerpath.com](http://www.careerpath.com)  
[www.jobbankusa.com](http://www.jobbankusa.com)  
[www.job-hunt.org](http://www.job-hunt.org)

Information about job vacancies is readily available through classified ads, placement offices on college campuses, and employment agencies. Additionally, “job listings,” also known as “job postings,” are available online. Be warned, however, that online searches are most fruitful for those looking for computer-related jobs (Bolles, 1999). In fact, Bolles estimates that for individuals searching for non-computer-related jobs, only 3 out of 100 will find a job using online methods.

## Investigating the Interviewer

To present yourself as a mature candidate for employment for any job, you will want to illustrate your knowledge of your chosen field, the effect of current social and economic conditions, and the trends in the field. You will want to keep current on all aspects of the career field because employers will view you more positively if you are conversant on these issues.

You should have a comprehensive understanding of the organization to which you are applying. You should be familiar with the current information on company officers, products or services offered, geographical locations, and potential mergers, acquisitions, and expansion plans.

It is important for you to be very familiar with the job description of the position for which you are applying. Nearly all organizations rely on official documents—job descriptions—to make business-related decisions, including hiring employees. A **job description** defines the job in terms of its content and scope. Although the format can vary, job descriptions may include information on job duties and responsibilities; the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to accomplish the duties; working conditions; relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and external stakeholders; and the extent of supervision required. To obtain a copy of the job description, you should contact the company's human resources department or the person managing the job search process. Besides providing you with information about the job expectations, the job description also serves as the legal cornerstone of interview questions and job-hiring practices.

### job description

A document that defines the job in terms of its content and scope.

## General Interviewing Strategies

### Preplan

The best way for applicants to prepare for their role in job interviews is to know what employers seek in applicants and how they can find pertinent information. Remember, the major purpose of the interview is to obtain and synthesize information about the abilities of an individual and the requirements of the job. The best way to plan for a successful interview is to review the job description and information about the organization, familiarize yourself with current events affecting the particular industry and/or job, reflect on your experiences and skills as related to the job description, and prepare answers to important questions.

In preparing answers to potential interview questions, remember that questions are tailored to the job description at hand and seek to ascertain your abilities to accomplish job duties.

Practicing competent responses to potential questions is an important method of managing the anxiety that is normally experienced by interviewees. Mentally talk to yourself prior to the interview. Build your confidence by telling yourself that you have done all you can to prepare for the interview. You have anticipated questions and have prepared answers; you have learned about the company. You are ready for the interview.



Watch “Susan Elliott: Reporting for KTNT” on the *Online Learning Center* to see how to preplan for an interview.

### Demonstrate Competence

During the interview you must present yourself as a potential asset to the organization. Doing so requires using verbal and nonverbal communication; specifically, you want to (1) create a good first impression, (2) speak with clarity, and (3) demonstrate interest.

Just as your written credentials should reflect a professional and competent image, so should you. One of the most obvious ways to create a good first impression is by the way you dress. The general rule is that you should match the style of dress

## SKILL BUILDER

Practice answering these typical job interview questions with a partner:

1. Why would you like to work for us?
2. What do you know about our products or services?
3. How have your previous work positions prepared you for this position?
4. What do you think your previous supervisors would cite as your strengths?  
Weaknesses?
5. Describe a typical strategy that you would use in a customer service call.
6. What criteria do you use when assigning work to others?
7. How do you follow up on work assigned to others?
8. Which aspect of your education has prepared you most for this position?
9. Which course did you like most in college?
10. If you had your education to do over again, what would you do differently, and why?
11. Why did you choose \_\_\_\_\_ as your major?
12. What do you think is the greatest challenge facing this field today?
13. Which area of this field do you think will expand the most in the next few years?



▲ First impressions occur the instant an interview begins.

of the interviewer. For professional positions, conservative dress is typically appropriate (dark suits, white shirts or blouses, standard ties for men, dark socks or neutral hose, dark shoes). Be sure to wear clothes that fit and are comfortable but not too casual. Be modest with your use of jewelry and cologne.

Arriving on time and introducing yourself in a courteous manner are also important to identity management. Allow the interviewer to take the lead. If an offer is made to shake hands, do so with a firm grip and a smile. Sit when asked to do so. Keep in mind, we are suggesting impression management techniques as a way to present yourself in a positive yet honest manner—not in a manipulative or dishonest manner.

Competent communicators speak with clarity. In one study of personnel interviewers' perceptions of applicants' communication skills, a lack of response clarity and poor grammar were among the most often cited communication inadequacies (Peterson, 1997). Yet 98% of respondents in Peterson's study, as well as other research (Ayles et al., 2001; Ralston & Kirkwood, 1999), indicated that such skills affect hiring decisions. Even if you have to pause before responding, organize your answer and avoid slurring your words, using potentially offensive language, or using grammatically incorrect sentences. Many applicants do not convey clear messages because their sentences include vocalized pauses ("uhs," "ums"), verbal fillers ("you know"), and repetitive phrases ("things like that"). In sum, the employment interview is a context to practice the skills you have been learning about and developing in this course.

To be interpersonally effective in interviews, you must also demonstrate interest. One of the most important ways to do so is by maintaining strong eye contact with the interviewer. Several studies have indicated that eye contact is one of the most important indicators of interview success (Young, Behnke, & Mann, 2004). Although you may be tempted to focus on responding to questions as the central interviewing skills, listening can demonstrate your interest and improve your responses. Also, use body language to show interest. Smile, nod, and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer. Be sure to thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration of you as a candidate.

### *Answer Questions Effectively and Ethically*

Answering questions effectively is critical for interviewees. Research has shown that various strategies are associated with successfully answering questions (e.g., Tey, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006). Four key guidelines emerge from that body of research: (1) offer relevant answers, (2) substantiate your claims with evidence, (3) provide accurate answers, and (4) be positive.

Your answers should be relevant to the question asked and to the job description. As an interviewee you should never evade questions; rather, you should respond to them thoroughly and directly. In discussing your skills and abilities, try to relate them to the specific position for which you are interviewing. Whenever possible, specify how and why you think you are well suited to this job. By so doing, you

demonstrate your knowledge of the position and illustrate the transferability of your knowledge and skills to the job at hand.

Whatever claims you make about your experience, always provide support. Some interviewees give terse, underdeveloped responses, forcing the interviewer to probe endlessly. Do not just say, “I’m really organized.” You need to substantiate this self-assertion with examples of when you have demonstrated organizational skills. Presenting claims without evidence can sound self-serving. If you offer evidence for your assertions, the objective facts and supporting examples will confirm your strengths.

All employers are searching for honest employees, so always provide accurate information. If an employer finds out you have misrepresented yourself during the interview by exaggerating or lying, everything you do and say will become suspect. Successful interviews feature candid conversation. If you are asked a question that you cannot answer, simply say so and do not act embarrassed. An interviewer will have more respect for an interviewee who admits to ignorance than for one who tries to fake an answer.

Accuracy should not be confused with confessing to every self-doubt or shortcoming. In fact, be as positive as possible during interviews, as you are “selling” yourself to the employer. To volunteer some limitations or claim personal responsibility for past events is fine, especially in the context of challenges you have met or problems you have encountered. However, avoid being overly critical of others and yourself. You can highlight your strengths and downplay your weaknesses, but always be honest.

### NCA Ethics Credo



*We believe that truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason are essential to the integrity of communication.*

### Ask Questions Effectively and Ethically

Any potential employer will recognize that you have questions about the job and/or organizational environment. After answering the interviewer’s questions, you should be prepared to ask questions. This provides you with insight necessary to decide if you want this particular job, shows your interest in the job, and demonstrates communication skills.

Recognize that your questions make indirect statements about your priorities, ambitions, and level of commitment. Consequently, avoid overreliance on questions that focus on financial issues such as salary, vacation time, and benefits. Devise questions that elicit information about the company and/or job that you were unable to obtain through your research. Arrange questions so that the most important ones come first, because you may not get a chance to ask all of your prepared questions. Sample questions to ask employers are provided on the *Online Learning Center*.

### MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Most interviewees approach the interview from a “performance” perspective in which they sell themselves to the organization or “try out” for a job. However, this approach fails to recognize that the potential employee must also assess whether the job and/or organization represents a good opportunity for personal and professional growth. How might the performance metaphor be re-envisioned to better capture the multidirectional persuasion that occurs in interview settings?*

### *Be Prepared for Illegal Questions*

Legally, employers must approach the hiring process with reference to the laws that govern employment. These laws are known as “equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws”; they are written and enacted by Congress and by individual state legislatures (Gutman, 2000). The purpose of such laws is to ensure that individuals are selected for employment without bias.

Employers should (1) describe the qualities and skills needed for the position they hope to fill, (2) construct questions that relate to those attributes, and (3) ask the same questions of all candidates for the position. These questions are known as “bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ) questions.” BFOQ questions should be about skills, training, education, work experience, physical attributes, and personality traits. With rare exceptions, questions should not be about age, gender, race, religion, physical appearance, disabilities, ethnic group, or citizenship.

Even with carefully planned BFOQ questions, employers will occasionally pose questions to interviewees that are intentionally or unintentionally illegal. For example, an employer might ask, “Are you married and do you have children?” when, in fact, he or she should really ask, “Is there anything that would prevent you from being able to travel frequently?” Often, illegal questions are unintentionally asked by untrained interviewers who are trying to be polite. In any circumstance you must carefully consider how to respond to the illegal question(s), using one or more of these strategies:

1. *Weigh the severity of the violation against your desire for the job.* If you really want the job, and the violation was minor, you may opt to provide a short answer or tactfully try to rephrase the question to avoid being forced to provide irrelevant information.
2. *Ask for clarification.* If you suspect that the illegal question is actually attempting to reference a BFOQ for the job, you can clarify what skills, knowledge, or attitudes the interviewer is attempting to assess.
3. *Be assertive.* You can tell the interviewer that the question is not related to the attributes specified in the job description or that the question, as phrased, asks for information that you do not have to provide. A less aggressive option is to politely decline to answer the question as phrased.
4. *Report the violation.* If the interviewer continues to ask illegal questions or is otherwise offensive, you might consider reporting the violation to a superior and/or to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ([www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)) or a similar state agency.



### **The Postinterview Stage**

Most interviews end with some plan for future action on the part of both the interviewee and interviewer. When the decision will be reached and how it will be communicated are usually specified by the interviewer. As an interviewee, make certain you carry out appropriate responsibilities, including writing to reconfirm your interest in the position and thanking the interviewer for his or her time. Additionally, you need to be prepared to deal with various interview outcomes.

A letter of appreciation is appropriate after an interview and should be sent within one or two days following the interview. If a company has been corresponding with you using e-mail, then you should send an e-mail thank-you letter. If you are still interested in the position,

you should express that interest in the letter. If you are not interested in the position, a letter is still appropriate. In the latter case, in fairness to the employer, you should withdraw your candidacy.

After the employment interview you will hopefully receive a job offer. Making a final decision about accepting a job involves careful consideration of multiple pieces of information. Here are tips for conducting negotiations with your potential employer and making a final decision; for additional information visit [www.collegegrad.com/offer/index.shtml](http://www.collegegrad.com/offer/index.shtml).

1. *Wait for the appropriate time.* The interview is not the ideal place to discuss salary expectations and other points of negotiation. In the interview you have little bargaining power. Once the company makes an offer, you are “in demand” and have a better chance of negotiating various items.
2. *Know what you want in advance.* Once you have been offered the job, you should immediately be prepared to begin the negotiation process. Conduct research to determine common salary ranges for your type of position. Online salary databases like [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) provide national and regional salary profiles for different types of jobs. Depending on the type of position, you may also be able to negotiate moving expenses, start date, continuing education funding, and other types of benefits.
3. *Understand the implications of taking the job.* If the job involves moving, you may want to investigate the living expenses of the new community. Try using Sperling’s Cost of Living Calculator, at [www.bestplaces.net/col](http://www.bestplaces.net/col), to compare where you live now with the place you will relocate to if you accept the job.
4. *Get it in writing.* Be aware that a job offer and your acceptance of the job offer is a legally binding document. Take care to ensure that all negotiated items are included in the offer letter, and do not write an acceptance letter until you have a correct offer letter in hand.
5. *Be tactful in your response.* Regardless of whether you are accepting or declining the job offer, your official response should be professional. If you accept the position, your acceptance letter should thank the interviewer and formally state that you are accepting the position as described in the offer letter. If you decline the offer, you should state your reason(s) for not accepting the offer, explicitly decline the offer, and end on a pleasant note.

## What Communication Skills Will You Need on the Job?

Previous sections of this chapter provided you with general information about organizations and taught you skills necessary for obtaining a job. This section emphasizes skills relevant to your role as an employee or organizational member. We begin by identifying several behaviors representing competent workplace communication and then discuss specific skills like conflict management and customer service effectiveness.

### Competent Workplace Communication

Previous chapters stressed the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication, perception, and listening. Clearly, the ability to perceive accurately, use verbal and nonverbal symbols with precision, and listen carefully are skills that benefit workplace

communicators. Let us consider four specific behaviors that are important in the workplace: immediacy, supportiveness, strategic ambiguity, and interaction management.

### Immediacy

#### immediacy

Communication behaviors intended to create perceptions of psychological closeness with others.

When people engage in communication behaviors intended to create perceptions of psychological closeness with others, they are enacting **immediacy**. Immediacy can be both verbal and nonverbal. Smiling, reducing physical distance, and using animated gestures and facial expressions are all examples of nonverbally immediate behaviors whereas calling people by their first names, using “we” language, and telling stories are examples of verbal immediacy behaviors. Although much research exploring the positive effects of immediacy has taken place in classroom setting, Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (2006) reason that immediacy also should influence workplace relationships between supervisors and subordinates. In their study they found that supervisors who are immediate are perceived as more trustworthy, higher in competence and goodwill, and more socially attractive. Moreover, employees working with immediate supervisors tend to be more motivated and willing to work hard. They conclude that organizations should devote greater attention to helping their managers learn to use immediacy because of its positive effect on workplace communication outcomes. Of course, as an entry-level employee you can also use immediacy behaviors to develop positive relationships with your co-workers and your supervisor.

### Supportiveness

#### supportive communication

Listening with empathy, acknowledging others’ feelings, and engaging in dialogue to help others maintain a sense of personal control.

People engage in **supportive communication** when they listen with empathy, acknowledge the feelings of others, and engage in dialogue to help others maintain a sense of personal control. Of course, supportive communication is an important skill in any context, including workplace settings. Research reviewed by Hopkins (2001) suggests that supportive supervisor communication is one of the most significant factors influencing employee morale. To enhance your supportive communication skills, consider the following strategies adapted from Albrecht and Bach’s (1997) discussion of supportive communication:

1. *Listen without judging.* Being judgmental while listening to a co-worker’s explanation of a problem can cause you to lose focus of what she or he is really saying.
2. *Validate feelings.* Even if you disagree with something your co-workers say, validating their perceptions and feelings is an important step in building a trusting relationship.
3. *Provide both informational and relational messages.* Supportive communication involves both helping and healing messages. Providing a metaphorical “shoulder to cry on” is equally as important as providing suggestions and advice.
4. *Be confidential.* When co-workers share feelings and personal reflections with you, maintaining their trust and confidence is essential. Telling others or gossiping about the issue will destroy your credibility as a trustworthy co-worker.



Watch “You Look Great” on the *Online Learning Center*, and analyze how Claire and Rachel enact supportive communication.

### Strategic Ambiguity

When learning to be competent communicators, we often assume that communication competence is associated with clarity. That is, we take for granted that to be a competent communicator is to be a clear communicator. Eisenberg (1984) disagrees

with this assumption and points out that clarity is essential for competent communication only when clear communication is the objective of the communicator. Eisenberg argues that professional and workplace communication often features the use of **strategic ambiguity**—the purposeful use of symbols to allow multiple interpretations of messages. You have probably witnessed instances of strategic ambiguity on your college campus. At the beginning of each year, various student organizations undertake recruitment drives to gain new members. When presenting their organization, whether it be a student club or a Greek organization, members are often strategically ambiguous about some aspect of the organization. After all, recruiting would be difficult if we knew that there were really only a few members or that there is significant political infighting in the club. When you enter the workforce, you will encounter new examples of strategic ambiguity. During orientation, for example, you might learn about your new company’s mission statement. Such mission statements are often strategically ambiguous so that all stakeholders (employees, managers, owners, and so on) can find relevant meaning in the statement. Of course, competent communicators must not only be skillful in recognizing the use of strategic ambiguity but also be able to use ambiguity when necessary.

#### strategic ambiguity

The purposeful use of symbols to allow multiple interpretations of messages.

### Interaction Management

Workplace communication is somewhat different from other types of communication situations because conversations tend to flow between the technical jargon associated with the workplace setting and other topics brought up to relieve stress and pass time. Thus computer technicians might talk about megabytes and megapixels one minute and speculate on who will be voted off *Survivor* the next. Competent workplace communicators engage in **interaction management** to establish a smooth pattern of interaction that allows a clear flow between topics and ideas. Using pauses, changing pitch, carefully listening to topics being discussed, and responding appropriately are skills related to interaction management.

#### interaction management

Establishing a smooth pattern of interaction that allows a clear flow between topics and ideas.

### Cross-Cultural Skills



The changing nature of demographics means that the workplace is increasingly a cross-cultural setting. People who speak English as a second language are infused into all sectors of the workforce, filling nearly every type of position imaginable. If you speak English as a second language, you should emphasize these skills initially to aid your transition to the workplace. First, you should ask more questions to clarify instructions or expectations. Because you have both a new language and potentially a new set of technical terms to learn in your workplace, questioning is the most effective strategy for avoiding misunderstanding. In addition, you should pay careful attention to your co-workers. By observing them and asking questions if necessary, you can not only learn important vocabulary but also model interaction skills with customers or clients. Finally, keeping a journal of your daily activities is a good idea. The first few days and weeks may seem overwhelming, but you will learn a great deal. Keeping a journal can help you retain vocabulary, directions, and other important pieces of information more easily.

If you are a native speaker who works with a second-language speaker, you will also have to adapt your communication behaviors. You can help ease your co-worker’s transition through some relatively easy steps. First, provide important directions in writing. Second-language





speakers often find written directions easier to process because the pace of spoken language can be challenging. Written directions allow second-language speakers to process and reprocess important directions and policies. Second, take time to explain. You can help your co-worker(s) learn vocabulary and interaction skills more quickly if you take a few moments to explain how and why you communicate the way you do. Finally, be patient. Becoming impatient and frustrated will introduce new problems and make the situation worse for everyone. If you are patient, you will make the transition easier and will likely prevent problems from recurring.

### Conflict Management Skills

Although the behavioral characteristics of competent communication are desirable in all communication situations, they will not ensure that your workplace communication is free from conflict. Workplace conflict can occur because of mundane issues such as one person playing a radio too loudly in her cubicle, or because of serious issues such as office politics pitting one faction of employees against another. Indeed, conflict management skills are not just desirable but necessary for effective workplace communication.

People often view conflict negatively because they associate conflict with anger. However, conflict occurs anytime two or more people have goals that they perceive to be incompatible. When one employee wants to work late to finish a project and another wants to go home to be with his or her family, conflict could occur. In short, workplace conflict is a fact of life—the rule rather than the exception.

A variety of techniques can be used to manage conflict productively. Wilmot and Hocker (2005) suggest several approaches to managing conflict:

- *Avoidance.* With the avoidance style you deny the existence of conflict. Although avoidance can provide you with time to think through a situation, continued avoidance allows conflict to simmer and flare up with more intensity.
- *Competition.* With the competition style you view conflict as a “battle” and advance your own interests over those of others. Although the competitive style can be necessary when quick decisions must be made or when you are strongly committed to a position, this tactic can also be highly detrimental to the relationships between you and your co-workers.
- *Compromise.* With a compromising style you are willing to negotiate away some of your position as long as the other party in the conflict is willing to do the same. Compromise can be an effective strategy because it is a win-win proposition for both parties, but when used too often, it can become a sophisticated form of conflict avoidance.
- *Accommodation.* With the accommodating style you set aside your views and accept those of others. Accommodation can maintain harmony in relationships, but this strategy is problematic in many situations because tacit acceptance of others’ views can stifle creative dialogue and decision making.
- *Collaboration.* A **collaborative style** involves thoughtful negotiation and reasoned compromise whereby both parties agree that the negotiated outcome is the best possible alternative under the circumstance. Although collaboration takes more time and effort to enact as a conflict management strategy, this approach typically results in the best possible outcome for all parties involved.

#### collaborative style

Thoughtful negotiation and reasoned compromise.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Conflict in the Workplace

Workplace contexts create potential for conflict because they force us to accomplish important task outcomes while also managing relationships with others. How we manage conflict can impact how effective we are as organizational communicators. Below you will find several statements; for each statement you should indicate how well the statement describes you by using the following scale:

1 = Does not describe me at all

2 = Does not describe me very well

3 = Describes me somewhat

4 = Describes me well

5 = Describes me very well

1. When working on problems, I try to win arguments to support my opinion.
2. When communicating at work, I generally let others have their way.
3. If I sense a conflict brewing, I would rather find a way to leave.
4. When in a conflict with a co-worker, I work to find common ground to resolve the conflict.
5. When I disagree with someone else, I am willing to give up some of my own position so long as others are willing to do the same.
6. I am quick to give up on my opinion when I sense conflict coming.
7. I am generally willing to meet others halfway to resolve conflict.
8. When in a conflict, my interests are most important.
9. I generally avoid conflict in the workplace.
10. When involved in a conflict, talking things through is the best way to find a solution.
11. I generally resolve conflict by compromising with the other person.
12. I often try to find ways to delay having to face a conflict situation.
13. When in a conflict, having dialogue can often resolve the situation.
14. I tend to give up on my views to resolve conflicts with others.
15. When in a conflict, I approach the other person ready for battle.

### Customer Service Skills

We often hear that we now live in a “service economy” in which American companies increasingly make money by providing services. In this kind of business environment, one of the most important forms of external communication is that which occurs in providing service to organizational customers. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) define the **customer service encounter** as “the moment of interaction between the customer and the firm” (p. 71). During this moment the organizational representative provides professional assistance in exchange for the customer’s money or attention.

Customer service became a business buzzword during the 1990s, yet it means different things to different people. For some individuals, customer service means being friendly, shaking hands warmly, and initiating pleasant conversations with

#### customer service encounter

The moment of interaction between the customer and the firm.

clients. For others, customer service means processing customers efficiently and quickly. Still others view customer service as involving listening intently to identify individual needs and providing sufficient information and/or support to meet those needs. All perspectives are legitimate; however, we must remember that the customer is the ultimate judge of whether customer service interactions are satisfying.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*A movement in the health care industry relabels “patients” as “customers” or “consumers.” Similarly, some individuals believe that educators should view “students” as “customers.” In small groups reflect on traditional provider–patient relationships and teacher–student relationships from the standpoint of customer service encounters. Discuss how communication patterns in such relationships might be different if viewed from a customer service standpoint. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the customer metaphor in health care and education? What potential “myths” of medicine and education are revealed through the customer metaphor? How might the customer metaphor both enable and constrain medicine and education?*

Regardless of how employees understand the concept of customer service, most providers have the goal of influencing their customers’ behaviors. An extensive body of research covers communication techniques for compliance gaining. In her book *Communicating with Customers: Service Approaches, Ethics, and Impact*, W. Z. Ford (1998) reviews compliance-gaining strategies used by customer service representatives. Her work is summarized in Table 8.2.

A wide range of occupations require interactions between employees and clients or customers. In many of these, the provision of service often involves some degree of emotional content (Waldron, 1994). Nurses interact with dying patients in a hospice, ministers counsel troubled parishioners, and social workers help physically abused women. Emotional communication also characterizes other less obvious occupations. Flight attendants must appear happy and attentive during international

**TABLE 8.2 COMPLIANCE-GAINING STRATEGIES USED BY CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES**

*Promise:* Promising a reward for compliance (e.g., “If you buy this car, I’ll throw in a free stereo.”)

*Threat:* Threatening to punish for noncompliance (e.g., “If you don’t buy the car before the end of the week, I cannot guarantee the 6 percent interest rate.”)

*Pre-giving:* Rewarding the customer before requesting compliance (e.g., “I will give you \$50 just for test-driving this new car.”)

*Moral appeal:* Implying that it is immoral not to comply (e.g., “Since you have small children, you should be looking at our larger models, with more safety features.”)

*Liking:* Being friendly and helpful to get the customer in a good frame of mind to ensure compliance (e.g., “Good afternoon, my how you look nice today. How can I help you?”)

flights (Murphy, 2001) while bill collectors must remain stern and avoid any trace of sympathy in interactions (Rafeili & Sutton, 1990).

Arlie Hochschild was the first scholar to deal with this phenomenon in her book *The Managed Heart* (1983). She uses the term **emotional labor** to refer to jobs in which employees are expected to display certain feelings in order to satisfy organizational role expectations. Research has indicated that while emotional labor may be fiscally rewarding for the organization and the client, it can be dangerous for the service provider and lead to negative consequences such as burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover (Tracy, 2005).

#### emotional labor

Jobs in which employees are expected to display certain feelings in order to satisfy organizational role expectations.

## What Ethical Dimensions Are Found in the Workplace?

Communicating in organizations is not an easy task. In fact, a pervasive part of organizational life is conflict—both destructive and productive. Conflict can destroy work relationships or create a needed impetus for organizational change and development. In this section we are concerned with the ethical dimensions of workplace communication. In particular, we focus our attention on honesty, aggressive communication, and sexual harassment.

▼ Service-oriented jobs such as in restaurants and retail sales require the employee to engage in emotional labor—that is, to display certain feelings to satisfy expectations.

### Aggressive Communication

Verbal aggressiveness is understood by communication scholars as an individual's communication that attacks the self-concepts of other people in order to inflict psychological pain (e.g., Infante, Riddle, Horvath, & Tulmin, 1992). Verbal aggression is on the rise in organizational settings, with a lot of aggression unrecognized by management. Workplace aggression includes all communication by which individuals attempt to harm others at work.

Neuman (1998) argues that workplace aggression occurs at three levels: (1) the withholding of cooperation, the spreading of rumors or gossip, consistent arguing, belligerency, and the use of offensive language; (2) intense arguments with supervisors, co-workers, and customers, and sabotage, verbal threats, and feelings of persecution; and (3) frequent displays of intense anger resulting in recurrent suicidal threats, physical fights, destruction of property, use of weapons, and the commission of murder, rape, and/or arson. Instances involving direct physical assaults constitute workplace violence; typically, this is a result of the escalation of workplace aggression.

Most of us are familiar with the term “going postal,” originating from an incident in which a postal worker walked up to his boss, pulled a gun from a paper bag, and shot him (*Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1995). Or perhaps we are familiar with the Fort Lauderdale man who opened fire on his former colleagues after being dismissed from his city job cleaning the beaches (*The New York Times*, February 10, 1996). Although mediated accounts of workplace violence typically focus on



homicides, most workplace aggression involves less dramatic forms of verbal abuse. Studies of verbal aggression in the workplace suggest that 50% of workers admit to arguing and criticizing co-workers (Bennett & Lehman, 1996) and over 65% of managers report experiencing verbal aggression—including use of profanity, threats of retaliation, silent treatment, and the spreading of rumors—in response to negative performance evaluations (Geddes & Baron, 1997).

## NCA Ethics Credo



*We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intolerance, intimidation, coercion, hatred, and violence.*

Cost cutting in the form of downsizing, layoffs, budget cuts, and pay freezes, as well as organizational change, engenders workplace aggression (Baron, 1999). Organizational communication research has detected negative effects of verbal aggression in workplace relationships (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). The psychological pain produced by verbal aggression includes embarrassment, feelings of inadequacy, humiliation, hopelessness, despair, and depression.

### Honesty

During the economic crisis of 2009 several high-profile events underscored the importance of honesty in organizational communication. Broadly, financial institutions were blamed for not being honest when extending risky mortgages to individuals so that they could purchase homes that they may not have been able to afford. In another high-profile case, Bernard Madoff was accused of lying to his investors and stealing billions of dollars. Yet other controversies questioned the honesty of corporate executives taking bonuses even after government bailout money was received to help their companies survive. Clearly, honesty and ethics played a large role in eroding consumer confidence during the crisis.

Honesty is not just something relevant to top executives, however. Is it appropriate for you to misrepresent information to your supervisor to make your performance appear better? When you create a résumé, for instance, is it ethical to integrate key words into your résumé so that electronic search engines will highlight your résumé even though you may not truly possess requisite skills for that job? Amare and Manning (2009) observe that individuals at all levels of organizations have a personal responsibility to act with integrity and to be honest. Even deciding with whom you should be honest is important. If you know that a fellow employee is underperforming, should you confront your peer first or go straight to your supervisor?

Honesty is at the heart of personal ethics. Honesty must begin with open communication and trust. The fears that drive people to dishonest behaviors can often be countered by establishing open communication with co-workers.

### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes a set of behaviors that constitute workplace aggression. The 1991 Senate confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas made the issue of sexual harassment a topic of reflection and discussion in corporate boardrooms and schools and at family dinner tables. Accusations against Bill Clinton, then president of the United States, were lodged by Paula Jones, claiming that he

sexually harassed her when he was governor of Arkansas. While sexual harassment has been a pervasive problem in the workplace for decades, these accusations against prominent public officials caused employees and employers alike to recognize the magnitude of the issue (Kreps, 1993).

What is sexual harassment? The Equal Employment Opportunity Communication (EEOC) defines **sexual harassment** as

unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature if (1) submission to the conduct is made a condition of employment, (2) submission to or rejection of the conduct is made the basis for an employment decision, or (3) the conduct seriously affects an employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Simply put, sexual harassment is unwelcome, unsolicited, repeated behavior of a sexual nature.

The EEOC definition of sexual harassment outlines two different, although sometimes overlapping, types of sexual harassment. The first type, termed **quid pro quo**, involves a situation in which an employee is offered a reward or is threatened with punishment based on his or her participation in a sexual activity. For example, a supervisor might tell her employee, "I will give you Friday off if you will meet me at my place tonight." The second type of sexual harassment creates a **hostile work environment**, or conditions in the workplace that are sexually offensive, intimidating, or hostile and that affect an individual's ability to perform his or her job. For example, if two males talk explicitly about the physical features of a female colleague in her presence, she asks them to stop, and they repeat the offense, sexual harassment has occurred.

A major obstacle to ending sexual harassment is the tendency of victims to avoid confronting the harasser. Most instances of sexual harassment are not confronted, exposed, or reported. Instead, the victim usually avoids the situation by taking time off, transferring to another area, or changing jobs. One of the primary reasons for avoidance is that the perpetrator is usually someone in the organization with authority and status—power over the victim—and the victim feels that exposure or confrontation will backfire.

Clearly, the EEOC's definition indicates that a wide range of communication behaviors can constitute sexual harassment, although many men and women see only serious offenses (for example, career benefits in exchange for sexual favors) as harassment. However, a person need not suffer severe psychological damage or extensive adverse work outcomes to be a victim of sexual harassment. Additionally, harassment is judged by its effects on the recipient, not by the intentions of the harasser. Because some people may regard any particular behavior as offensive, and others not, the courts use what is called the "reasonable person rule" to determine whether a reasonable person would find the behavior in question offensive. One limitation of this rule is evidence that men and women view sexual harassment differently (Solomon & Williams, 1997). In particular, sexual overtures that women typically view as insulting are viewed by men, in general, as flattering.

Sexual harassment is a serious and pervasive communication problem in modern organizational life, with both the targets of sexual harassment and those accused of sexual harassment (falsely or not) suffering personal and professional anguish. Note that even though a majority of sexual harassment cases involve women as victims, the EEOC guidelines apply equally to men.

#### sexual harassment

Unwelcome, unsolicited, repeated behavior of a sexual nature.

#### quid pro quo sexual harassment

A situation in which an employee is offered a reward or is threatened with punishment based on his or her participation in a sexual activity.

#### hostile work environment sexual harassment

Conditions in the workplace that are sexually offensive, intimidating, or hostile and that affect an individual's ability to perform his or her job.

## get INVOLVED!

At several points in this chapter you have learned about the importance of networking. Of course, one of the most valuable ways for you to create a personal network is to join organizations so that you can meet a diverse array of people. Many community service organizations offer special membership options for students, and some even have student chapters.

Contact local service organizations to determine what options exist for student memberships, the activities undertaken by the group, and information on attending meetings and other events. Here are some web addresses for common community service organizations to help you get started.

- American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)): Although not a club, the Red Cross utilizes community volunteers to assist with blood drives and to assist with various levels of disaster relief. Volunteering for the Red Cross does not require membership; contact your local Red Cross office for additional information on specific volunteer needs.
- Civitan International (<http://www.civitan.com>): Major emphasis is on service projects targeting people with developmental disabilities. Has special “Civitan Campus” clubs.
- Kiwanis International (<http://www.kiwanis.org>): Major emphasis is on children’s issues and local service projects. Has special “Circle K” clubs on college campuses.

If you have specific volunteer interests you can use the Internet to search for volunteer opportunities in your area. Volunteer Match (<http://www.volunteermatch.org>) offers a free search engine to identify options near your campus and community.



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Workplace communication takes place within the context of an organization. Such organizations are classified into four different types enacting these primary roles:
  - Economic production organizations manufacture products or services.
  - Political organizations generate and distribute power in society.
  - Integrative organizations mediate and resolve conflict.
  - Pattern-maintenance organizations promote cultural and educational regularity.
- ▶ Organizations have both informal networks and formal networks. Formal networks include downward, upward, and horizontal communication.
- ▶ Written credentials for employment interviews include résumés and cover letters.
  - The résumé should be concise and stylistically reflect your personality in a professional way.
  - The résumé should highlight your work experiences and other qualifications.
  - The cover letter is a short statement introducing you and your résumé.
  - The cover letter has four main sections: attention, interest, desire, and action.
- ▶ Effective strategies for preparing for a job interview include creating a self-inventory, creating networks, searching for a job, investigating the interviewer, being prepared to ask and answer questions, and conducting postinterview negotiations.
- ▶ Workplace communication competence involves general skills already covered in this text as well as four specialized skills: immediacy, supportiveness, strategic ambiguity, and interaction management.
- ▶ Conflict management skills include avoidance, competition, compromise, accommodation, and collaboration. Although each has advantages, the collaboration approach works best in many situations.
- ▶ Customer service interactions are essential aspects of contemporary work life. Customer service agents must learn to enact compliance-gaining skills and to engage in emotional labor.
- ▶ Unethical workplace communication can include aggressive communication and sexual harassment.
  - Workplace aggression includes all communication by which individuals attempt to harm others.
  - Sexual harassment is an extreme form of unethical communication involving an abuse of power.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Chronological résumé

Collaborative style

Communication networks

Cover letter

Customer service encounter

Downward communication

Economic orientation

Emotional labor

Formal communication

Functional résumé

Horizontal communication

Hostile work environment sexual harassment

Immediacy

Informal communication

Integration orientation

Interaction management

Job description

Network

Objective statement

Organizational communication

Organizational communities

Organizations

Pattern-maintenance orientation

Political orientation

Quid pro quo sexual harassment

Sexual harassment

Strategic ambiguity

Supportive communication

Upward communication



## Study Questions

- An organization with this orientation generates and distributes power and control within society.
  - economic
  - pattern-maintenance
  - political
  - integration
- Information flows in an organization through patterns of relationships known as
  - communication networks
  - organizational communication
  - objective statements
  - pattern-maintenance
- When information is transferred between a worker and his or her boss formally, which type of communication has taken place?
  - horizontal
  - political
  - societal
  - upward
- Which of the following is a true statement regarding written credentials?
  - The objective statement is usually the last bit of information on the résumé.
  - The cover letter is a document that organizes credentials by type of function performed.
  - An effective résumé contains good style, content, and format.
  - The only way to organize your résumé is chronologically.
- When preparing for and taking part in an interview,
  - you should dress a bit more casually than you expect the interviewer to dress
  - you do not need to know the job description because the interviewer will tell you about the job's duties
  - you should avoid using strong eye contact
  - you should ask and answer questions effectively and ethically
- By smiling, gesturing, and using facial expressions in the workplace to create perceptions of psychological closeness with others, you are enacting
  - immediacy
  - management
  - ambiguity
  - preparation
- Which technique of conflict management is used to maintain relationship harmony but to stifle creative dialogue and decision making?
  - compromise
  - accommodation
  - avoidance
  - collaboration
- Customer service representatives may use which of the following compliance-gaining strategies, in which the representative implies that it is immoral not to comply?
  - promises
  - threats
  - pregiving
  - moral appeals
- Conflict in the workplace can be
  - destructive
  - productive
  - neither a nor b
  - both a and b
- If your boss tells you that you can leave work early on Fridays if you go on a date with him or her, he or she is utilizing a type of sexual harassment called
  - quid pro quo
  - hostile work environment
  - emotional labor
  - nothing; it is not sexual harassment

### Answers:

1. (c); 2. (a); 3. (d); 4. (c); 5. (d); 6. (a); 7. (b); 8. (d); 9. (d); 10. (a)

## Critical Thinking

- Search online for some résumés. Based on the text, identify what the creator did correctly and what he or she could improve upon. Focus on the résumé's style, content, and format.
- Think about some of your past jobs. In the workplace did people display immediacy, supportiveness, strategic ambiguity, or interaction management? What did they do to demonstrate these behaviors? What conflict management skills were utilized by your superiors? Were they successful?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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## Additional Resources

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define small-group communication and state why it is important.
2. Recognize different types of groups.
3. Define leadership and explain its relevance to small-group communication.
4. Explain how culture develops in small groups.
5. Identify steps in the small-group decision-making process.
6. Discuss two examples of how technology can be used to facilitate small-group communication.
7. Utilize skills necessary for effective and ethical group communication.
8. Recognize strategies for ethically managing group conflict.





# THE DYNAMICS OF SMALL-GROUP COMMUNICATION

## **Small groups permeate nearly all facets**

**of our lives.** Our families, our jobs, our courses,

and our friends are all invigorated and driven by

small groups of people. In this chapter we

address several issues related to small-group

communication. After discussing generally what

small-group communication is, we turn to theo-

ries explaining concepts like leadership, group

culture, and small-group decision making. The

chapter concludes by discussing several pro-

cesses related to small-group effectiveness:

cohesiveness, use of technology, and skills used

by ethical group communicators.

**If you travel 10 minutes northeast of** Hermann Park in central Houston, you will find yourself in the middle of the greater Third Ward. Houston's Third Ward is distinctive for many reasons: that area is the home of Texas Southern University; it is one of the original political subdivisions of Houston; and the area is just adjacent to downtown Houston and the world-renowned Texas Medical Center campus. The Third Ward has also been the home for much of Houston's African-American community since Texas abolished slavery in 1865 (see <http://eyeonthirdward.mfah.org>). As an article in the July 20, 2007, edition of the *Houston Business Journal* points out, the Third Ward has been threatened with losing its historic identity because of gentrification, or the influx of higher-income development within lower-income areas. Lower-income residents who can no longer afford rent or who pay property taxes mainly feel the effects of gentrification—those residents often become displaced and the historical roots of the area are literally ripped apart.

Small groups of residents in Houston's Third Ward are doing their part to combat the negative effects of gentrification. A group of artists created Project Row Houses ([www.projectrowhouses.org](http://www.projectrowhouses.org)) in 1993 as a way to use art to build community. Today, Project Row Houses embraces the philosophy that communities created through art can revitalize inner-city neighborhoods like the Third Ward. The small groups of artists who work in the row houses not only pay tribute to the historic legacies of Third Ward residents, but also use art as a vehicle for raising community action, responsibility, and involvement.

In addition to the Row House project, small groups of students in the Yates High School's magnet program in communications use photography to record the culture of the Third Ward. The Eye on Third Ward project (<http://eyeonthirdward.mfah.org>) has been in place since 1995 and combines students' pictures and stories as part of an ongoing chronicle of life in the Third Ward, as seen through the eyes of young residents.

These stories should teach you two important lessons about group communication. First, we often turn to groups in response to social problems. Both the Row House project and the Eye on Third Ward project occurred because gentrification was negatively affecting a community. Second, groups can come up with elegant and creative solutions. Rather than turning to bureaucracy and partisan politics, both projects used art as a way to promote community.

*Small groups of people can accomplish extraordinary things, as the dedicated artists and students of these two projects show us. Groups are all around us; they are inescapable. We might even go so far as to say that groups are partly what make humans so . . . human. This chapter looks at the nature of groups—how communication works within groups, how leaders use their skills, and how group members can effectively and ethically contribute to solving problems.*

## Why Should You Learn About Small Groups?

Small groups are the basic building blocks of our society. Families, work teams, support groups, religious circles, and study groups are all examples of the groups on which our society is built. In organizations, the higher up you go, the more time

**TABLE 9.1 WHY YOU SHOULD STUDY SMALL-GROUP COMMUNICATION**

1. Humans need groups to meet needs they cannot meet as individuals.
2. Groups are everywhere.
3. Knowing how groups function and how to operate effectively in them is a highly valued skill.
4. Working effectively in groups requires training.
5. Small groups are a means of participating in the democratic process.

you will spend working in groups. For example, one report estimated that executives spend about *half* their time in business meetings (Cole, 1989) and more recent reports refer to the “black holes of the workday” (Herring, 2006) in response to polls showing that 75% of workers say that time spent in meetings could be more productive. Membership in small groups is both common and important. Research has consistently documented teamwork as one of the most important communication skills for personal and professional success (Vice, 2001).

Small groups are important for five reasons (see Table 9.1). These reasons clarify why you will want to learn how to communicate effectively in small groups. First, humans need groups; membership in groups meets needs that we cannot meet for ourselves. William Schutz (1958), a psychologist who studied group interaction, said that humans have needs for inclusion, affection, and control. The need for **inclusion**—the state of being involved with others—suggests that we need to belong to, or be included in, groups with others. As humans, we derive much of our identity, our beliefs about who we are, from the groups to which we belong. Starting with our immediate families and including such important groups as our church, mosque, or synagogue; interest groups; work teams; and social groups—all these help us define who we are. The need for **affection**—the emotion of caring for others and/or being cared for—means that we humans need to love and be loved, to know that we are important to others who value us as unique human beings. Finally, we have a need for **control**—the ability to influence our environment. We are better able to exercise such control if we work together in groups. One person cannot build a school, bridge, or new business. However, by working together in groups, we can accomplish these and other complex tasks. We need others to meet our needs.

Second, groups are everywhere. You will not be able to escape working in them. Think about all the groups to which you currently belong, including informal groups such as study groups or your “lunch bunch.” Students typically belong to between 8 and 10 groups, but sometimes as many as 20 or more and rarely fewer than 2. Your presence in groups will not end upon graduation. Numerous companies have discovered how helpful groups can be and have installed groups at *all* levels.

The third reason is related to the second. Because group work is expected to increase in the future, particularly in business and industry, knowing how groups function and having the ability to

**inclusion**

The state of being involved with others; a human need.

**affection**

The emotion of caring for others and/or being cared for.

**control**

The ability to influence our environment.

**TRY THIS**

*Make a list of groups that you belong to. When making your list, identify at least one group you belong to for inclusion purposes, one group for affection purposes, and one group for control purposes. Do any of the groups you belong to meet all three of these needs?*





▲ American companies have come to realize how helpful groups can be in conducting their business.

operate effectively in them will be highly valued skills. A survey of college graduates showed that oral communication, problem-solving skills, and the ability to motivate and manage others were three of the top four skills taught in college classes that were essential for workplace success—the fourth was written communication (Zekeri, 2004). In addition, a *Wall Street Journal* poll conducted in December of 2007 found that teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking/problem solving, all skills we practice in small groups, were in the top five skills that are more important now than they were five years ago in the workplace (Miller, 2008).

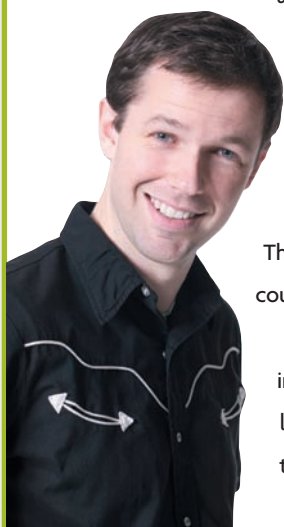
## TRY THIS

Watch the evening news on one of your local TV stations. While watching the news, make note of each civic or political group discussed. What was each group trying to achieve? Did some groups have the power to make decisions (such as political groups)? Did some groups advocate a certain position although they had no power to make decisions (such as community groups)?

Fourth, being an effective group or team member cannot be left to chance. Just because you are placed on a team does not mean you know how to work effectively in that team. As helpful as groups can be to any organization, they often fail because group leaders have not thought through exactly what they want the groups to accomplish or because group members have not been trained in how to behave appropriately as part of a team (Vengel, 2006). Effective group participation cannot be taken for granted. Group members need training to understand the dynamics of small-group interaction, which is much more complex than dyadic (two-person) interaction.

Finally, groups can be an important way for Americans to participate in the democratic process; thus they have the potential to help us achieve our ideals as a society. Because we can accomplish so much more in groups than we can as individuals,

## get INVOLVED



Small groups are powerful forces that support democracy. Our very existence as a nation can be traced to a small group of individuals who advocated for independence from Britain, and even today, small groups of individuals form the leadership of our communities, states, and nation. During the 2008 presidential election, small groups played a key role in increasing voter turnout. At Illinois State University a small group of communication instructors created assignments in their public-speaking classes designed to get students more involved in politics. Those efforts led to a campus “issues fair” at which small groups of students presented information about local, state, and national issues by setting up tables and booths on their campus quad. These students helped raise awareness of how political issues were relevant to other college students. Those same teachers organized small groups of students to receive training from the county board of elections to register new voters. Those efforts not only significantly increased student-voter turnout, but also persuaded the county board of elections to expand early voting locations to the ISU campus.

If you want to make a difference in your community, you will likely need to do so by forming or joining a group. An initial step might be to join a student organization or other group to learn more about issues of interest to you. You may also have the opportunity to take classes that, like those at Illinois State University, use small groups in service-learning projects.

group participation can be an important vehicle through which we create and govern our society. A lone voice “crying in the wilderness” may have little effect, but a group of people working hard for a cause in which they believe can lead to great changes. Furthermore, by talking in groups, we can become more confident in articulating our own beliefs, which, in turn, may lead us to be more vocal about our beliefs in a variety of contexts (Zorn, Rober, Broadfoot, & Weaver, 2006). For example, students who want to enact an honor code on their campus may face initial hesitation from peers. By talking in groups first, the students may be better able to find their voice to argue in favor of establishing an honor code.

## What Is Small-Group Communication?

**Small-group communication** is the interaction among three to nine people who are working together to achieve an interdependent goal (Galanes & Adams, 2006). This definition implies several things:

- Groups must be small enough that members are mutually aware that the group is a collective entity. Groups typically contain between three and nine people but may be larger if members perceive the group as an entity. Research does show that groups of three or four people are more productive

### small-group communication

Interaction among three to nine people working together to achieve an interdependent goal.

than are larger groups with five or more people (Wheelan, 2009). So, if given a choice, working with a smaller group may produce better results.

- The substance that creates and holds the group together is the interaction between members.
- Group members are interdependent—they cannot achieve their goals without the help of other group members. If you have seen MTV’s show, “The Real World,” you have seen examples of interdependence as participants are forced to live in a house together. Business consulting firms are now teaching the importance of interdependence by doing the same thing with corporate work teams. Corporations are charged \$75,000 to have team members locked up in a house to develop interdependent teamwork skills (Jana, 2009).

The definition of small-group communication just presented establishes *communication* as the essential process within a small group. Communication creates a group, shapes each group in unique ways, and maintains the group. As with other forms of human communication, small-group communication involves sending verbal and non-verbal signals that are perceived, interpreted, and responded to by other people. Group members pay attention to each other and coordinate their behavior in order to accomplish the group’s assignment. Perfect understanding between the person sending the signal and those receiving the signal is never possible; in a group, members strive to have enough understanding to enable the group’s purpose to be achieved.

## The Types and Functions of Small Groups

### task-oriented groups

Also called secondary groups; groups formed for the purpose of completing tasks, such as solving problems or making decisions.

### relationship-oriented groups

Also called primary groups; groups that are usually long-term and exist to meet our needs for inclusion and affection.

### assigned groups

Groups that evolve out of a hierarchy whereby individuals are assigned membership to the group.

### emergent groups

Groups resulting from environmental conditions leading to the formation of a cohesive group of individuals.

Think for a moment about the different groups you belong to. You may regularly study with other students from your accounting class, you may belong to a club on campus, you may be assigned to participate in a student government group, and you likely have a group of friends with whom you socialize. What are the key differences between these groups? We identify four ways to categorize groups:

- **Task-oriented groups** (also called **secondary groups**) are formed for the purpose of completing tasks such as solving a problem or making a decision. A group of students studying for an exam are taking part in a task-oriented group.
- **Relationship-oriented groups** (also called **primary groups**) are usually long-term and exist to meet our needs for inclusion and affection. Your family is an example of a relationship-oriented group.
- **Assigned groups** evolve out of a hierarchy whereby individuals are appointed as members of the group. Being asked to serve on a student union advisory board is an example of an assigned group.
- **Emergent groups** are the results of environmental conditions leading to the formation of a cohesive group of individuals. A group of friends who meet at college is an example of an emergent group.

Classifying groups according to whether they are task-oriented, relationship-oriented, assigned, or emergent risks oversimplifying a more complex process. Because groups comprise people and are sustained through communication, they can go through several metamorphoses. As you probably can tell, primary or secondary groups are not pure. Members of primary groups, such as families, engage in work, make decisions, and must cooperate to complete tasks. Members

of secondary groups forge strong personal bonds and provide each other with affection and recognition. In fact, some of the best secondary groups are those with strong primary characteristics, such that members feel appreciated and valued. Likewise, emergent groups can be institutionalized, and assigned groups can take on the characteristics of an emergent group.

Although understanding general characteristics of different types of groups is valuable, recognizing that groups are not static entities is equally important. We might belong to an assigned group formed for task purposes. As we interact with members of that group, a relationship-oriented social group may emerge. Just as our personal relationships can go through several turning points, our group membership is also constantly in flux.

## TRY THIS

Using groups from your own life, try to find an example to illustrate a group in each cell of the following matrix. For example, think of a relationship-oriented assigned group, a task-oriented emergent group, and so on.

	ASSIGNED GROUP	EMERGENT GROUP
RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED GROUP		
TASK-ORIENTED GROUP		

## The Role of Leadership in Small Groups

For most groups to work effectively, some structure is necessary. A primary task of the group leader is to provide necessary structure and direction for the group. In this section we explain what leadership is and examine several theories on the process of effective leadership.

### What Is Leadership?

Hackman and Johnson (2003) define **leadership** as a process of using communication to influence the behaviors and attitudes of others to meet group goals. Leadership, then, is enacted through communication and persuasion, not through physical force or coercion. Furthermore, only influence designed to benefit the group can be termed small-group leadership. One member persuading another to sabotage a group goal is not leadership according to this definition.

A leader is a person who influences the behavior and attitudes of others through communication. In small groups two types of leader are designated and emergent. A **designated leader** is someone who has been appointed or elected to a leadership position (such as a chair, team leader, coordinator, or facilitator). An **emergent leader** is someone who becomes an informal leader by exerting influence toward achievement of a group's goal but who does not hold the formal position or role of leader. Groups benefit from having a designated leader because designated leaders add stability and organization to the group's activities. An emergent leader can be any group member who helps the group meet its goals. Groups work best when all members contribute skills and leadership behaviors on behalf of the group.

#### leadership

A process of using communication to influence the behaviors and attitudes of others to meet group goals.

#### designated leader

Someone who has been appointed or elected to a leadership position.

#### emergent leader

Someone who becomes an informal leader by exerting influence toward achievement of a group's goal but who does not hold the formal position or role of leader.



▲ Leadership is about communication, not personality or luck.

### power

Interpersonal influence that forms the basis for group leadership.

How do leaders, designated or emergent, gain their ability to influence others? Wilmot and Hocker (2005) suggest that group leaders may gain interpersonal influence over groups through the use of **power**, which is the interpersonal influence that forms the basis for small-group leadership. According to Wilmot and Hocker's perspective, group leaders likely use one of three types of power:

- *Distributive power*, whereby the leader exerts influence over others.
- *Integrative power*, which highlights interdependence with another person or persons to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals.
- *Designated power*, which reflects the importance of relationships between people. Marriages, families, and groups often hold such power for us.

Wilmot and Hocker's perspective on power provides a general classification of how power functions. A classic study by French and Raven (1981) further helps to explain the concept of power by identifying specific sources of power used by leaders:

- *Reward power*—the ability to give followers what they want and need.
- *Punishment power*—the ability to withhold from followers what they want and need. An extreme form of punishment power is *coercion*, in which compliance is forced through hostile acts.
- *Referent power*—power based on others' admiration and respect. Charisma is an extreme form of referent power that inspires strong loyalty and devotion from others.
- *Expert power*—when the other members value a person's knowledge or expertise.
- *Legitimate power*—power given to a person because of a title, position, or role.

All members of a group have the ability to influence other members. For instance, all members, not just the designated leader, can reward others, withhold rewards, or provide expertise potentially valuable to the group. In addition, a designated leader’s influence usually stems from more than just legitimate power. Besides holding the title of leader, that person also has expertise, referent power, and so forth. In fact, if legitimate power is the leader’s only source of influence, then someone else in the group with more broadly based power will probably emerge as a more influential informal leader. In short, all group members possess some sources of influence and can lead the group, even if they do not have the title of leader.

### Theoretical Approaches to Group Leadership

Since Aristotle’s time, people have been interested in what makes a good leader. Is leadership something you are born with? Can you learn to be a leader? In this section you will learn about three ways of thinking about effective leadership: leadership as style, leadership as communication competence, and leadership as planning. Although they are presented as separate perspectives, effective leaders learn to embrace key elements from each simultaneously.

### Leadership Styles

Style approaches to studying leadership focus on the patterns of behavior leaders exhibit in groups. Considerable research has examined three major styles of designated leader: democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic. **Democratic leaders** encourage members to participate in group decisions, even major ones: “What suggestions do you have for solving our problem?” **Laissez-faire leaders** take almost no initiative in structuring a group discussion; they are nonleaders whose typical response is “I don’t care; whatever you want to do is fine with me.” **Autocratic leaders** maintain strict control over their group, including making assignments and giving orders: “Here’s how we’ll solve the problem. First, you will . . .” Autocratic leaders ask fewer questions but answer more



Observe how Jay and Claire enact leadership behaviors in “Senior Seminar” on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

#### democratic leaders

Leaders who encourage members to participate in group decisions.

#### laissez-faire leaders

Leaders who take almost no initiative in structuring a group discussion.

#### autocratic leaders

Leaders who maintain strict control over their group.

### TRY THIS

You have learned that there are different types of leadership style and that leaders base their ability to influence others on the exercise of power. What relationship do you think exists between leadership style and power? In the matrix below, check cells where you think the leadership style matches the base of power. Why do you think these relationships exist?

	DEMOCRATIC LEADER	AUTOCRATIC LEADER	LAISSZ-FAIRE LEADER
REWARD POWER			
PUNISHMENT POWER			
LEGITIMATE POWER			
REFERENT POWER			
EXPERT POWER			

than democratic leaders; they make more attempts to coerce and fewer attempts to get others to participate (Foels, Driskell, Mullen, & Salas, 2000).

Groups vary in the amount of structure and control their members want and need, but research findings about style have been consistent (see Brown & Trevino, 2006). Most people in the United States prefer democratic groups and are more satisfied in democratically rather than autocratically led groups.

The style approaches imply a single leadership style good for all situations. However, most scholars believe that the style should match the needs of the situation. For example, if you are in a group working on a class project and the deadline is tomorrow, a democratic leadership style might be ineffective because it takes longer to make decisions.

### *The Communication Competencies of Leaders*

Communication scholars who adopt the communicative competencies approach have tried to focus on the communicative behaviors of leaders as they exercise interpersonal influence to accomplish group goals. They ask such questions as “What do effective leaders do?” The Communication Competency Model of Group Leadership, developed by Barge and Hirokawa (1989), is one of the most comprehensive models to address this question. This model assumes that leaders help a group achieve its goals through communication skills (competencies). Two competencies include the task and interpersonal, or relationship, distinctions discussed earlier. Leaders must be flexible to draw from a personal repertoire of such competencies. Some of the most important leader competencies are described briefly here:

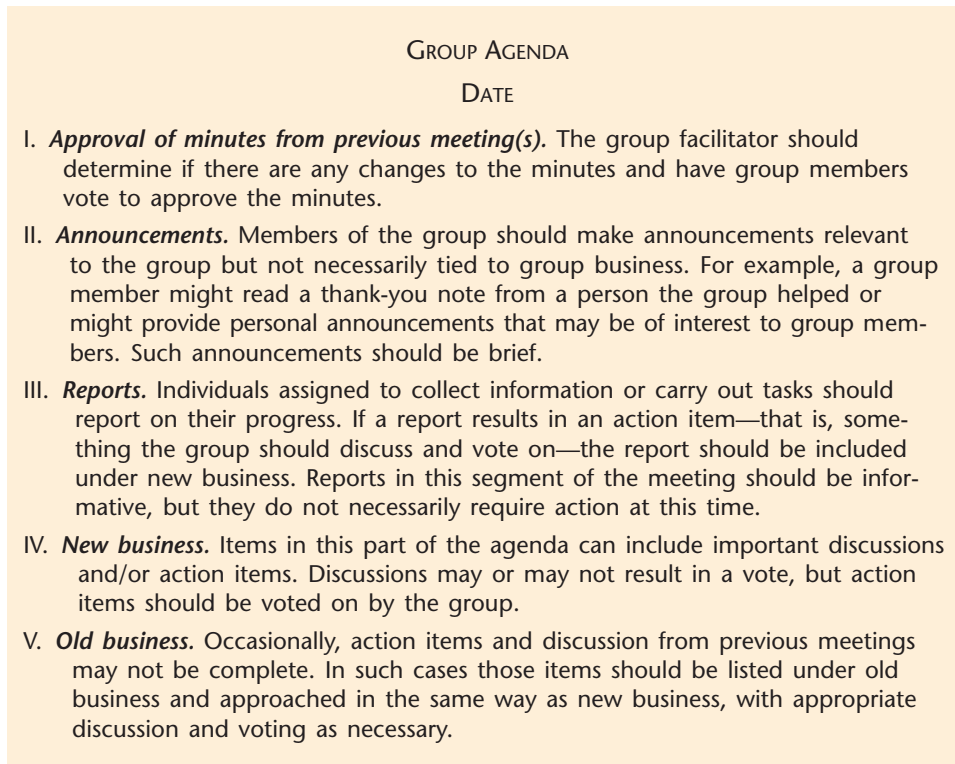


- Effective leaders are able to clearly and appropriately communicate ideas to the group without dominating conversation.
- Effective leaders communicate a clear grasp of the task facing the group.
- Effective leaders are skilled at facilitating discussion.
- Effective leaders encourage open dialogue and do not force their own ideas on the group.
- Effective leaders place group needs over personal concerns.
- Effective leaders display respect for others during interaction.
- Effective leaders share in the successes and failures of the group.

### *The Planning Skills of Leaders*

In addition to exhibiting an appropriate style and being a competent communicator, effective leaders must learn to plan. Although planning cannot prevent all problems from occurring, some up-front work can increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. Here are some tips for planning effective meetings:

1. *Know the task at hand.* Later in the chapter you will learn about the group problem-solving model. Effective leaders should understand the problem facing the group and take care to communicate that task to group members.
2. *Know the people.* As you will learn, individual group members will have different skills, motivations, frames of reference, and knowledge bases. Understanding how to draw on group members' strengths and manage interpersonal dynamics is a key role of the group leader.
3. *Collect information.* The group leader should attempt to become knowledgeable on all issues facing the group. If you are knowledgeable, you will know when discussions are off track.



**Figure 9.1** Standard group agenda template.

4. *Distribute leadership.* In certain situations leadership should be distributed among all group members. The designated leader may need to delegate responsibility, especially when smaller tasks need to be assigned to individual group members. Distributed leadership, whereby all members share in leadership responsibilities, can result in highly productive group outcomes (Barge & Hirokawa, 1989).
5. *Organize the discussion.* Although some types of group discussions may not need much organization—a short class discussion assigned by your teacher, for instance—most discussions need more structure. The group leader should plan an agenda for the discussion. The agenda should be adapted to the task at hand; however, a general template for the agenda is provided in Figure 9.1. As you can see, the typical agenda requires group members to agree on minutes from the past meeting to clear up any confusion or disagreement, make announcements, hear reports, consider new business, and reconsider old business as necessary.

## Establishing Culture in Small Groups

When small groups are created, they immediately begin developing a unique group culture. Some group cultures are pleasant, whereas others are aggressive, hostile, and demeaning. In this section we will discuss the development of group norms, role structures enacted by group members, group cohesiveness, and how diversity affects group culture.



## cultural note

### Cultural Differences in Small-Group Communication

- Conformity in small-group communication is more common in collectivist cultures (which value the group over the individual), such as Venezuela, Pakistan, Peru, and Taiwan.
- Competition and dissent are more common in individualistic cultures (which value freedom, choice, and independence), such as the United States, Australia, Great Britain, and Canada.
- A rigid hierarchy with a controlling group leader is preferred in uncertainty-rejecting cultures, such as India, Mexico, and the Philippines.
- Equality among group members, and use of first names, is preferred in uncertainty-accepting cultures, such as Israel, Australia, and New Zealand.
- Clear rules are expected in uncertainty-rejecting cultures, such as Japan and Greece.
- Flexible rules, high tolerance for ambiguity, and risk taking characterize uncertainty-accepting cultures, such as Great Britain.
- Ambiguity and saving face is important in collectivist cultures, such as China, Korea, and Japan.

Descriptions of various cultures are provided in more detail in chapter 7.

#### norms

Informal rules for group interaction created and sustained through communication.

### The Development of Group Norms

The first time members meet as a group, they begin to establish the **norms**—informal rules for interaction created and sustained through communication—that will eventually guide the members’ behaviors. George Homans (1950) called a norm “an idea in the minds of the members of a group, an idea that can be put



▲ The diversity of a group will influence group culture.

in the form of a statement specifying what the members . . . ought to do, are expected to do, under given circumstances” (p. 73). At first, the full range of human behavior is available to members. For example, they may greet each other formally (“Ms.,” “Dr.,” “Professor,” and so on), or they may speak informally and use first names. The initial pattern of behavior tends to set the tone for subsequent meetings and to establish the general norms that members will follow. The norms of any group tend to mirror the norms of the larger culture or co-culture in which the group exists. Such norms are also created and altered through communication between group members.

Most norms are not established directly. For example, if Ali comes late to a meeting and no one seems bothered, other members may get the message that coming to meetings on time is unnecessary. By saying nothing to Ali, the group, without consciously thinking about or formally “deciding,” has begun to establish a norm that members need not be on time.

Norms often develop rapidly, without members consciously realizing what is occurring. They can be inferred by observing what members say and do. For example, repeated behaviors (such as members always sitting in the same seats) provide evidence of a norm. In addition, behaviors that are punished (such as one group member chastising another by saying, “It’s about time you got here”) indicate that a norm has been violated.

Members should pay attention to group norms to ensure that they are appropriate to the group task. As teachers we often observe students working in groups. As we walk around the classroom, groups seem to notice we are standing near them and quickly stop talking about the band playing at a local club and turn to the topic we asked them to discuss. As we walk away, discussion soon returns to music and fun. Such norms for playfulness, while important for relationship development, may begin to distract the group from assigned tasks. We certainly do not advocate “no fun time” in groups. In fact, we like to talk to our students about music and sports. Nevertheless, a norm that emphasizes all “fun time” and no “work time” can prevent the group from reaching its goal.

## The Development of Roles for Group Members

Every group member enacts a unique **role**, which is a consistent pattern of interaction or behavior exhibited over time. In movies, characters enact roles to drive the story; in small groups, members enact roles to drive the interaction of the group. Whereas actors learn their roles from scripts, group members create their roles spontaneously during interactions with others and while drawing on their unique skills and attitudes. Just as an actor plays different roles in different scripts, individuals enact many diverse roles in the numerous groups to which they belong.

### role

A consistent pattern of interaction or behavior exhibited over time.

## The Types of Group Roles

Two major types of group roles are formal and informal. A **formal role** (sometimes called a **positional role**) is an assigned role based on an individual’s position or title within a group. For example, Indira may be her service club’s treasurer. As treasurer she is expected to perform certain duties, such as paying the club’s bills, balancing the books, and making regular reports to the club about its financial status. These duties may even be specified in a job description for the position of treasurer. We also expect the person in a particular position to behave in certain

### formal role

Also called positional role; an assigned role based on an individual’s position or title within a group.

ways. For example, what do you think Indira's fellow group members expect of her in addition to her assigned duties? Very likely they expect her to be well organized and to present her report clearly and concisely, without wandering into topics irrelevant to the treasury.

#### informal role

Also called a behavioral role; a role that is developed spontaneously within a group.

An **informal role** (sometimes called a **behavioral role**) is a role that is developed spontaneously within a group. The role of each group member is worked out by the interaction between the member and the rest of the group and continues to evolve as the group evolves. Informal roles strongly reflect members' personality characteristics, habits, and typical ways of interacting within a group. For example, Rich goofs around during fraternity meetings. He refuses to take anything seriously, cracks jokes that interrupt others, and calls members who work hard for the fraternity "overachievers." Rich's constant failure to take the group's job seriously has earned him the informal role of playboy in his group. In contrast, Jeff, one of the "overachievers," constantly reminds members about upcoming deadlines. His fraternity brothers have started calling him the group's timekeeper.

### Behaviors That Define Roles

Roles enacted by group members comprise a set of behaviors that perform a function for the group. For formal roles the set of behaviors is often specified in writing. For informal roles the member performs the set of behaviors so regularly that others begin to expect it. Jeff's fraternity relies heavily on his timekeeping duties and would be lost (at least temporarily) if he did not perform them.

#### task functions

Behaviors that are directly relevant to the group's task and that affect the group's productivity.

A number of classification schemes describe typical group functions that members' behaviors serve. One common scheme classifies behaviors by whether they perform task, maintenance, or self-centered functions. **Task functions** are behaviors that are directly relevant to the group's purpose and that affect the group's productivity; their purpose is to focus group members productively on their assignment. **Maintenance functions** are behaviors that focus on the interpersonal relationships among group members; they are aimed at supporting cooperative and harmonious relationships. Both task and maintenance functions are considered essential to effective group communication. On the other hand, **self-centered functions** are behaviors that serve the needs of the individual at the expense of the group. The person performing a self-centered behavior implies, "I don't care what the group needs or wants. I want . . ." He or she uses self-centered functions to manipulate other members for selfish goals that compete with group goals. Examples of statements that support task, maintenance, and self-centered functions are shown in Figure 9.2. The list is not exhaustive; many more functions could be added.

#### maintenance functions

Behaviors that focus on the interpersonal relationships among group members.

#### self-centered functions

Behaviors that serve the needs of the individual at the expense of the group.

These behavioral functions combine to create a member's informal role, which is a comprehensive, general picture of how a particular member typically acts in a group. An example of how individual functions combine to create a role is shown in Figure 9.3. As you can see, information-giving and opinion-giving behaviors primarily characterize the information specialist role. The storyteller role comprises several behaviors including dramatizing, relieving tension, supporting, summarizing, and clarifying. Numerous other informal roles can be created through combinations of behaviors.

## TRY THIS

Figure 9.3 illustrates how individual behavioral functions combine to create a role. How would you draw your own role in a group you belong to? Pick a group from your own life, and draw a pie diagram of behavioral functions of the group showing your role.

## TASK FUNCTIONS AND STATEMENTS

<i>Initiating and orienting:</i>	"Let's make a list of what we still need to do."
<i>Information giving:</i>	"Last year, the committee spent \$150 on publicity."
<i>Information seeking:</i>	"John, how many campus muggings were reported last year?"
<i>Opinion giving:</i>	"I don't think the cost of parking stickers is the worst parking problem students have."
<i>Clarifying:</i>	"Martina, are you saying that you couldn't support a proposal that increased student fees?"
<i>Extending:</i>	"Another thing that Toby's proposal would let us do is . . ."
<i>Evaluating:</i>	"One problem I see with Cindy's idea is . . ."
<i>Summarizing:</i>	"So we've decided that we'll add two sections to the report, and Terrell and Candy will write them."
<i>Coordinating:</i>	"If Carol interviews the mayor by Monday, then Jim and I can prepare a response by Tuesday's meeting."
<i>Consensus testing:</i>	"We seem to be agreed that we prefer the second option."
<i>Recording:</i>	"I think we decided at our last meeting. Let me check the minutes."

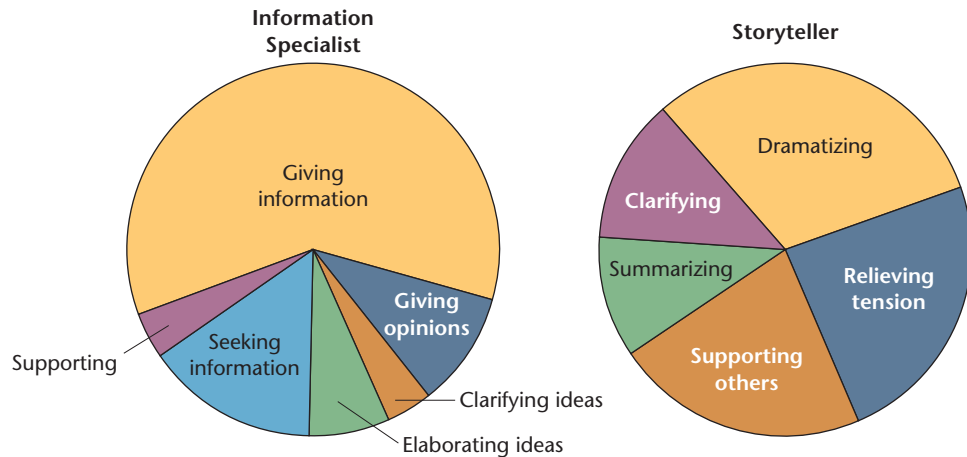
## MAINTENANCE (RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED) FUNCTIONS AND STATEMENTS

<i>Establishing norms:</i>	"It doesn't help to call each other names. Let's stick to the issues."
<i>Gatekeeping:</i>	"Pat, you look like you want to say something about the proposal."
<i>Supporting:</i>	"I think Tara's point is well made, and we should look at it more closely."
<i>Harmonizing:</i>	"Jared and Sally, I think there are areas where you are in agreement, and I would like to suggest a compromise that might work for you both."
<i>Tension relieving:</i>	"We're getting tired and cranky. Let's take a 10-minute break."
<i>Dramatizing:</i>	"That reminds me of a story about what happened last year when . . ."
<i>Showing solidarity:</i>	"We've really done good work here!" or "We're all in this together."

## SELF-CENTERED FUNCTIONS AND STATEMENTS

<i>Withdrawing:</i>	"Do whatever you want; I don't care," or not speaking at all.
<i>Blocking:</i>	"I don't care if we've already voted; I want to discuss it again!"
<i>Status and recognition seeking:</i>	"I have a lot more expertise than the rest of you, and I think we should do it the way I know works."

**Figure 9.2** Examples of task, maintenance, and self-centered statements.



**Figure 9.3** Behavioral functions combine to create roles.

SOURCE: Galanes and Brillhart, 1993.

## Group Cohesiveness

### *Establishing a Cohesive Climate*

#### group climate

The emotional tone or atmosphere members create within the group.

Another important element that helps shape a group's culture is the **group climate**, which is the emotional tone or atmosphere members create within the group. For example, you have probably attended a group meeting where the tension silenced everyone. That atmosphere of tension describes the group's climate. Three factors that contribute heavily to group climate are trust, cohesiveness, and supportiveness.

- *Trust* means that members believe they can rely on each other. Two types of trust relevant to groupwork are task trust and interpersonal trust. Task trust can be violated when group members do not contribute their share of the work (known as “hitchhikers”). Interpersonal trust means that others are working with the best interest of the group in mind rather than advancing hidden agendas.
- *Supportiveness* refers to an atmosphere of openness where members care about each other and create cohesiveness (Gibb, 1961). Examples of both supportive and defensive statements are found in Figure 9.4.
- *Cohesiveness* is the attachment members feel toward each other and the group. Highly cohesive groups are more open, handle disagreement more effectively, and typically perform better than noncohesive groups (Barker, 1991; Kelly & Duran, 1985).

### *Groupthink: An Unintended Outcome of Group Cohesiveness*

#### groupthink

An unintended outcome of cohesion in which the desire for cohesion and agreement takes precedence over critical analysis and discussion.

Although cohesiveness is generally desirable for groups, dangers arise from too much cohesion. **Groupthink** happens when the desire for cohesion and agreement takes precedence over critical analysis and discussion. According to sociologist Irving Janis, groupthink can destroy effective decision making. Several historical decision-making blunders have been attributed to groupthink, including the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission, the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster, and the failure of American forces to foresee the attack on Pearl Harbor (Neck, 1996). Although groupthink

<b>DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS AND STATEMENTS</b>	
<i>Evaluation:</i>	Judging another person: "That's a completely ridiculous idea."
<i>Control:</i>	Dominating or insisting on your own way: "I've decided what we need to do."
<i>Manipulating:</i>	"Don't you think you should try it my way?"
<i>Neutrality:</i>	Not caring about how others feel: "It doesn't matter to me what you decide."
<i>Superiority:</i>	Pulling rank, maximizing status differences: "As group leader, I think we should . . ."
<i>Certainty:</i>	Being a "know-it-all": "You guys are completely off base. I know exactly how to handle this."
<b>SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIORS AND STATEMENTS</b>	
<i>Description:</i>	Describing your own feelings without making those of others wrong: "I prefer the first option because . . ."
<i>Problem orientation:</i>	Searching for the best solution without predetermining what that should be: "We want to produce the best results, and that may mean some extra time from all of us."
<i>Spontaneity:</i>	Reacting honestly and openly: "Wow, that sounds like a great idea!"
<i>Empathy:</i>	Showing you care about the other members: "Jan, originally you were skeptical. How comfortable will you be if the group favors that option?"
<i>Equality:</i>	Minimizing status differences by treating members as equals: "I don't have all the answers. What do the rest of you think?"
<i>Provisionalism:</i>	Expressing opinions tentatively and being open to others' suggestions: "Maybe we should try a different approach . . ."

**Figure 9.4** Examples of defensive and supportive statements.

may be difficult to detect when you are in a group, researchers have identified the following observable signs of groupthink:

- An illusion of invulnerability by the group
- An unquestioned belief in the morality of the group
- Collective efforts by group members to rationalize faulty decisions
- Stereotypic views of enemy leaders as evil, weak, or ineffective
- Self-censorship of alternative viewpoints
- A shared illusion that all group members think the same thing
- Direct pressure on group members expressing divergent opinions
- The emergence of "mind guards" to screen the group from information contradictory to the prevailing opinion

Although Janis's original description of groupthink suggests that these various characteristics lead to groupthink, and consequently result in bad decisions, recent studies suggest that Janis's groupthink characteristics actually occur after the group has already made the poor decision (Henningsen, Henningsen, Eden, DeKalb, & Cruz, 2006). Once

groups make decisions, group members try to create and reinforce a consensus in support of the decision even in the face of evidence that the decision was poor. The desire for consensus then leads to all of the groupthink characteristics identified by Janis.

Groupthink is possible in nearly every group. To prevent groupthink from occurring, groups should seek all pertinent information, carefully assess the credibility of information relevant to the decision at hand, assign members to present counterarguments, and maintain a commitment to finding the best possible outcome as supported by the available evidence.

## The Effect of Diversity on Group Culture

### group culture

The socially negotiated system of rules that guide group behavior.

**Group culture** is the socially negotiated system of rules that guide group behavior. Group culture differs from national and ethnic cultures because a group culture is a relatively unstable and short-term phenomenon. That is, group cultures are constantly in flux and they disappear when the group dissolves. National and ethnic cultures change slowly and are relatively persistent. If you compare two groups from your own life, you can easily understand the concept of group culture. Your group of friends has implicit rules for behavior—inside jokes, slang, norms for touching, and shared objectives. Your group likely has a culture different from that of an assigned group of students you work with in one of your classes. Classroom groups are typically more formal, less cohesive, and more task-oriented.

### within-group diversity

The presence of observable and/or implicit differences among group members.

**Within-group diversity** is the presence of observable and/or implicit differences between group members. We observe within-group diversity when group members differ based on visible characteristics. For example, to visually distinguish between males and females or between members of certain ethnic groups is easy. Group diversity can be implicit when members of a group have differing values, attitudes, and perspectives—personal characteristics that cannot be seen. Table 9.2 shows common examples of observable and implicit within-group diversity.

Differences between group members can have an impact on how they interact with one another and how effectively the group functions. To illustrate the effects of group diversity on group members' behaviors, here are several research findings on differences between how men and women interact in groups:

- In online discussion groups and other forms of computer-mediated communication, women tend to use more exclamation points as markers of friendliness—thus emphasizing the relational aspects of group communication (Waseleski, 2006).
- Female speakers tend to prefer standard (more formal) speech forms whereas male speakers tend to prefer vernacular (less formal) speech forms (Ladegaard & Dorthe, 2003).

**TABLE 9.2** OBSERVABLE AND IMPLICIT WITHIN-GROUP DIVERSITY

	OBSERVABLE	IMPLICIT
<b>DEFINITION</b>	Within-group diversity based on physical characteristics that can be seen	Within-group diversity based on individuals' worldviews, perspectives, and other personality characteristics
<b>EXAMPLE</b>	Ethnicity, sex	Religious orientation, educational background

- Although men are typically more influential in standard communication contexts, this difference diminishes in groups, especially when more than one woman is present. In such situations the influence of women is roughly equal to that of men (Carli, 2001).
- Recent research has observed no differences in perceived leadership ability regardless of whether the group is primarily task- or relationship-oriented; previous research had shown that women were better leaders in relationship-oriented groups (Won, 2006)



In addition to gender differences, cultural differences can also influence group dynamics. For instance, it is likely that work groups and even classroom groups will have at least one member for whom English is a second language. In such situations all group members should make sure that ESL members are fully included. Strategies for helping non-native speakers to feel included are (1) providing written information in advance of discussions, (2) asking someone in the group to take notes that can be copied and distributed to all group members, (3) viewing difference as a strength of the group, and (4) matching tasks to members' abilities. Particularly with the last suggestion, finding out the strengths of all group members is important. Second-language speakers often do not speak as often, but this does not mean that they do not have highly developed skills in other areas like computers, artwork, record keeping, and so on. Finding each member's strengths and using those to the group's advantage demonstrate effective and ethical leadership.

If you are a second-language speaker who is part of a group with mostly native speakers, you must practice being assertive. You should ask questions to clarify the activities of the group or points made during discussion. You should also let group members know about skills you have that could be useful to the group. Finally, try to recognize that in most situations group discussions are as much about relationship building as task accomplishment. Taking time to get to know other members of your group will not only help all of you build confidence in each other but will also potentially lead to meaningful friendships outside of class or the workplace.

## Problem Solving and Decision Making

A primary task facing many groups is solving problems: Student clubs need to raise money, church groups need to plan activities, and social groups must find fun things to do. Group members must be both creative and critical to arrive at the best solutions to these problems. Groups are usually (but not always) better problem solvers than individuals, because several people can provide more information than one person. Groups also can supply more resources and collectively have a broader perspective. And group members can spot flaws in each other's reasoning. However, trade-offs occur. Group problem solving takes longer, and sometimes personality, procedural, or social problems make working as a team difficult for members. Group problem solving is superior under certain conditions, such as when multiple solutions are equally appropriate, decisions must be acceptable to all the members, and the group has ample time to meet (Vroom, 1973). Groups are particularly well suited for **conjunctive tasks**, for which no one member has all the necessary information but each member has some information to contribute. Individuals are often better at **disjunctive tasks**, which require little coordination and which can be completed by the most skilled member working alone (Smith, 1989). Group problem solving is usually more effective when the process is systematic and organized, because a group

### conjunctive tasks

Group tasks for which no one member has all the necessary information but each member has some information to contribute.

### disjunctive tasks

Group tasks that require little coordination and that can be completed by the most skilled member working alone.



that does not have an overall plan for decision making is more likely to make a poor decision (Gouran & Hirokawa, 1986).

### Effective Group Problem Solving

Groups using systematic procedures solve problems more effectively and have higher-quality discussions than do groups that do not use systematic procedures (Gouran, Brown, & Henry, 1978). Following a structured procedure often reminds discussants of something they forgot to do (such as analyze the problem thoroughly) in an earlier stage of problem solving and suggests logical priorities (Poole, 1983a, 1983b). An effective problem-solving process starts with an appropriate discussion question, includes an explicit discussion of the criteria the group will use to assess potential solutions, and follows a systematic problem-solving procedure.

### Wording the Discussion Question

Problem-solving groups typically handle three basic types of discussion questions. Questions of *fact* deal with whether something is true or can be verified. Questions of *value* ask whether something is good or bad, better or worse. Cultural and individual values and beliefs are central to questions of value. Questions of *policy* ask what action should be taken. The key word *should* is either stated or implied in questions of policy. Examples of each type of question are presented in Figure 9.5.



Watch “Where There’s Smoke” on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e), and determine what type(s) of questions are being addressed.

#### FACT

- How has the divorce rate changed in the past 15 years?
- How many Hispanic students graduate from high school each year?
- What percentage of college students graduate in four years?
- How often, on average, does a person speak each day?
- What occupations earn the highest annual incomes?

#### VALUE

- Why should people seek higher education?
- How should Americans treat international students?
- Does our legal system provide “justice for all”?
- How should young people be educated about AIDS?
- What is the value of standardized tests for college admission?

#### POLICY

- What courses should students be required to take?
- Should the state’s drunk driving laws be changed?
- What are the arguments for and against mandatory retirement?
- Should the United States intervene in foreign disputes for humanitarian reasons?
- What advantages should government provide for businesses willing to develop in high-risk areas of a city?

**Figure 9.5** Examples of questions of fact, value, and policy.

"I think Ms. Brown is a **good lawyer** because she is *very credible*. She *knows the law* and always *comes up with novel arguments* that her opposing lawyers can't counter."

"Our solution for the parking problem has to be **effective**. I mean, it has to *reduce parking complaints, eliminate the amount of driving around looking for a space that happens now, and not cost the university any money*."

"I think **weapons** should be made illegal. I mean, *guns* are really dangerous in the wrong hands, and you can't tell me that people need *semiautomatic assault rifles* to hunt with."

**Figure 9.6** Making abstract concepts more concrete.

Regardless of the type of discussion question guiding a problem-solving group, the leader must state the question appropriately. Well-stated questions are clear and measurable and focus on the problem rather than on a solution. First, the language and terminology should be concrete rather than abstract. If ambiguous terms such as *effective*, *good*, or *fair* are used, providing examples helps each group member have as close to the same meaning as possible. Figure 9.6 gives examples of how abstract terms can be made more concrete. Second, a well-stated discussion question helps group members know when the solution has been achieved. For example, a task force charged with "completing a report by May 15 on why membership has dropped from 100 to 50 members" knows exactly what to do by what deadline. Finally, a group should start its problem solving with a problem question rather than a solution question. Problem questions focus on the undesirable present state and imply that many solutions are possible. They do not bias a group toward one particular option. Solution questions, on the other hand, slant the group's discussion toward one particular option. They may inadvertently cause a group to ignore creative or unusual options because they blind members to some alternatives. Examples of problem and solution questions appear in Figure 9.7.

### Discussing Criteria

**Criteria** are the standards by which a group must judge potential solutions. For example, a solution's likely effectiveness ("Will it work?"), acceptability ("Will people vote for our proposal?"), and cost ("Does this option keep us within the budget?") are common criteria. Group members should discuss and agree on criteria before adopting a solution. Because criteria are based on the values of group members, two members, each using rational tools of decision making, can arrive at

#### criteria

The standards by which a group must judge potential solutions.

#### PROBLEM QUESTIONS

How can we reduce complaints about parking on campus?

What can we do to increase attendance at our club's activities?

How can we make Ginny Avenue safer to cross?

#### SOLUTION QUESTIONS

How can we increase the number of parking spaces in the campus lots?

How can we improve publicity for our club's activities?

How can we get the city council to reduce the speed limit on Ginny Avenue?

**Figure 9.7** Problem questions versus solution questions.

ABSOLUTE CRITERIA	IMPORTANT CRITERIA
<i>(Must be met)</i>	<i>(Should be met)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must not cost more than \$2 million</li> <li>• Must be wheelchair accessible</li> <li>• Must include flexible space that can be arranged in different ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be centrally located</li> <li>• Should have stage space for concerts</li> <li>• Should be attractive to all campus constituencies, including traditional and nontraditional students, faculty, and staff</li> </ul>

**Figure 9.8** Absolute criteria versus important criteria for a new student union.

different conclusions. The more similar group members are in age, gender, ethnicity, background, attitudes, values, and beliefs, the easier they can agree on criteria.

Two kinds of criteria are common. Absolute criteria are those that must be met; the group has no leeway. Important criteria are those that should be met, but the group has some flexibility. Group members should give the highest priority to criteria that must be met. Ideas that do not meet absolute criteria should be rejected, and the rest should be ranked on how well they meet important criteria. Examples of absolute and important criteria are presented in Figure 9.8.

### **Identifying Alternatives**

One of the most important jobs a leader has is to encourage group creativity. One procedure that encourages creativity is brainstorming, a technique that originated in the advertising industry to help develop imaginative advertising campaigns (Osborn, 1975). Group brainstorming is generally enhanced when groups are highly cohesive, when leaders are chosen democratically, and when group members have substantial knowledge related to the problem being addressed (Moore, 2000). In fact, Moore's research suggests that any two of these factors allow groups to outperform individuals when brainstorming.

Critical evaluation kills creativity, so the main rule of brainstorming is “no evaluation,” at least during the brainstorming process. Evaluation of the ideas takes place *after* the group has exhausted its options.

### **Evaluating Alternatives**

After group members have adequately brainstormed alternatives, the final task is to evaluate alternatives. At this stage in the discussion, criteria identified by the group in step two are used to judge the efficacy of each solution. Solutions failing to meet absolute criteria are quickly eliminated. Once the nonviable alternatives are eliminated, group members must evaluate each alternative based on remaining important criteria. Eventually, the group must determine which alternative best meets the set of important criteria identified in step two.

## **Beyond Problem Solving: Group Work in a New Era**

In various places throughout the book, we have highlighted myths, metaphors, and misunderstandings. For small-group communication one of the most common myths is that groups function only to solve problems. Of course, groups serve multiple

functions, sometimes simultaneously. In addition to helping us perform task functions like solving problems, groups also allow us to do the following:

1. *Make decisions.* Many groups exist to make decisions that are unrelated to specific problems. For example, student groups like fraternities and sororities make daily decisions such as planning social engagements, launching community outreach projects, and maintaining facilities. These decisions do not necessarily solve problems; rather, they sustain the day-to-day functions of the groups.
2. *Effect change.* Some groups want to influence society but do not have the power to make decisions. For example, several years ago the staff at one of our universities went on strike in an attempt to get better pay and benefits from the state. That group of employees had little power to make decisions—they could not force the state to provide a better offer. However, their actions as a group were meant to raise awareness and plead a case. They wanted to promote change even though they could not force change.
3. *Negotiate conflict.* Groups are often created to resolve conflict. In Los Angeles small groups were used to bring Latino-American and Armenian-American high school students together to resolve racial tensions. In fact, the National Communication Association in partnership with the Southern Poverty Law Center has used this strategy across the nation to promote intercultural understanding and to help resolve racial conflict.
4. *Foster creativity.* Groups help us achieve a level of creativity not possible when working alone. The idea that “two heads are better than one” is magnified in groups. People working together to identify creative ideas will likely be more successful than one person acting alone.
5. *Maintain ties between stakeholders.* A final function for small groups is to bring together stakeholders. **Stakeholders** are groups of people who have an interest in the actions of an organization. For example, most schools have parent–teacher organizations. The principal of a school might bring together selected teachers and parents to discuss issues facing the school so that open lines of communication between various stakeholders (parents, teachers, and administrators) can be maintained. Various organizations, including businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations, use groups to establish and maintain communication between multiple groups of stakeholders.

As you can see, groups exist for many reasons. Although the heart of group activity may indeed be problem solving, not all groups exist solely for that purpose.

## Technology and Group Communication Processes

Throughout this book you have learned how technology impacts various forms of human communication, and group communication is no different. Groups of all types use technology to find and analyze information, to facilitate interaction among group members, and even to aid in the decision-making process.

One form of group communication technology is a **group decision support system**, or GDSS. A GDSS system uses networked computers so that group members can

### stakeholders

Groups of people who have an interest in the actions of an organization.

### group decision support system (GDSS)

An interactive network of computers with specialized software allowing users to generate solutions for unstructured problems.

## e-note

## Small-Group Skills on the Web

Communication consultant Jerry Hampton has created a list of resources on his website for improving group communication in community groups, support groups, church groups, and others (<http://www.community4me.com/resources.html>). On this website you will find several articles and activities that highlight practical skills that can improve your group communication, including icebreakers, discussions of how group norms develop, and other exercises relevant to group communication.



▲ Computers can be used to facilitate group communication.

anonymously communicate with one another through text messages and also allows anonymous voting to help make decisions. If you have ever taken a class in which “clickers,” or student response systems, are used, you have seen GDSS technology in action. Clickers allow teachers to ask students practice quiz questions and have a summary of anonymous responses displayed for the class. More advanced GDSS systems (and, in fact, more advanced student response systems) simply add the element of anonymous texting. Research shows that GDSS technology has the potential to increase interactions because they allow anonymity for group members, can increase the efficiency of decision making, and can reduce the potential that groupthink influences outcomes (see Aakhus, 2001; Craig, 2004).

Of course, not all technology-mediated group communication takes place in businesses and classrooms. A growing number of websites are being created where people can join online social-support groups. As the Internet becomes a primary source for information about health, people are increasingly using discussion boards and chat rooms to connect with others who have similar conditions or problems (Coulson, Buchanan, & Aubeeluck, 2007). These online support groups not only provide anonymity, but can connect people together who have similar ailments but live apart, even on different sides of the world. Your campus may even offer online anonymous support groups for topics like drinking, fitness, and even academic difficulties.

Of course, not all group technology automatically improves group communication. As communication researcher Paul Turman (2005) points out, groups communicating entirely through technology may find that group norms and basic structures for how the group operates are more difficult to create in computer-mediated environments. He cautions that computer-mediated groups must take more time to explicitly talk about how the group will function and about various norms for communication among group members.

## How Should You Communicate in Small Groups?

If you, as a group member, are responsible, with the other members, for the outcomes of the groups to which you belong, what can you do to help achieve productive outcomes? The ability to speak fluently and with polish is not essential, but the ability to speak clearly is. You will help fellow group members understand

you better by organizing your comments during small-group discussions in the following ways:

1. *Relate your statements to preceding remarks.* Public speakers do not always have the opportunity to respond to remarks by others, but small-group members do. Your statement should not appear irrelevant. Clarify the relevance of your remark to the topic under discussion by linking your remark to the preceding remark. We recommend doing the following:
  - Briefly note the previous speaker's point that you want to address—for example, "I want to piggyback on Bill's comment by noting that we can meet our goal by . . ."
  - State your point clearly and concisely.
  - Summarize how your point adds to the comments made by others—for example, "So, I agree with Bill. We need to fund-raise, but we can't get so caught up in raising money that we forget about our goal of volunteering."
2. *Use conventional word arrangements.* When you speak, you should use clear, common language so people can understand you. Consider this comment: "I unequivocally recognize the meaningful contribution made by my colleague." While the language might impress some, a simple "I agree" would work just as well. We recommend the following to improve your verbal clarity during group discussions:
  - After connecting your idea to the discussion or previous speaker, state your point and then provide one piece of supporting information or additional explanation.
  - When done, ask if anyone needs you to clarify your point.
3. *Speak concisely.* The point here is simple: Don't be long-winded. The main advantage of small groups is their ability to approach a problem interactively. If you monopolize the discussion, that advantage of small-group communication may be diminished or lost completely. To learn to speak concisely, try the following:
  - Write down your idea before speaking. Those who are wordy during group discussions often spend much of their time trying to figure out what they want to say.
  - Try to talk for no more than one minute at a time. Of course, this time limit is arbitrary; however, one minute should be enough time to get an idea out for consideration, and you can always answer questions to clarify as needed.
4. *State one point at a time.* Sometimes this rule is violated appropriately, such as when a group member is presenting a report to the group. However, during give-and-take discussion, stating only one idea promotes efficiency and responsiveness. To ensure this practice, try the following strategies:
  - As a group, appoint a process observer to be in charge of keeping the group discussion moving along and preventing any member from bringing up more than one idea at a time. After using the process observer a few times, these behaviors become second nature.
  - If you have several ideas that vary in importance, provide some of the less important points to group members in written form for later reflection. Save discussion time for the most important ideas.

## SKILL BUILDER

*Practice your group communication skills while participating in class discussions. When your class is discussing a topic, make contributions by (1) connecting your comment to the previous person's statement, (2) using conventional word arrangements, (3) speaking concisely, and (4) stating only one point at a time.*

## Being an Ethical Group Member

The unique nature of small groups requires attention to special ethical concerns regarding the treatment of speech, people, and information. First, as noted in the NCA Credo of Ethics, discussed earlier in the book, the field of communication strongly supports the value of free speech. Many secondary groups are formed because several heads perform better than one, but that advantage will not be realized if group members are unwilling or afraid to speak freely in the group. An important ethical principle for small groups is that group members should be willing to share their unique perspectives. But they should also refrain from saying or doing things that prevent others from speaking freely. Members who are trustworthy and supportive are behaving ethically.

Second, group members must be honest and truthful. In a small group they should not intentionally deceive one another or manufacture information or evidence to persuade other members to adopt their point of view.

Third, group members must be thorough and unbiased when they evaluate information. Many decisions made in groups, from where to locate a mall to whether it is safe to launch a space shuttle in cold weather, affect people's lives. Such decisions will be only as good as the information on which they are based and the reasoning the members use to assess the information. Group members must consider *all* relevant information in an open-minded, unbiased way by using the best critical thinking skills they can; otherwise, tragedies can result.

Fourth, group members must behave with integrity. That is, they must be willing to place the good of the group ahead of their own goals. Some individuals cannot be team players because they are unable or unwilling to merge their personal agendas with those of the group. Groups are better off without such individuals. If you make a commitment to join a group, you should be the kind of team member who will benefit rather than harm the group. If you cannot in good conscience give a group your support, you should leave the group rather than pretend to support the group while sabotaging it.

Finally, group members must learn to manage **group conflict**, which is an expressed struggle between two or more members of a group (Galanes & Adams, 2007; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Although some conflict can actually help groups make better decisions because ideas are debated and tested more vigorously, too much conflict may result in decreased group cohesiveness and could actually cause the group to cease functioning. To manage conflict, group members must be ethical in the way they approach disagreement and be willing to listen to and compromise with others. Ethical disagreement happens when you express your disagreement openly, disagree with ideas rather than people, base your disagreement on evidence and reasoning, and react to disagreement positively rather than defensively (Galanes & Adams, 2007).

### group conflict

An expressed struggle between two or more members of a group.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Collective Self-Esteem Scale

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. For example, you belong to a university, and as a student you may belong to one or more university groups as well as several social groups. We all belong to groups for different reasons. Read each of the following statements carefully and respond using the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

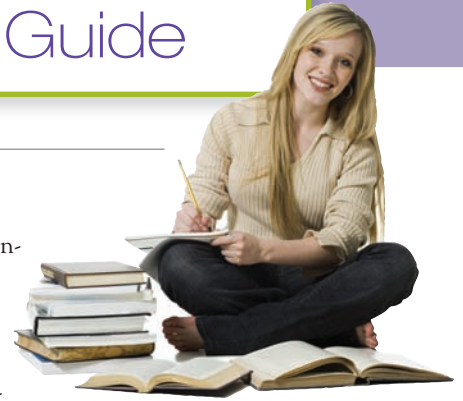
5 = Strongly agree

1. I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.
2. The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am.
3. I often feel I'm a useless member of my social groups.
4. Most people consider my social groups, on the average, to be more ineffective than other social groups.
5. In general, I'm glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to.
6. I feel good about the social groups I belong to.
7. Overall, my social groups are considered good by others.
8. I feel I don't have much to offer to the social groups I belong to.
9. In general, others respect the social groups that I am a member of.
10. The social groups I belong to are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
11. Overall, my group membership has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
12. In general, others think that the social groups I am a member of are unworthy.
13. Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am a member are not worthwhile.
14. I am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to.
15. In general, belonging to my social groups is an important part of my self-image.
16. I often regret that I belong to the social groups I do.

Source: Luthanen, R., & Croker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self-evaluation of one's social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18, 302–318.



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Small-group communication is the interaction of a small group of people working together to achieve a common goal. Small-group communication is relevant to our lives because:
  - Humans need groups to meet needs they cannot meet for themselves.
  - Groups are everywhere.
  - Group communication is a highly valued skill.
  - Working effectively in groups requires training.
- ▶ Small groups can be classified as task related, relationship related, assigned, or emergent. Many groups can blur boundaries among these types of groups.
- ▶ Leadership is the process of using communication to influence the behaviors and attitudes of people to meet group goals. Various theories discuss how leadership affects small-group communication. The most effective leaders are able to adapt their leadership skills to the needs of the group. Additionally, all members of the group can potentially share leadership responsibilities.
- ▶ Group culture is created from several factors including within-group diversity, group norms, individuals' role structures, and group cohesiveness. Although group cohesiveness is generally viewed as a positive element of group culture, highly cohesive groups must take care to prevent groupthink from occurring.
- ▶ Group decision making involves four steps:
  - Wording the discussion question.
  - Discussing criteria for evaluating potential solutions.
  - Brainstorming alternatives.
  - Evaluating alternatives.
- ▶ Small-group communication can utilize technology to help facilitate communication and decision making.
  - Computer networking, either traditional or peer-to-peer, allows members of a group to communicate electronically and share information.
  - Group decision support systems use special software to facilitate brainstorming and decision making. Group members are able to anonymously present ideas to other members and are also able to anonymously rate and vote for specific alternatives.
- ▶ To effectively communicate in small groups, you must use clear language and make concise comments that are related to the comments of other group members. You should try to keep your comments limited to one issue at a time.
- ▶ Ethical behaviors in group contexts include allowing others to speak without fear, being honest and truthful, carefully evaluating alternatives, acting with integrity, and managing conflict ethically.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Affection

Assigned groups

Autocratic leaders

Conjunctive tasks

Control

Criteria

Democratic leaders

Designated leader

Disjunctive tasks

Emergent groups

Emergent leader

Formal role

Group climate

Group conflict

Group culture

Group decision support system (GDSS)

Groupthink

Inclusion

Informal role

Laissez-faire leaders

Leadership

Maintenance functions

Norms

Power

Relationship-oriented groups

Role

Self-centered functions

Small-group communication

Stakeholders

Task functions

Task-oriented groups

Within-group diversity

## Study Questions

1. “Groups meet needs,” “groups are everywhere,” and “working effectively in groups requires training” are statements that explain
  - a. types of small groups
  - b. reasons for studying small-group communication
  - c. ways of interacting in small groups
  - d. methods of studying small-group communication
2. What is true of small groups?
  - a. They are comprised of three to nine people.
  - b. Members are interdependent.
  - c. Group members work toward a common goal.
  - d. All of the above.
3. Which type of group exists to meet our needs for inclusion and affection?
  - a. task-oriented
  - b. relationship-oriented
  - c. assigned
  - d. emergent
4. A process of using communication to influence the behaviors and attitudes of others to meet group goals and to benefit the group is termed
  - a. groupthink
  - b. inclusion
  - c. leadership
  - d. role
5. According to French and Raven, referent power is
  - a. power based on others’ admiration and respect
  - b. the ability to give followers what they want and need
  - c. when other members value a person’s knowledge or expertise
  - d. the ability to withhold from followers what they want and need
6. Informal rules for group interaction, the emotional tone created within a group, and group member roles are comprised in
  - a. leadership skills
  - b. brainstorming techniques
  - c. maintenance functions
  - d. a group’s culture
7. Creating a discussion question, evaluating prospective solutions, and brainstorming and evaluating alternatives are steps in
  - a. group conflict
  - b. group diversity
  - c. group decision making
  - d. groupthink
8. Which of the following statements is true?
  - a. Groups exist solely for problem solving.
  - b. Effective leaders do not adapt their leadership skills to the needs of the group.
  - c. Technology can be utilized to help facilitate communication within small groups.
  - d. Groupthink is a helpful and effective method of decision making
9. When communicating with other group members, you should
  - a. use technical language so you appear more credible
  - b. state numerous points at a time
  - c. be long-winded
  - d. relate your remarks to previous statements
10. To manage group conflict ethically, members must
  - a. be willing to listen to and compromise with others
  - b. base their disagreements on feeling and intuition
  - c. disagree with people rather than ideas
  - d. defend their ideas and refuse to listen to others’ ideas

### Answers:

1. (b); 2. (d); 3. (b); 4. (c); 5. (a); 6. (d); 7. (c); 8. (c); 9. (d); 10. (a)

## Critical Thinking

1. Think of the groups to which you belong. Do they mesh with the text’s definition of a small group? What are the groups’ functions? What type of leader does each group have? What group norms are you expected to abide by?
2. When in the presence of a group, note the members’ functions and related statements. Under which subcategory do the statements fall (refer to Figures 9.2 and 9.4)?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Brainstorm topics appropriate for you and your audience.
2. Conduct a personal inventory for topics you know best.
3. Narrow a topic to save yourself time and to increase relevance.
4. Analyze your audience by demographics, interests, and concerns.
5. Recognize the challenge of changing an audience's existing positions.
6. Develop strategies for adapting yourself and your message to a specific audience.





# TOPIC SELECTION AND AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

**Many speakers get stuck on this first step in** creating a speech because they have too many choices and cannot settle on one choice. So this chapter focuses on how you can more quickly determine what topics are important to you and to your audience, how you can more rapidly narrow the focus so you do not waste time by exploring too broadly, and how you can analyze the audience to make sure that they will care about you and what you have to say. Your ability to inform or persuade an audience depends heavily on your skill in selecting an appropriate topic and in adapting that topic to the particular audience. Once you have mastered these skills for your classroom audience, you can apply them when you speak to other groups.

**Does public opinion determine what the media**—newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, and blogs—cover? Or do the topics that the media cover shape public opinion? This is a question that media scholars have debated for decades. Many studies have lent some support to the second of these possibilities because of a theory known as agenda setting.

Agenda setting theory holds that the media highlight certain stories, which then lead the public to assign importance to the topics covered. In this way the stories more or less set the agenda of public opinion. Thus the war in Iraq, terrorism, global warming, star-crossed astronauts, and political campaigns are topics that have been on the minds of many people lately. If not, those people have probably watched or read very little news.

The media do, in fact, shape the choices that speakers make for their topics. A study by Thomas Christie (2006) compared the topics covered at the daily White House press briefings during two periods of time—a month when media coverage of war issues was high and a month when media coverage focused elsewhere. Christie found that war issues dominated the press briefings during the month that the media focused on the war, but in the month that the media focused on other issues, the war received very little mention in the press briefings. Christie concluded that, at least in part, the White House communication strategy shaped itself to reflect the hot topics in the media.

*Do you think agenda setting is a good way to explain the relationship between the media and public opinion? Would the “hot topics” of the day influence your choices for speech topics? No matter what topic you select for a speech, you must take your audience into consideration. Sometimes that may require you to change your speech or even the topic itself. How much you need to adapt to an audience can be difficult to determine. In this chapter we will focus on how you should select topics while also understanding the nature of your audience. With every speech you will continue to grapple with the balance between personal views and audience adaptation.*

## How Do You Select a Topic?

Many speakers, ranging from the most novice to the most experienced, have significant problems selecting good topics for speeches. Some speakers spend far too little time finding a suitable topic and end up speaking on something that audience members cannot connect with; others spend too long searching for topics and get forced into making a last-minute decision and sacrificing valuable preparation time. Although you should devote adequate attention to thoughtful topic selection, only a small amount of your speech preparation time should be devoted to topic selection. This chapter provides you with suggestions on thoughtful but speedy topic selection.

## Individual Brainstorming

**Brainstorming** is thinking of as many topics as you can in a limited time so that you can select one topic that will be appropriate for you and your audience. Group brainstorming can be a useful technique for selecting a topic for group discussion; individual brainstorming can be an equally effective way to find a topic for your public speech. Indeed, this technique can help you generate many speech topics. Most students find this method more productive than trying to think of just one topic for their speech.

You'll find individual brainstorming to be relatively quick and easy. First, give yourself a limited time—say, 5 minutes—and without trying to think of titles or even complete thoughts, write down as many potential topics as you can. When your time is up, you should have a rough list of possible ideas or topics for your speech. This step can be repeated if you want an even larger list. Second, select the *three* items from your list that are the most appealing to you as topics for your speech. Third, from those three topics choose the *one* that you think would be most appealing to both you and your audience.

### brainstorming

A creative procedure for thinking of as many topics as you can in a limited time.

## Personal Inventories

Another way to find a topic for your presentation is to do a **personal inventory**, or an analysis of your own reading, viewing, and listening choices. You can learn much about yourself by reflecting on your own choices: iPod selections, chat room choices, video and audio downloads, and website selections. Examining your own choices will help you choose a topic that you already know something about.

Public speaking starts with the self—with what you know, have experienced, or are willing to learn. Self-analysis, through personal inventories, can help you uncover the areas in which you are qualified to speak.

While media use is one cue to your interests, you may also inventory the following:

- What you like best and least at work, about family life, about your community, and about our government, politics, and policies
- What causes take your time and energy: your religion, your political party, your position on important issues of our time, and so on
- What personal issues bother you and need to be brought to the attention of others: discrimination, environmental concerns, health issues, and so on

Let us look next at how you can select topics that emerged through brainstorming or personal inventories. Let us look first at your involvement in the topic and then at your knowledge of the topic.

## Your Topic's Importance

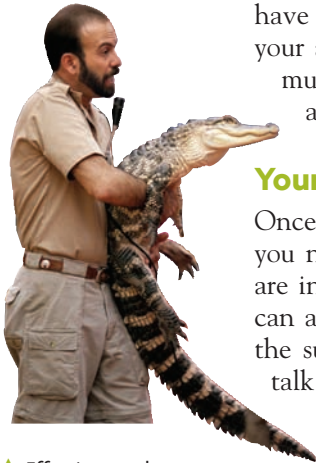
Once you have selected a possible topic, you should evaluate whether the topic is important both to you and to your audience, if you and the audience know enough about the topic, and if you are committed to the topic.

For example, you may be a committed environmentalist who knows a great deal about sustainable agriculture, you may have lived on a small farm, and you may have good ideas on how to practice organic farming. If most of your audience members have never stepped foot outside of a large metropolitan area, you may

### personal inventory

An analysis of your own reading, viewing, and listening habits and behavior to discover topics of personal interest.





▲ Effective speakers know their subject.

#### commitment

A measure of how much time and effort you put into a cause; your passion and concern about the topic.

have a more difficult task. Similarly, if you are a committed political activist but your audience generally hates politics, your task in keeping them engaged will be much more difficult. In both situations the topic you selected had less relevance and importance for your audience.

### Your Knowledge of the Topic

Once you have established that your topic is important to you and to your audience, you need to determine what you and your audience know about the subject. You are in the best position if you know more about the topic than they do. Also, you can add to what you know by talking to others, reading, and going to websites on the subject, as long as you correctly cite your sources. Let's say that you want to talk about the topic of national defense narrowed to service in the National Guard. Twice deployed, you can speak with authority about military purpose and implementation, and your audience knows the topic is important. That condition is ideal for a presentation topic: You know much, and they know little, but they believe the topic to be important.

### Your Commitment to the Topic

Even a topic that you know much about and that you and the audience believe to be important is not a good choice for a presentation unless you feel some passion about the subject. **Commitment** is a measure of how much time and effort you put into a cause. For example, you know that many children are waiting to be adopted; you deeply want more people to be concerned about heart disease and cancer because your relatives died from these diseases; or you want less government interference in our personal lives. You spend time and effort on what you care about, so those causes can guide you to an ideal topic for you and your audience.

We should warn you, however, that commitment to a topic may not be enough to overcome poor preparation. One of us, along with a colleague (Mazer & Titsworth, 2008), conducted a study exploring whether commitment to a topic is related to speech performance and found that it was not—the strongest predictor of speech performance is actually the work put into preparation. While you may need to be committed to a topic to put in adequate preparation for a speech, commitment may not be enough to help you deliver an effective presentation.

Figure 10.1 provides some helpful pointers.

### Topic Selection for ESL Speakers



Nearly every student finds topic selection to be one of the most challenging aspects of the speech preparation process. And for those who speak English as a second language, this step can be even more challenging

1. Do not select a topic that is illegal to present. Most colleges and universities do not allow weapons and alcohol on campus or in classrooms.
2. Do not select an overused topic unless you have discovered a novel approach. Gun control, for example, is an old issue that invites a novel approach.
3. Do not select a topic that is trivial to the audience. You might love to talk about how toothpicks are made, but will your audience find the topic significant?

Figure 10.1 Tips for selecting topics.

because you may need to consider how to balance your personal knowledge and comfort with certain topics with what your audience will be able to relate to. In this section we provide various suggestions for non-native speakers to keep in mind when selecting a topic.

1. *Draw on personal experience.* Depending on your culture you may or may not feel comfortable talking about your own personal experience. In America it is not only appropriate but potentially desirable to do so. Because the American culture is aligned toward respect for individuality, people's unique personal experiences are often viewed as important layers to an explanation or argument. Although you should use other types of support to document your speech, selecting a topic with which you have personal experience is wise.
2. *Review many examples.* To get a sense of what types of topics other students are likely to select, you should review as many example topics as possible. Using this textbook, resources from your instructor or library, and even an Internet search for "speech topics" can be a useful way to identify example topics. Although you should not feel bound to use one of the examples you find, you should try to get some sense of what types of topics are common. You can then adapt your topic ideas to be consistent in scope, focus, and viewpoint if necessary.
3. *Consult with your instructor.* This individual is your most valuable resource in terms of topic selection. The best approach is to brainstorm three to five topic ideas and meet with your instructor to discuss advantages and disadvantages of each. You should also talk to him or her about how to appropriately narrow your topic.
4. *Remember that smaller is better.* If you find it difficult to read material quickly, you might benefit from selecting topics that are narrower in focus. Narrower topics will be easier to research and will likely be easier to organize.

## How Do You Narrow Your Topic?

Even after determining importance, knowledge, and commitment, beginning presenters often select a topic that is too large for the time limits. Topics like selecting a lender, purchasing insurance, and overcoming an addiction may meet those three requirements, but they are too broad. They will produce hundreds of sources on the Internet, and they will give you more information than you can handle. If you take the time to carefully narrow a topic *before* you begin your search for additional information, you can save much time and even more frustration. Figure 10.2 shows one way to narrow your topic.

An abstract category discovered through brainstorming or personal inventories can be narrowed by listing smaller categories directly related to that topic. The abstract topic "college," for example, might yield the following smaller categories directly related to it:

- Application process for state colleges
- Application process for out-of-state schools
- Where to apply for financial aid
- On-campus residence
- Programs of study

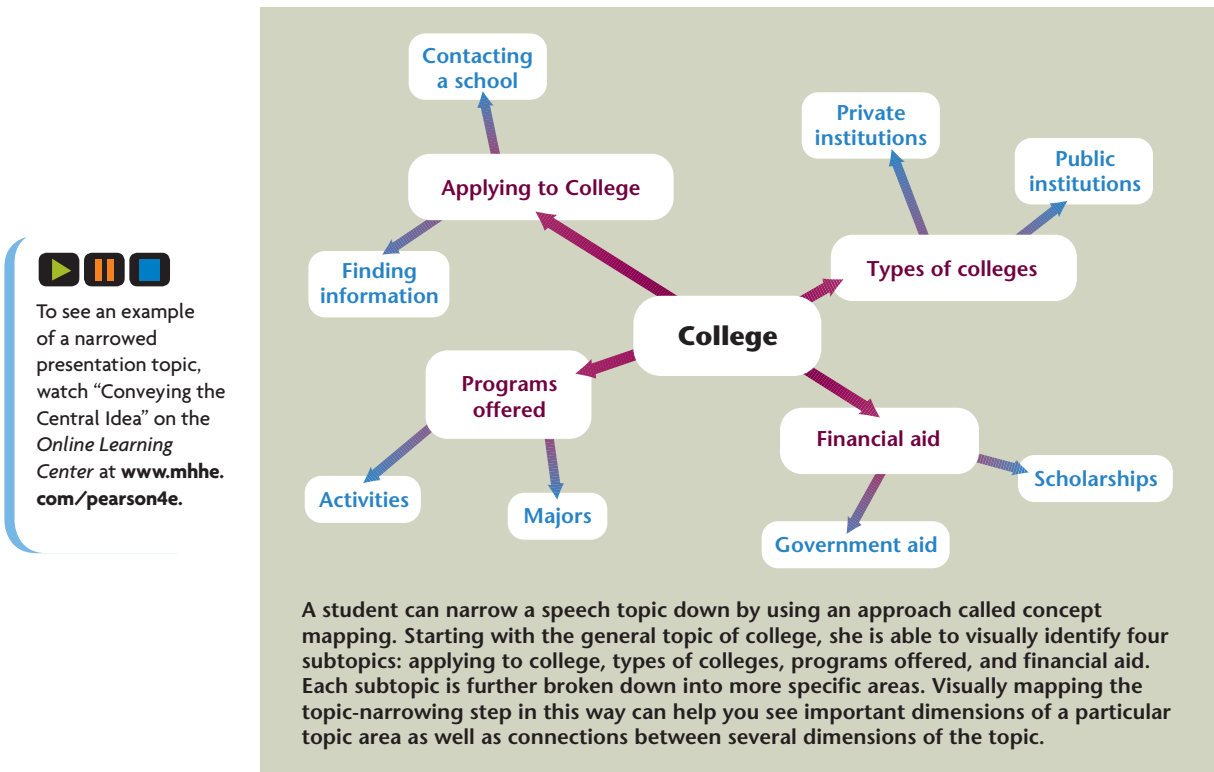


Figure 10.2 Selecting and narrowing a topic.

A slightly different approach to narrowing a topic involves taking a broad category, such as music, and listing as many smaller topics as you can that are at least loosely related to that topic:

- The development of country/western music
- The influence of Les Paul’s guitar on rock and blues
- Rap artists
- Music therapy
- Why any good song sounds bad in an elevator
- Music education at the elementary school level
- The history of the mandolin
- Hip hop artists who serve as role models

The list of more specific and concrete topics can be extended until you have a large number from which to choose.

How will you know if your topic is narrow enough? Things to consider include (1) the amount of information available on the narrowed topic, (2) the amount of information that can be conveyed within the time limits for the speech, and (3) whether the narrowed topic can be discussed with enough depth to keep audience members interested.

In this section on topic selection, you have learned what standards to apply to a topic. You need to determine the importance of the topic to you and your

**TABLE 10.1** POSSIBLE PRESENTATION TOPICS

What Is a Lobbyist?	Keeping Drugs out of Baseball
Protecting Yourself from Food-Borne Illnesses	Why the Poor Stay Poor
Why Tuition Keeps Rising	CEO Compensation in Drug Companies
	American Tobacco Sales to Other Nations

audience, your and the audience's knowledge about the topic, and your commitment to the topic. Once those three criteria are satisfied, you need to narrow or reduce your topic to one you can manage within the time limits established for the presentation. Still another approach is to look at the examples of successful topics in Table 10.1.

## How Do You Analyze Your Audience?

**Audience analysis** is the collection and interpretation of audience characteristics through observation, inferences, questionnaires, or interviews. Why should you analyze your audience? Especially, why should you analyze an audience of classmates? Before we start talking about *how* to analyze an audience, we need to explain *why* we analyze an audience.

Suppose you are giving a speech arguing that the government should not have implemented the 2009 bailout of the financial and auto industries. Should you care that many of your audience members came from a part of the state where auto manufacturing is a significant industry? If you plan to inform audience members about the use of performance enhancing drugs in sports, should you find out whether any of your audience members have played organized sports? In both cases you must use audience analysis to learn about your audience members' beliefs and backgrounds; such information will be invaluable as you generate ideas for how to focus and narrow your topic.

Audience analysis is similar to target marketing in advertising and public relations. Analysis can be as simple as “eyeballing” a group to estimate age, sex, and race or as complicated as polling people to discover their feelings on your topic. The information that follows is designed to make you more insightful about how you approach an audience and to invite you to think carefully about the people to whom you speak so that you can be as effective as possible.

### audience analysis

The collection and interpretation of audience information obtained by observation, inferences, questionnaires, or interviews.

## SKILL BUILDER

*Some people are much better than others at sizing up an audience. Check out your own skill at analyzing an audience by inferring audience characteristics. For example, what is the approximate range in age, what cultures or co-cultures are represented, how many commute, how many have traveled, and how many are actively involved with campus organizations? Perhaps your instructor will allow you to find out the accuracy of your inferences unless classmates might be uncomfortable revealing some of this information.*

## cultural note

### Seek Human Values

Some colleges have such diverse audiences that audience analysis seems impossible. Although challenging, an audience with a rich mix of races, religions, and languages invites the speaker to find topics that relate to us as human beings. All peoples of the world seek safety, security, food, shelter, and loving families. What values can you find in your audience that relate to your topic?

## Four Levels of Audience Analysis

To begin, we will explore four levels of audience analysis. The categories are called *levels* because the first is relatively simple and the last is the most complex. The four levels begin with the distinction between captive and voluntary audiences.

### Level 1: Captive and Voluntary Audiences

You need to decide how captive or voluntary your audience is because captive audiences take more convincing than voluntary audiences. How can you tell the difference?

A **captive audience** did not choose to hear you or your speech. Your classmates are a largely captive audience for this reason. That means they are somewhat more difficult to inform or persuade than would be a **voluntary audience** of people who chose to hear you speak about a particular topic. The voluntary audience is easier to manage because they actually seek information or ideas. For the captive audience you and your topic are more or less accidental. But do not be discouraged about the classroom audience being largely captive because captive audiences have an upside: They often end up hearing and responding positively to a topic for which they never thought they had an interest. That is, they can be informed about a subject that they formerly found uninteresting, and they can be persuaded on topics they never would have listened to if they had a choice.

#### **captive audience**

An audience that has not chosen to hear a particular speaker or speech.

#### **voluntary audience**

A collection of people who choose to listen to a particular speaker or speech.

### Level 2: Demographic Analysis

Another important step in the process of speech preparation is discovering the audience's demographic characteristics. The term *demographics* literally means “the characteristics of the people.” **Demographic analysis** is the collection and interpretation of data about the characteristics of people: name, age, sex, hometown, year in school, race, major subject, religion, and organizational affiliations. Demographic information can be important to public speakers by revealing the extent to which they will have to adapt themselves and their topics to an audience.

The groups to which your audience members belong can signal support for or hostility toward your topic. On a commuter campus pay attention to the bumper stickers. They can signal your audience's attitudes about gun control, abortion, and a host of other issues. Observe their accessories: Christian crosses, a Star of David, a Muslim head cover, sorority or fraternity letters, ethnic dress, VFW or American Legion or Rotary pin, a Harley-Davidson jacket, tell-tale tattoos—many signs revealing memberships that may also reflect attitudes about topics.

Public speakers usually rely heavily on demographic information. Politicians send personnel ahead to find out how many blue-collar workers, faithful party

#### **demographic analysis**

The collection and interpretation of data about the characteristics of people.



▲ Does a teacher have a captive or a voluntary audience?

members, elderly people, union members, and hecklers they are likely to encounter. They consult opinion polls, population studies, and reliable persons in the area to discover the nature of a prospective audience. Conducting a demographic analysis of your class can serve a similar purpose—analysis will help you design a speech better adapted to your audience.

### ***Level 3: Audience and Topic Age and Interest***

Topics, like people, live, change, and die—some have long and varied lives, while others pass quickly. Therefore you need to pay attention to the age and development of your subject matter and the age and development of your audience.

The age and development of your topic is your first concern. Some topics have endured for decades if not centuries:

- How much should government be allowed to intervene in our lives?
- Should the United States use military force to promote democracy?
- What can and should we do about the poor and marginalized in our society?
- What can and should we do about the privileged and overrewarded in our society?
- Should concern for the environment limit our exploration for oil?

These are just a few of the vexing problems that have been around for decades. Even young people have probably heard plenty about what they are supposed to believe about issues like gun control.

So what are you supposed to do about the age of issues and the age of audiences? Understand that more mature audiences, abundant in community colleges, have heard about many of these issues before, so they have to be viewed as more sophisticated

on these topics. Younger audiences are less likely to have heard as much and are less likely to have hardened positions on the issues, so they can be treated differently. In fact, old, persistent issues need to be treated in new or novel ways, and not just a rehash of what the audience has heard repeatedly in the past. The effective presenter takes into account both the age of the issue and the age of the audience and skillfully adapts the topic to the particular audience for maximum effect.

#### ***Level 4: The Audience's Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values***

Another consideration in the process of speech preparation is to discern audience attitudes, beliefs, and values on an issue before giving the speech. An **attitude** is a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a person, an object, an idea, or an event. The attitudes of audience members can be assessed through questionnaires, by careful observation, or even by asking the right questions. If your audience comes from a place where many attitudes, beliefs, and values are shared, your audience analysis may be easy. For example, a speech about safe sex would be heard in some colleges with as much excitement as a speech on snails; however, at other colleges, the same speech could be grounds for dismissal. Attitudes toward politics, sex, religion, drugs, and even work vary in different geographic areas and co-cultures. Regardless of the purpose of your speech, the attitudes of audience members will make a difference in the appropriateness of your topic. Some examples of attitudes follow:

Antigovernment	Pro-business	Pro-conservation
Anti-gun control	Pro-green	Pro-technology
Antipollution	Pro-choice	Pro-diversity
Anti-immigration	Pro-life	Antirefugee
Pro-animal rights	Antitax	Pro-free trade

Everyone has attitudes about a variety of ideas, persons, and things. They are regarded as quite stable and often difficult to change. The effective public speaker learns as much as possible about audience attitudes before speaking to the group.

A **belief** is a conviction. Beliefs are usually considered more enduring than attitudes, but our attitudes often spring from our beliefs. Your belief in good eating habits may lead to a negative attitude toward overeating and obesity and to a positive attitude toward balanced meals and nutrition. Your audience's beliefs make a difference in how they respond to your speech. They may believe in upward mobility through higher education, in higher pay through hard work, or in social welfare. On the other hand, they may not believe in any of these ideas. Beliefs are like anchors to which our attitudes are attached. To discover the beliefs of an audience, you need to ask questions and to observe carefully. Some examples of beliefs follow:

Hard work pays off.	Good people will go to heaven.
Taxes are too high.	Work comes before play.
Anyone can get rich.	Government should be small.
Education pays.	

Knowing your audience's beliefs about your topic can be a valuable aid in informing and persuading them.

A **value** is a deeply rooted belief that governs our attitude about something. Both beliefs and attitudes can be traced to a value we hold. Learned from childhood through the family, religion, school, and many other sources, values are often so

#### **attitude**

A predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a person, an object, an idea, or an event.

#### **belief**

A conviction; often thought to be more enduring than an attitude and less enduring than a value.

#### **value**

A deeply rooted belief that governs our attitude about something.

## e-note

## Ideas for Speeches

Check the websites of major television networks such as **www.cbs.com** to find top stories, in-depth stories, specialized items like “Eye on Politics,” and information on CBS news productions, like *60 Minutes*.

much a foundation for the rest of what we believe and know that they are not questioned. Sometimes we remain unaware of our primary values until they clash. For example, a person might have an unquestioned belief that every individual has the right to be and do whatever he or she wishes—basic values of individuality and freedom—until it comes to homosexuality. Sexual orientation as an aspect of individual freedom may clash with the person’s value of heterosexuality. Table 10.2 shows one method for ranking values.

The values held by your audience and the order in which the audience members rank these values can provide important clues about their attitudes and beliefs. Figure 10.3 shows one way to rank values. A speaker who addresses an audience without knowing the values of the audience members is taking a risk that can be avoided through careful audience analysis. The relationships among attitudes, beliefs, and values are illustrated in Figure 10.3.

### Three Methods of Audience Analysis

This section examines three methods of analyzing an audience. The three methods are based on your observations of the audience, your inferences, and your questions and their answers.

#### Method 1: Observation

Effective public speakers must engage in active observation, using their senses (sight, hearing, smell, and touch) to build information about their audience. An effective lawyer selects an audience by questioning prospective jurors. The lawyer asks questions

**TABLE 10.2** RANKING VALUES

Rank-order five of the following values in their order of importance to you. If you can persuade some of your classmates, or the entire class, to do this as well, you will have information that will help you prepare your speech.

___ Wisdom	___ Wealth	___ Fame
___ A world at peace	___ Security	___ Health
___ Freedom	___ Fulfillment	___ Love
___ Equality		

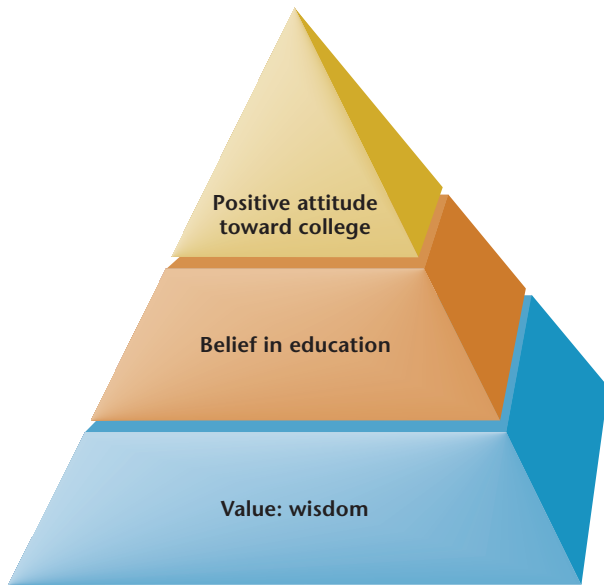
How does your ranking compare to your classmates’? What other values might help you with your speech?

Source: Heath, 1976.



Watch “Appealing to Motivations” on the *Online Learning Center* to see how presenters can adapt messages to audience members’ attitudes, beliefs, and values.





**Figure 10.3** Relationships among attitudes, beliefs, and values.

designed to discover prejudice, negative and positive attitudes, beliefs, and values. Later, as the witnesses testify, the lawyer observes jurors' verbal and nonverbal behavior and decides which arguments, evidence, and witnesses are influencing the jurors. People who speak on behalf of business associations, unions, political parties, colleges, and the underprivileged have usually spent years watching others and learning which approaches, arguments, and evidence are most likely to be accepted by an audience.

You can learn to observe your class. For every speech you give, you might listen to 20 or 25 given by others. You have a unique opportunity to discover your classmates' responses. Do they respond well to speakers who come on strong or to speakers who talk to them as equals? Do they like speeches about work, leisure, or ambition? Do they respond well to numbers and statistics, stories and examples, graphs and posters, or pictures and slides? As a listener in the classroom, you have a unique opportunity to observe your own and your classmates' responses to a variety of speakers.

Even though your audience may be more captive than most, you have an advantage over most public speakers. How many public speakers have an opportunity to hear every one of their listeners give a speech? Instead of sitting back like a passive observer, take advantage of the situation by listening actively, taking notes about each speaker's characteristics, and recording the audience's responses. You can analyze your audience continually by careful observation during each round of speeches.

### **Method 2: Inference**

To draw an inference is to draw a tentative generalization based on some evidence. We draw an inference when we see someone dressed in rags and tentatively conclude that the person is homeless. Our inferences are often accurate—we infer from a man's wedding band that he is married, from the children tugging at his sleeve that he is a father, and from the woman holding his arm that she is his wife. We are basing these inferences on thin data, but they are probably correct. However, inferences can also be incorrect. The more evidence on which an inference is based, the more likely it is to be true.

You can base inferences on the observed characteristics of your audience, on demographic information, and on the information obtained from questionnaires. You can draw inferences either indirectly or directly. An indirect way to draw inferences is by observation. You might, for example, find that 85% of the students at a particular university hold part-time jobs (an observation). You might infer that the school is expensive, that financial aid is limited, or that the cost of area housing is high. You might also infer, from your limited information, that most of the students in this school value their education, are exceptionally well motivated, or believe in saving money.

A more direct way to gather data on which to base inferences is to ask questions. You could, for example, ask either orally or in writing how many students in the class have part- or full-time jobs; how many are married, have families, and/or



▲ The public speaker must consider different opinions among audience members that reflect different values.

have grown children; how many plan to become wealthy; whether they were raised in an urban or a rural setting; and how many have strong religious ties. The answers to these questions provide valuable information about your audience.

### Method 3: The Questionnaire

A more formal way to collect data on which you can base inferences is to ask your audience to fill out a **questionnaire** consisting of written questions developed to obtain demographic and attitudinal information. Demographic information can be easily gathered and summarized from questions similar to the following:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>___ 1. I am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a first-year student</li> <li>b. a sophomore</li> <li>c. a junior</li> <li>d. a senior</li> </ul> | <p>___ 2. I am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 17–21 years old</li> <li>b. 22–35 years old</li> <li>c. 36–45 years old</li> <li>d. over 45</li> </ul>     |
| <p>___ 3. I am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. single</li> <li>b. married</li> <li>c. divorced or separated</li> <li>d. widowed</li> </ul>       | <p>___ 4. I have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. no children</li> <li>b. one child</li> <li>c. two children</li> <li>d. more than two children</li> </ul> |

#### questionnaire

A set of written questions developed to obtain demographic and attitudinal information.

The audience members do not have to identify themselves by name to provide this information. Keeping the questionnaires anonymous encourages honest answers and does not reduce the value of the information.

Attitudinal information can be collected in at least three ways. One way is to ask questions that place audience members in identifiable groups, as these questions do:

- \_\_\_ 5. I
- am active in organizations
  - am not active in organizations
- \_\_\_ 6. I see myself as
- conservative
  - liberal
  - independent
- \_\_\_ 7. I see myself as
- strongly religious
  - moderately religious
  - unreligious

A second method of gaining attitudinal information is to ask people to rank values, such as hard work, higher education, high pay, and security. People's ranking of their values can provide additional information about their attitudes and beliefs.

The third method of collecting data about people's attitudes involves listing word concepts that reveal attitudes and then asking respondents to assess their attitudes toward these specific issues. One method is to use an attitudinal scale like the one in Table 10.3. The reactions to these and similar words or phrases can provide information that will help you approach your audience successfully. For example, if most persons in your audience are neutral to mildly favorable toward taxing tobacco, then your speech advocating tobacco taxes could be designed to move their attitudes from mildly favorable to strongly favorable. If the responses are negative, then you may have to work just to move your audience closer to a mildly disfavorable attitude or toward neutrality.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Evaluating Topics

Brainstorming and eventually selecting an effective speech topic begins with a thorough self-assessment of your own interests and knowledge. Below you will find several topics followed by bipolar pairs of adjectives. For each topic, check the space that best represents your opinion of that topic with respect to that pair of bipolar terms.

#### 1. Politics

Interesting ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) Uninteresting

Good ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) Bad

Confident ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) Not Confident

Relevant ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) Irrelevant

## 2. The Environment

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 3. The Economy

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 4. Education

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 5. Health

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 6. Technology

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 7. Diversity

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 8. Religion

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 9. Conflict

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

## 10. Poverty

Interesting      Uninteresting  
 Good      Bad  
 Confident      Not Confident  
 Relevant      Irrelevant

**TABLE 10.3** ATTITUDINAL SCALE

Next to each word or phrase, indicate your attitude toward it by writing in the appropriate number: (1) strongly favor, (2) mildly favor, (3) neutral, (4) mildly disfavor, or (5) strongly disfavor.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Internet censorship
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Job security
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Gun control
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Minority groups
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Women’s rights
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. Alcohol consumption
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Military
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. Recreational drugs

Compile data that indicate the attitudes within your class on one of these topics. What does this information tell you about how to approach your audience about this topic?

## How Do You Adapt to the Audience?

Audience analysis yields information about your listeners that enables you to adapt yourself and your message to that audience. A speech is not imposed on a collection of listeners; a message is negotiated between a speaker and an audience and is designed to inform, entertain, inspire, teach, or persuade that audience. This negotiation is based on your analysis of your audience.

### MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Speakers often misunderstand what it means to “adapt” a message to an audience, assuming that they must change their position on an issue because of audience members’ perceptions. An important question to consider in adapting to an audience is “How do I adapt to an audience without letting the audience dictate my position?”*

*The answer is that you analyze the audience not to discover your own position but to discover theirs—how much do they know about the topic? Finding out, for example, that an audience is likely to be utterly opposed to your position is not an indication that you should alter your position on the issue. Instead, you may have to adopt a more gradual approach to changing your listeners’ minds than you would have liked.*

### Adapting Yourself

In public speaking you also have to adjust to information about the audience. Just as the college senior preparing for a job interview adapts to the interviewer in dress, manner, and language, the public speaker prepares for an audience by adapting to its expectations. How you look, how you behave, and what you say should be carefully tailored to your audience.

## Adapting Your Verbal and Nonverbal Codes

The language you use in your speech, as well as your gestures, movements, and even facial expressions, should be adapted to your audience. Does your audience analysis indicate that your language should be conversational, formal, cynical, or technical? Does your analysis indicate that your listeners like numbers and statistics? Do your observations indicate that you should pace the stage or remain behind the lectern? Does your analysis indicate that you should not use taboo words in your speech lest you alienate your group, or does the audience like a little lively language?

## Adapting Your Topic

Public speakers should be permitted to speak on nearly any topic; after all, the First Amendment provides some protection for free speech. There may be practical considerations that may lead you to avoid certain topics, but those are typically unique to specific situations and contexts. Of course, the right to speak on nearly any topic brings with it a responsibility to adapt how you approach your topic for the audience to which you are speaking. Using audience analysis you must figure out how to best approach your topic to meet the needs of your audience. Your analysis may lead you to make adaptations in language, visual resources, evidence used to support claims, or even switching entire points made during the presentation. For example, suppose you want to speak in favor of physician-assisted suicide and your audience analysis indicates that the majority of your listeners are opposed to it, you need not conclude that the topic is inappropriate. You may, however, adapt to the members of your audience by starting with a position closer to theirs. Your initial step might be to make audience members feel less comfortable about their present position so that they are more prepared to hear your views.

## Adapting Your Purpose

You should also adapt the purpose of your speech to your audience. Teachers often ask students to state the purpose of a speech—what do you want your audience to know, understand, or do? Thinking of your speech as one part of a series of informative talks your audience will hear about your topic may help. Your listeners have probably heard something about the topic before, and they are likely to hear about the topic again. Your particular presentation is just one of the audience's exposures to the topic.

Still, the immediate purpose of your speech is linked to a larger goal. The goal is the end you have in mind. Some examples of immediate purposes and long-range goals will illustrate the difference. The following is an example of the immediate purpose and long-range goal of an informative speech:

*Immediate purpose:* After listening to this speech, the audience should be able to identify three properties of printers.

*Long-range goal:* To increase the number of people who will read articles and books about printers.

The following is an example of the immediate purpose and long-range goal of a persuasive speech:

*Immediate purpose:* After my speech, the audience should be able to explain the low nutritional value of two popular junk foods.

*Long-range goal:* To dissuade the listeners from eating junk food.

You should note that an immediate purpose has four essential features. First, an immediate purpose is highly specific. Second, it includes the phrase *should be able to*. Third, it uses an action verb such as *state, identify, report, name, list, describe, explain, show, or reveal*. Fourth, it is stated from the viewpoint of the audience. You are writing the purpose as an audience objective. The more specific your immediate purpose, the better you will be able to determine whether you have accomplished that purpose.

## Microtargeting: A New Kind of Audience Analysis

### microtargeting

A method of bringing national issues down to the individual level.

Until the 2004 presidential race, few people had heard of a new kind of audience analysis called **microtargeting**, a method of bringing national issues down to the individual level. The consulting firm contracted by the Republicans, TargetPoint Consulting, explains the reasoning behind microtargeting:

The control has switched from the seller to the buyer. Voters and consumers now have multiple sources for information and entertainment, and they control what they want and when they want it. The captive audience is gone. The empowered individual reigns.

Most important: voters and consumers expect you to personally market and sell to them based on their unique wants, needs, biases and preferences. What was once exceptional is now expected, but until now, the data tools to give consumers what they want didn't exist. Now they do. (Microtargeting, 2006)

Among the very first people to publicize what was going on privately in the political campaign were two reporters for *The Washington Post*, who explained the concept after the Republicans succeeded in gaining the presidency for George W. Bush:

Republican firms, including TargetPoint consultants and National Media Inc., delved into commercial databases that pinpointed consumer buying patterns and television-watching habits to unearth such information as Coors beer and bourbon drinkers skewing Republican, brandy and cognac drinkers tilting Democratic; college football TV viewers were more Republican than those who watch professional football; viewers of Fox News were overwhelmingly committed to vote for Bush; homes with telephone caller ID tended to be Republican; people interested in gambling, fashion and theater tended to be Democratic. (Edsall & Grimaldi, 2004)

Although microtargeting was first used as a tool by the Republican party when President Bush was elected, the Democratic party effectively used this technique to elect President Obama. As explained in a *New York Times* story,

[m]icrotargeting uses computers and mathematical models to take disparate bits of information about voters—the cars they own, the groups they belong to, the magazines they read—and analyze it in a way to predict how likely a person is to vote and what issues and values are most important to him. Often these analyses turn up surprising results; for instance, Democrats have taken advantage of the fact that many evangelical Christians are open to hearing a pro-environmental message. (Wayne, 2008, np).

As explained in the article, microtargeting allowed the Democrats to explore and find pockets of support for Obama in states that traditionally voted Republican. Now, microtargeting has become a commonly used tool for national and even some state and local elections.

You can use a form of microtargeting in your own presentations, including those in the classroom. Like the microtargeting firms, you can survey your class for information (usually anonymously) about political affiliations and positions on issues. Like the microtargeting professionals, you are likely to find that positions on issues tend to cluster: NASCAR fans are likely to be anti-gun control; pro-life advocates often embrace fundamentalist Christian beliefs; and antitax and pro-defense positions are often credited to Republicans. Like politicians you have an advantage if you know how your audience feels about a topic. You do not change your stance on the topic because of the audience, but you can and should adapt your message to account for the audience's positions on the issue.

## get INVOLVED

At several points in this chapter you have learned that picking personally relevant topics is an effective strategy for speakers. Sometimes looking to what others identify as important topics can help you discover how to balance your personal interest with the interests of others. Besides using newspapers, blogs, and other electronic and print publications to explore topics important to society, several high-quality websites are available to help you analyze socially relevant issues.

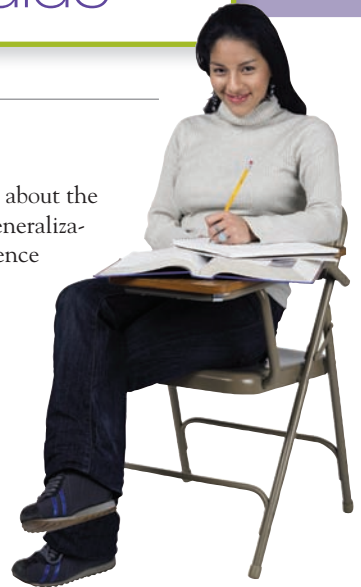


One such website is the “Seven Revolutions” page sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Seven Revolutions project explores seven different issues (population, resource management, technology, information flow, economic integration, conflict, and governance) that will likely be “revolutionary” by the year 2025. That website can be found by clicking on the Seven Revolutions tab on the Center for Strategic and International Studies/Global Strategy Institute website: <http://gsi.csis.org/index.php>.

Using the Seven Revolutions website as a starting point, explore the seven areas and analyze how those areas might be personally relevant to you and your classmates. In addition to gaining experience in analyzing topics in relation to your audience, you may even find a valuable topic and resources for your next speech!



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Two methods of topic selection are brainstorming and personal inventories.
  - The topic needs to be important to you and your audience.
  - The topic needs to be one that you know about and that your audience may want to know about.
  - The topic needs to be one to which you are committed, to which you speak with passion and conviction.
  - Once chosen, the topic needs to be narrowed to fit the time limits, the subject matter, and the audience.
- ▶ Four levels of audience analysis can help you determine topic appropriateness.
  - Level 1 distinguishes between voluntary and captive audiences.
  - Level 2, demographic analysis, evaluates the characteristics of audience members.
  - Level 3, audience and topic age and interest, analyzes the audience's interest in and knowledge of a topic.
  - Level 4 determines the audience's attitudes, beliefs, and values.
- ▶ Observation, inference, and questionnaires are three methods of audience analysis.
  - Observation involves using your senses to interpret information about the specific audience.
  - Inferences involve using data about the audience to draw tentative generalizations that can make the audience responses more predictable.
  - Questionnaires garner demographic and attitudinal information about the audience.
- ▶ Presentations should be adapted to information about the audience gathered through audience analysis.
  - You should adapt your own behavior to audience expectations.
  - You should adapt your verbal and nonverbal codes to this audience.
  - You should adapt your topic to this audience's knowledge and interest levels.
  - You should adapt your purpose to what is possible with this audience.
- ▶ Microtargeting will help you learn how your audience feels about various issues and adapt your message if appropriate.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Attitude

Audience analysis

Belief

Brainstorming

Captive audience

Commitment

Demographic analysis

Microtargeting

Personal inventory

Questionnaire

Value

Voluntary audience

## Study Questions

1. What is one basic element to keep in mind when selecting a topic for presentation?
  - a. Take a lot of time in choosing a topic.
  - b. Begin with a subject you already know.
  - c. Select a topic you know nothing about.
  - d. Choose a topic that does not affect you personally.
2. After choosing a topic, which of the following is necessary to do?
  - a. Evaluate the importance of your topic.
  - b. Determine how much you and your audience know about the topic.
  - c. Realize your commitment to the topic.
  - d. All of the above.

3. Why is it important to narrow your topic?
  - a. To reduce the information load and meet time requirements.
  - b. To reduce the depth of the topic.
  - c. To reduce your interest in the topic.
  - d. It is not important.
4. When you investigate the audience's demographics, interests, and concerns, you are
  - a. brainstorming
  - b. microtargeting
  - c. analyzing the audience
  - d. creating a captive audience
5. Which level of audience analysis includes collecting data about the characteristics of people?
  - a. audience type
  - b. audience interest in the topic
  - c. audience's attitudes, beliefs, and values
  - d. demographic analysis
6. A deeply rooted feeling that affects how we act toward an idea or concept is a(n)
  - a. attitude
  - b. belief
  - c. value
  - d. thought
7. A method of audience analysis that draws tentative generalizations based on some evidence is termed
  - a. observation
  - b. inference
  - c. questionnaire
  - d. survey
8. If you ask people to rank concepts in order of importance or if you ask questions that place individuals into identifiable groups, you are
  - a. conducting a questionnaire
  - b. brainstorming
  - c. narrowing
  - d. inferring
9. Which method of analysis involves making observations by using your senses in order to interpret information about the audience?
  - a. involvement
  - b. value
  - c. inference
  - d. observation
10. Which is *not* true regarding immediate purposes?
  - a. They are highly specific.
  - b. They include the phrase "should be able to."
  - c. They use an action verb.
  - d. They are stated from the viewpoint of the speaker.

#### Answers:

1. (b); 2. (d); 3. (a); 4. (c); 5. (d); 6. (c); 7. (b); 8. (a); 9. (d); 10. (d)

## Critical Thinking

1. Choose a broad topic, and then narrow the topic by creating your own concept map (see Figure 10.2). At what point do the topics become too specific to be discussed in depth?
2. If you are going to give a presentation to a room full of strangers, how might you quickly analyze your audience? What changes might you need to make in the presentation based on your rapid audience analysis?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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## Additional Resources

You can find information on any topic by using Google or another search engine and appropriate words. Here are examples of a few sources on just two topic areas—health and politics.

### HEALTH

[www.cnn.com/HEALTH/](http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/) Information on diet, fitness, and parenting. Special feature: video clips.

[www.webmd.com/](http://www.webmd.com/) Health and medical news and information.

[www.healthfinder.gov/](http://www.healthfinder.gov/) Health and human services from the U.S. government. Special feature: Leads to online publications.

[www.dir.yahoo.com/Health/](http://www.dir.yahoo.com/Health/) Human health, diseases, medicine, sexual health, fitness, and nutrition.

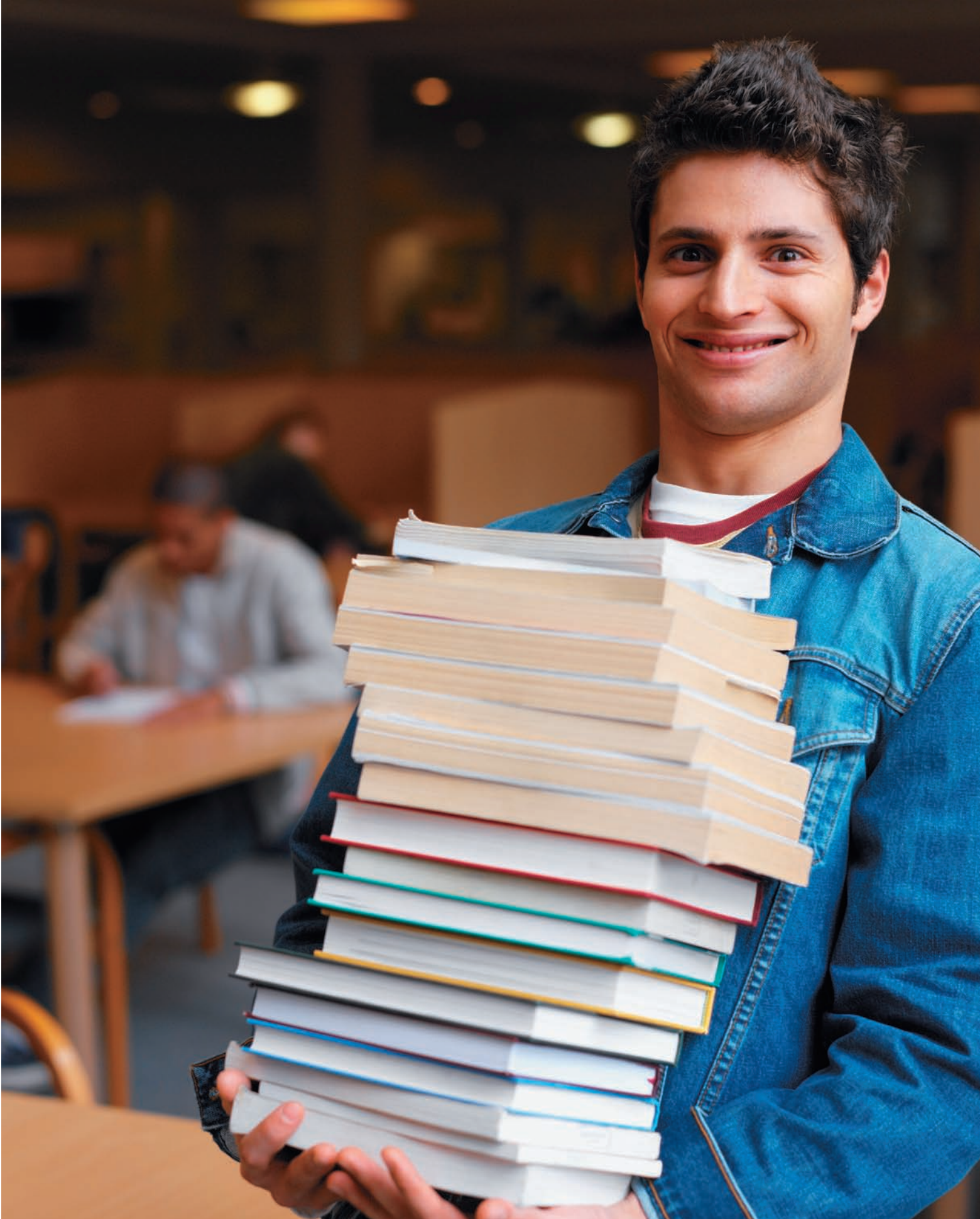
### POLITICS

[www.cnn.com/POLITICS/](http://www.cnn.com/POLITICS/) Cable News Network's political section, a middle-of-the-road, national perspective.

[www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/index.html) News, opinions, and multimedia about political campaigns and elections from an East Coast, liberal perspective.

[www.latimes.com/news/politics/](http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/) Political news and information on elected officials and candidates with an emphasis on West Coast and national government.

[www.18-24bracket.com](http://www.18-24bracket.com) A political news source from the perspective of young but highly perceptive reporters on the political front.



When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Define source credibility and explain why source credibility is important.
2. Identify four aspects of source credibility.
3. Effectively use personal experience, library resources, the Internet, and other people to gather evidence for your speeches.
4. Correctly use both internal and verbal citations to correctly attribute the sources of ideas and evidence.
5. Recognize seven different forms of supporting material that you can use in your speech.
6. Use ethical principles to present an honest and accurate image of yourself and the evidence that you use.





# BEING CREDIBLE AND USING EVIDENCE

**Effective public presentations are an artfully crafted combination of you, your ideas, and the ideas** and opinions of others. How you present yourself, your ideas, and your evidence will determine the credibility and confidence that audience members attribute to your speech. In this chapter you will learn about source credibility and the ways that you can increase your credibility by using strong evidence.

**In early Fall of 2008 Lance Armstrong** shocked bicycling enthusiasts by announcing that he would come out of retirement and return to professional cycling with plans to appear in at least five races in the 2008–2009 season. Armstrong, who survived testicular cancer in 1996, has become a leading advocate for raising awareness about cancer, and has even publicly stated that he may run for governor of Texas in 2014 (Brinkley, 2008). Coupled with all of that, Armstrong has won the Tour de France a record-setting SEVEN times. In short, Lance Armstrong has many reasons to be viewed as credible.

Lance Armstrong's story is complex, however, and his efforts to re-enter professional cycling have not come without challenges. European media accused Armstrong of using steroids during his reign as the world's top cyclist, and regardless of test results and his own statements, those accusations accompanied his return to cycling. In fact, in early 2009 Armstrong's ability to ride in the upcoming Tour de France was in question because when a French cycling official came to his home to perform a drug test Armstrong did not immediately submit to the test. In a video statement released on Armstrong's Livestrong.com website, he claimed that not only were there no abnormalities in the test results, but that the official did not comment about any irregularities in the testing procedure on the official report. Still, the accusation generated controversy around Armstrong's return to professional cycling and renewed questions about his credibility. So, although Lance Armstrong has many factors that support his credibility, he must continue efforts to maintain his public image.

*Lance Armstrong's story teaches all of us that credibility is complex. For someone like Armstrong, his credibility is multidimensional as he speaks from the perspective of his celebrity status, from the perspective of an advocate for cancer research and awareness, from the perspective of a potential politician, and from the perspective of someone accused of taking performance-enhancing drugs. Although you will not enter a speaking situation with the same experiences as Armstrong, you too will need to learn ways to constantly bolster your credibility. To help you, this chapter will teach you about the interconnectedness between source credibility, supporting material, and effective, ethical communication.*

## Why Is Source Credibility Important?

Any speech starts with you. You are the messenger. Who and what you are makes all the difference. Audiences do not want to hear from someone they do not respect. And audiences will not listen to or retain information from someone who has not earned the right to talk about that subject.

An excellent question to remember as you launch your public-speaking experience is this one: Why are YOU telling us about this topic in this manner? Stated in this manner, the spotlight is on you: Who are you that we should listen to you? Stated like this—WHY are you telling us about this topic in this manner?—the focus shifts to your purpose. Nobody wants to listen to you blather about nothing. If you do not have something important to say, then you will be better off saying nothing. Stated like this—Why are you telling US about this topic in this manner?—

the emphasis shifts to the audience. No matter who you may be, your speech will not be successful unless you have an audience receptive to your message. Stated like this—Why are you telling us about THIS TOPIC in this manner?—the focus moves to the message, to what you are going to speak about. Stated like this—Why are you telling us about this topic in THIS MANNER?—the emphasis is on how you organize and display your message.

If you just remember this question—WHY are YOU telling US about THIS TOPIC in THIS MANNER?—you are more likely to remember the important ingredients of the public-speaking process: purpose, source credibility, audience analysis, topic selection, and message organization and display (visual resources).

## What Is Source Credibility?

More than 2,300 years ago Aristotle noted that a speaker’s “character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.” Since that time, scholars have continued to study the importance of the source, or speaker, because they correctly believe that *who* says something determines *who* will listen.

In the public-speaking classroom you are the source of the message. You need to be concerned about your **source credibility**—the audience’s perception of your effectiveness as a speaker. You may feel that you do not have the same credibility as a high public official, a great authority on a topic, or an expert in a narrow field. Nonetheless, you can be a very credible source to your classmates, colleagues, or friends. Source credibility is not something a speaker possesses, like a suit of clothes. Instead, the audience determines credibility. Like beauty, credibility “is in the eye of the beholder” (Rosnow & Robinson, 1967).

A speaker’s credibility depends in part on the speaker, him- or herself, the subject being discussed, the situation, and the audience. Have you served in the armed forces overseas? You may have earned the right to speak on national defense, the price of being in the National Guard, and the inside story of war. Have you grown up in another country? You may have earned the right to speak on another country’s culture, food, or customs.

Similarly, you might be more credible to some audiences than to others—your classmates might find you credible but the local teamsters union might not. The personality characteristics of the audience members also affect their response to your message and to you as a source of that message (Wood & Kallgren, 1988). Some people are more inclined to respond positively to a speaker simply because he or she is attractive, whereas others focus on the content of the speech. Hacker, Zakahi, Giles, and McQuitty (2000) indicate that voters integrate a politician’s persona with her or his position on issues, a blend of attractiveness and content. In addition, audience members’ perceptions of your credibility may be influenced by how much they know about the topic (Eckstein, 2005). If they know a great deal about the topic on which you are speaking, they may perceive you as more credible than if you were speaking on a topic about which they know little.

How do you gain credibility with an audience? The answer is that you *earn* the right to speak, through your experiences



Watch both versions of the “Cell Phones” presentation on the *Online Learning Center*, and compare the two in terms of source credibility.

### source credibility

The audience’s perception of your effectiveness as a speaker.



▲ Captain Chelsey Sullenberger’s credibility is forever changed because of his role in bringing passengers to safety during the crash landing of Flight 1549 in the Hudson River.



**TRY THIS** 

*If you earn the right to speak through your life experiences and life learning, make a list of what you have done or learned that would invite others to see you as credible.*

and accomplishments. As one person observed, “Before you express yourself, you need a self worth expressing.” You may have earned the right to speak on a number of subjects. Have you worked in a fast-food restaurant? You may have earned the right to comment on the quality of fast food and service. Have you raised children? You may have earned the right to speak on the problems and pleasures of family life. What have you experienced, learned, or lived through that has earned you the right to speak?

### Four Aspects of Credibility

What do audience members perceive that signals speaker credibility? If individuals in the audience base credibility on judgments, what is the basis for those judgments? On what will your classmates be rating you when they judge your credibility? According to research, four of the most important aspects of credibility are competence, trustworthiness, dynamism, and common ground.

#### Competence

##### competence

The degree to which the speaker is perceived as skilled, reliable, experienced, qualified, authoritative, and informed; an aspect of credibility.

The first aspect of credibility is **competence**—the degree to which a speaker is perceived as skilled, qualified, experienced, authoritative, reliable, and informed. A speaker does not have to live up to all these adjectives; any one, or a few, might make the speaker credible. A machinist who displays her metalwork in a speech about junk sculpture as art is as credible as a biblical scholar who is demonstrating his ability to interpret scripture. They have different bases for their competence, but both can demonstrate competence in their areas of specialization.

Words, use of technology, and an air of authority convey your own competence as a speaker. What can you build into your speech that will help the audience perceive your competence? What experience have you had that is related to the subject? What training or knowledge do you have? How can you suggest to your audience that you have earned the right to speak about the subject? The most obvious way is to tell the audience of your expertise, but a creative speaker can think of dozens of ways to hint and suggest competence without being explicit and without seeming arrogant.

There are several things you can do to improve your competence as a speaker. First, you should become familiar enough with your information and speech that you do not have to rely on extensive notes. Constantly referring to notes for every point can lead audience members to perceive that you really do not understand the information. Second, focus on translating ideas. If you are able to take relatively complex ideas and make them understandable for audience members by using metaphors, vivid descriptions, visual aids, and other resources, you will appear more competent. Third, feel comfortable with the speaking situation. If you plan to use technology, make sure that you know how to use the computer, software, and other resources. Finally, audience members will perceive you as more competent if you deliver the speech well. Practice your delivery to reduce pauses, vocalizations, nervous gestures, and other distracting delivery habits.

##### trustworthiness

The degree to which the speaker is perceived as honest, fair, sincere, honorable, friendly, and kind; an aspect of credibility.

#### Trustworthiness

The second aspect of credibility is **trustworthiness**—the degree to which a speaker is perceived as honest, fair, sincere, friendly, honorable, and kind. These perceptions

are also earned. We judge people's honesty by their past behaviors and whether we perceive them to have goodwill toward the listeners. In a study exploring perceived credibility of the 2008 presidential candidates, communication researcher Jason Teven (2008) found that goodwill was the strongest predictor of perceived credibility among the leading candidates in the primary elections. So too, your classmates will judge your trustworthiness based on how you represent your past behaviors and establish goodwill.

You may have to reveal to your audience why you are trustworthy. Have you held jobs that demanded honesty and responsibility? Have you been a cashier, a bank teller, or a supervisor? Have you given up anything to demonstrate you are sincere? The person who pays his or her own way through college ordinarily has to be very sincere about education. Being respectful of others' points of view can be a sign of fairness. What can you say or do that signals trustworthiness?

Trustworthiness and goodwill are difficult to establish in a short speech. After all, the trust we give to others typically happens after knowing them for some time. During a speech both what you say and how you say it can impact audience members' perceptions of your trustworthiness. First, you should take care to present fair and balanced information. Using sources and presenting other viewpoints can show audience members that you are being accurate with the conclusions that you draw. Also, talking with a confident tone and maintaining eye contact are important tools in building trust at the beginning of your speech.

### *Dynamism*

The third aspect of credibility is **dynamism**—the extent to which an audience perceives the speaker as bold, active, energetic, strong, empathic, and assertive. Audiences value behavior described by these adjectives. Perhaps when we consider their opposites—timid, tired, and meek—we can see why dynamism is attractive. People who exude energy and show the passion of their convictions impress others. Watch the television evangelists and note how they look and sound. You can learn to be dynamic. Evidence indicates that the audience's perception of your dynamism will enhance your credibility.

Dynamism is exhibited mainly by voice, movement, facial expressions, and gestures. A person who speaks forcefully and rapidly and with considerable vocal variety; a speaker who moves toward the audience, back behind the lectern, and over to the visual aid; and a speaker who uses facial expressions and gestures to make a point are all exhibiting dynamism. What can you do with your voice, movement, facial expressions, and gestures to show the audience you are a dynamic speaker?

### *Common Ground*

**Common ground** is the sharing of values, beliefs, attitudes, and interests (Tuppen, 1974). You tell the audience explicitly how you agree with them. This kind of information sharing is not just demographic—sharing similarities about hometowns, family sizes, and so on—but ideological as well. That is, the speaker tells the audience ways in which they share various attitudes, beliefs, or values.

#### **dynamism**

The extent to which the speaker is perceived as bold, active, energetic, strong, empathic, and assertive; an aspect of credibility.

#### **common ground**

Also known as co-orientation, the degree to which the speaker's values, beliefs, attitudes, and interests are shared with the audience; an aspect of credibility.



▲ Emotion and passion on the part of the speaker influence the audience's perception of the speaker's dynamism.

For example, Jesse Jackson used common ground when he addressed more than 4,000 mostly white, rural southeastern Ohio college students and community members at a campus speech. He persuaded hundreds of students to register to vote by talking about how both the inner-city poor and the rural poor in their area share similar problems of illiteracy, illegitimate births, unemployment, drug dependency, bad schools, and poverty.

An informative speech may require a minimal amount of common ground. However, a persuasive speech requires that the speaker go beyond areas of complete agreement into areas in which the speaker is trying to make a case for acceptance of his or her point of view on the issue.

Soon after his inauguration, President Barack Obama traveled to Turkey and spoke before the Turkish parliament. This speech was important for President Obama because it was his first speech as president in front of a foreign legislative body; the importance of the speech was underscored by the fact that many of Turkey's citizens practice Islam. In his speech, Obama established common ground by stating, "We will listen carefully, bridge misunderstanding, and seek common ground. We will be respectful, even when we do not agree. And we will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over so many centuries to shape the world for the better—including my own country." In your speeches you can use a similar approach by talking about common understandings, principles, and ideas that are shared by you and your audience.

## SKILL BUILDER

*Because your credibility depends so heavily on how you are introduced, you should furnish an introduction of yourself when you speak to a group. Think of some topic that would be a good one for you, and then write an introduction for yourself that includes your name, your topic, and your qualifications (education, experience) for that topic.*

## Practical Advice on Increasing Credibility

Credibility depends on topics, audiences, and circumstances, and it may be different before, during, and after the speech. You may hold the speaker in high regard before the speech, but during the speech your perception of the speaker may diminish, and then after the speech your perception may move in a more positive direction because you decide that the message has merit.

Hundreds of studies of speaker credibility and related areas have revealed the following:

- High-credibility speakers can seek and change audience opinions more than low-credibility speakers (Karlins & Abelson, 1970; Rosnow & Robinson, 1967).
- Sometimes a **sleeper effect** occurs when source and message get separated in the listener's mind over time: a low-credibility speaker's message can gain influence while a high-credibility speaker's message can diminish over time (Hovland & Weis, 1967).

### sleeper effect

A change of audience opinion caused by the separation of the message content from its source over a period of time.



▲ How did Barack Obama and Sarah Palin's perceived credibility factor in the 2008 presidential and vice presidential bids?

- Who introduces you as a speaker (preferably someone high in credibility) and how you are introduced (positive information or unintended negative information) can raise or lower your credibility (Thompson, 1967).
- Educational background can raise credibility. Andersen and Clevenger (1963) found that audiences perceived graduate students as more fair-minded, likable, and sincere than undergraduates.
- Harms (1961) found that judgments about a presenter's credibility can occur remarkably fast—in the first 10–15 seconds.
- Presenters perceived as high in status consistently earn higher credibility scores than presenters perceived as lower in status (Thompson, 1967).
- Disorganized speeches result in lower credibility (Sharp & McClung, 1966).
- Effective delivery skills—voice, gestures, movement—tend to raise credibility (Thompson, 1967).
- Nonfluencies such as unexpected or vocalized pauses (“mmm,” “ahhh”) can decrease a presenter's perceived credibility (Thompson, 1967).
- Your use of evidence, coupled with the audience's perception of the topic's importance and your competence as a speaker, interact to influence your credibility. Reinard and Myers (2005) found that although the use of any type of evidence increases your credibility, those effects are even greater when the audience perceives the topic to be important and you to be competent.
- In situations in which you are introduced to your audience, the timing and content of your introduction by another person is important. Mike Allen and colleagues (2002) found that highly credible speakers benefit from early identification whereas speakers with less initial credibility benefit from delayed identification of their qualifications in terms of perceived credibility. In other words, if you do not have automatic credibility based on qualifications, it may be best to delay letting the audience know your qualifications until after you have spoken.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Research Attitudes Scale

When researching your speech topics you have a variety of sources from which you can locate evidence and information. Read each statement below and respond using the following scale.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

1. I feel confident when using the Internet to find good information.
2. I like to use journals to find good articles on a topic.
3. I find it easy to locate good books on a given topic.
4. I have confidence in using reference materials to find good research on topics.
5. I find it easy to locate good popular press articles on topics.
6. I like to look for good books when researching a topic.
7. I find it easy to locate good journal articles on topics.
8. I like to use good reference materials when researching.
9. The Internet is easy to use when looking for good information.
10. I am confident in my abilities to find good popular press articles on topics.
11. I am confident in my ability to find good books on a topic.
12. It is easy to use the reference section in the library to find good information.
13. I like to search for good popular press articles on topics.
14. I like to use the Internet to search for good information.
15. I am confident in my ability to locate good journal articles on a topic.

## How Should You Find and Use Information?

Although audience members look at several factors to determine your credibility, you have control over only some of those factors. For instance, you can practice your delivery to avoid nonfluencies, you can work to improve your gestures, and you can take care to create a well-organized speech. In addition, you can improve your own credibility by borrowing on the credibility of others. In this section you will learn how to conduct research and gather supporting material and how to evaluate those sources and use them effectively in your speeches. Research is critical to nearly every aspect of the speech-making process, as shown in Table 11.1.

### What Information Sources Can You Use?

When preparing your presentation, you can use several different sources of information. We explain four of the most common: personal experience, written and visual resources, the Internet, and other people.

**TABLE 11.1** RESEARCH AND THE SPEECH PREPARATION PROCESS

PREPARATION STEP	BENEFIT OF RESEARCH
1. Selecting a topic	Research helps you discover and narrow topics.
2. Organizing ideas	Research helps you identify main and subordinate points.
3. Researching support materials	Research provides facts, examples, definitions, and other forms of support to give substance to your points.
4. Preparing an introduction and conclusion	Research may reveal interesting examples, stories, or quotes to begin or end the speech.
5. Practicing and delivering the speech	Because your speech is well researched, you will feel more confident and will seem more credible.

### *Personal Experience*

The first place you should look for materials for the content of your speech is within yourself. Your **personal experience**—your own life as a source of information—is something about which you can speak with considerable authority. One student had been a “headhunter,” a person who finds employees for employers willing to pay a premium for specific kinds of employees. This student gave a speech from his personal experience concerning what employers particularly value in employees. Another student had a brother who was autistic. In her informative speech she explained what autism is and how autistic children can grow up to be self-reliant and successful. Your special causes, jobs, and family can provide you with firsthand information that you can use in your speech.

However, you should ask yourself critical questions about your personal experience before you use personal experience in your speech. Some of your experiences may be too personal or too intimate to share with strangers or even classmates. Others may be interesting but irrelevant to the topic of your speech. You can evaluate your personal experience as evidence, or as data on which proof may be based, by asking yourself the following questions:

1. Was your experience typical?
2. Was your experience so typical that it will bore an audience?
3. Was your experience so atypical that it was a chance occurrence?
4. Was your experience so personal and revealing that the audience may feel uncomfortable?
5. Was your experience one that this audience will appreciate or from which this audience can learn a lesson?
6. Does your experience really constitute proof or evidence of anything?

It is also important to consider the ethics of using your personal experience in a speech. Will your message harm others? Is the experience firsthand (your own) or someone else’s? Experience that is not firsthand is probably questionable because

#### **personal experience**

Use of your own life as a source of information.

information about others' experiences often becomes distorted as the message is passed from one person to another. Unless the experience is your own, you may find yourself passing along a falsehood.



Students who speak English as a second language know well the various challenges when communicating with native speakers. To document some of these challenges, Australian scholar Jennifer Miller (2000) conducted a study exploring how ESL students develop a social identity in schools. Not surprisingly, Miller showed that while some ESL students achieve at high levels, others face stigmas associated with imperfect use of English.

When viewed from the perspective of source credibility and evidence, ESL students in public-speaking classes have unique advantages in terms of how to use their second language to enhance their credibility. Because non-native speakers have a wealth of knowledge about their own language as well as the unique customs and rituals associated with their culture, being a non-native speaker can provide valuable support for a speech. For example, if you are from the island nation of Sumatra, you could provide a unique perspective on how rising sea levels associated with global warming will displace indigenous populations; if you are from China, you could discuss how the world economy is causing Chinese culture to change; if you are from Latin America, you could discuss the impact of North American free trade in your country. In each case the native culture provides you with rich supporting material that will enhance the credibility of your presentation, all while adapting to your audience by speaking on a topic familiar to them. You might even provide a culturally driven twist on a topic also covered by a classmate. The point is this: Your culture is a potential wealth of information that will be perceived as highly credible supporting material if used effectively.

### **Library Resources**

Modern libraries, like the ones found at most colleges and universities, are vastly different from the libraries used by students a mere 10 years ago. The rapid growth of information technology—computers, the Internet, electronic databases, and so on—has caused many libraries to transform themselves from being repositories of published information to being portals to digital information. So, rather than helping you find a particular book or article, a **reference librarian**—someone specially trained to help you locate sources of information—is far more likely to teach you how to use one or more electronic databases. When most of your instructors were in school, the most important library skills involved understanding the difference between subject, author, and title indexing and knowing how to use the Library of Congress indexing system. Today those skills have been superseded by the need to understand how to access one of potentially thousands of databases to locate digital archives of articles and books.

Because each campus library works differently and has access to different databases, your instructors and your campus reference librarians can provide you with valuable information on how to use your school's library system. Here are some practical principles that you can adapt to your unique situation:

1. *Start at the center and work your way out.* This familiar saying applies when conducting research. First, the reference desk is the practical “center” of your library. Everything you need will start with a search of some type; the reference desk is there to help you conduct that search. You should start at the reference desk and ask for assistance if you are new to the university library. In addition to starting at the center of the library, you should begin by searching at the center of your topic. Following the principle that topics will be narrowed as

#### **reference librarian**

A librarian specifically trained to help you find sources of information.

**TABLE 11.2** TYPES OF SOURCES

SOURCE	USES
Fictional books	Some plots or characters can be used to illustrate points you are making in your speech.
Nonfiction books	Nonfiction books include historical, political, social, and scientific studies. Research reported in books tends to be very detailed but can also be somewhat out of date.
Academic journal articles	Academic journal articles tend to undergo blind peer reviews, which can help ensure high-quality information. Academic articles tend to report the results of very specific studies.
Government documents	The federal government produces publications ranging from compilations of congressional testimony to the results of million-dollar scientific studies. Many university libraries have a separate department for government documents.
Trade journal articles	Trade journals are targeted toward professionals in a particular profession or discipline. Trade journals tend to be practical but based on solid research.
Reference books	Your library reference department will have a number of reference books ranging from dictionaries and biographies to atlases. Depending on your speech topic, such sources can be very useful.
Encyclopedias	Encyclopedias are excellent places to learn about topics for which you know absolutely nothing. Encyclopedia entries provide short, easy-to-read explanations of the topic in question but tend to be dated and too general.
Magazine articles	Magazine articles provide timely information and tend to provide more in-depth coverage. The one disadvantage of magazine articles is that they are typically written by journalists with little or no expertise on the topics they write about.
Newspaper articles	Newspaper articles are among the timeliest sources of print information. Although they are up to date, they are written by journalists who may have little or no expertise on the topics they write about. They also tend to provide few details.
Web pages	Web pages are hard to describe because they come in so many variations. Later you will learn about how to locate effective websites. For now, understand that although websites provide easy access to current information, the quality of information on the web must always be verified.

you conduct research, start by researching the broad and typical elements of your topic. As you gain more information, you will be able to narrow your search to more specific (and possibly off-center) aspects of your topic.

2. *Understand that not all sources are equal.* Modern libraries offer access to many different types of sources ranging from books and academic journals to newspapers and trade magazines. Understanding what those different types of sources are is important because each will provide you with different types of information and each will likely be indexed in a different database. Table 11.2



## e-note

## Common Search Tools on the Web

Search engines and virtual libraries are popular and efficient methods of locating information on the Web.

Some common search engines are

Yahoo!: [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

Alta Vista: [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)

Google: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Excite: [www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com)

Lycos: [www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)

HotBot: [www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com)

Some virtual libraries are

Library of Congress: [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

Yahoo! Libraries: [dir.yahoo.com/Reference/Libraries/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Reference/Libraries/)

identifies several different types of sources and suggests how you might use them as evidence. A key principle when conducting good research is that source variety is important—finding and using a variety of types of sources from this list is wise.

3. *Know your databases!* Having access to over 500 electronic databases at one university library is not uncommon. With so many options, figuring out which databases to use can seem daunting. Following the principle that you should start at the center, generalized databases like Academic Search Premier and Lexis-Nexis are excellent places to begin. The library computer catalog will also help you locate books and other resources in your library. Once you have located initial information, you may wish to consult more specific and specialized databases. For example, if you are doing a presentation about a medical topic, you may wish to consult MEDLINE. And if you are doing a persuasive speech, you may wish to consult the Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center to find “pro” and “con” articles on topics ranging from adoption to welfare reform. Remember that the reference librarian is trained to help you select and use the right databases for your topic.
4. *Recognize that good research requires reading, thinking, and more research.* Many students assume that their research task is over with one quick trip to the library. While the “one trip fits all” approach is appealing, it does not work well. Once you have obtained initial research on your topic, the best thing you can do is to spend time reading those sources, revising your outline, and conducting more research to fill in gaps and find more specific information. Good research takes time, but the end result is outstanding evidence that is sure to impress.

### Internet Resources

The Internet has quickly been integrated into nearly every aspect of our lives, appearing on our cell phones, televisions, and even upscale refrigerators. As recently



▲ Easy access to information makes the critical evaluation of information even more essential.

as the year 2000, norms for how to use the Internet were clear—most teachers “outlawed” the use of web pages as evidence in their classes because at that time the Internet was mostly a free-for-all for anyone with a thought. Now such norms would severely hamper solid research. Suffice it to say that the web is both a blessing and a curse. We have access to more information than ever, but filtering through the garbage can be overwhelming.

**Locating Sources on the Web** Although the web provides us with a valuable research tool, some care must be taken when searching it for information. Following are a few basic procedures for locating web materials:

1. *Use a search engine.* A **search engine** is a program on the Internet that is specially designed to help you search for information. Although search engines will locate thousands of sites that contain the word or phrase you are searching for, one criticism of search engines is that they return hundreds of irrelevant websites. An alternative to using a search engine is to use a virtual library, which provides links to websites that have been reviewed for relevance and usability. The accompanying E-Note provides web addresses for several popular search engines and virtual libraries.
2. *Refine your search.* Many search engines give you two options for accessing information. One option is to click on one of the several topical categories displayed on the home page of the search engine site. By following progressively more specific subcategories, you can locate web sources on a relatively specific concept, person, object, hobby, and so on. The other option is to conduct a key-word/Boolean search. We recommend using the first option if you are still in the initial stages of selecting and narrowing a topic—the

**search engine**

A program on the Internet that allows users to search for information.



**Figure 11.1** Yahoo! and other search engines allow you to use keyword searches or to browse topical categories. Both approaches can assist you in locating information and narrowing topics.

SOURCE: Yahoo! Inc., 2007.

organized list of categories might help you in the process of topic selection. We recommend using the search option once you have identified and narrowed a topic. Figure 11.1 shows what the home page of Yahoo! looks like. Figure 11.2 shows how you can use the categories to find progressively more specific information—in this case about the popular singer Tim McGraw. Using the search feature to look for web pages on Tim McGraw will return a greater variety of sites, some of which may be relevant to your speech. Table 11.3 provides recommendations on how to more effectively narrow your searches.

3. *Evaluate carefully all sources of information found on the Internet*, especially when you locate the sources through a public domain search engine rather than your university library's home page. We provide suggestions for evaluating web sources and other types of information later in this chapter.

One additional point we like to make about the Internet is that people have different motives for creating web pages. Some websites are intended to be informative, others are intended to persuade, and still others are out to make money. You should understand that some websites are designed to conceal their true motive: A website might look informative but actually tell only part of a story to persuade you to purchase a service or product. One way to understand the motive of websites is

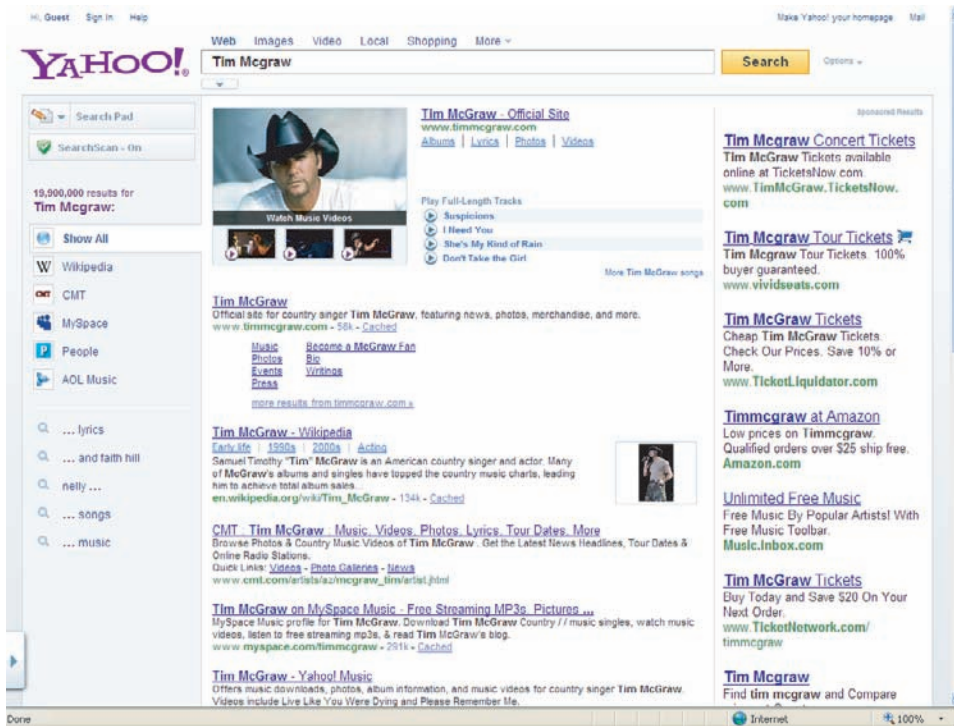


Figure 11.2 List of websites about Tim McGraw from Yahoo!

SOURCE: Yahoo! Inc., 2007.

to pay attention to the server extension. Figure 11.3 explains the parts of a web address and the characteristics of web addresses with different server extensions. No single type of web address—based on the server extension—is necessarily better than another. Although knowledge of different types of web address can be valuable, all web resources require scrutiny.

## SKILL BUILDER

The University of California library has an excellent online exercise illustrating the importance of carefully evaluating web sources. The address of the exercise is [www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html). Individually, in a group, or as a class, evaluate the various websites listed in the exercise. If you click on the “Tips and Tricks” links, the UC Berkeley librarians provide their own analyses of how effective the various sites are.

## People Resources

Speakers often overlook the most obvious sources of information—the people around them. You can get information for your speech from personal experience, written and visual resources, the Internet, and other people. The easiest way to secure information from other people is to ask them in an informational interview.

**TABLE 11.3 TOOLS FOR NARROWING YOUR WEB SEARCH****WORD STEMMING**

By default, browsers return any web page containing the word you asked it to search for. For example, if you want to search for the speech acronym *inform*, the search engine would return sites with the words *informative*, *information*, *informal*, *informing*, and so forth. To prevent this problem, type your search term with a single quote at the end.

Example: *Inform'*

**PHRASE SEARCH**

If you are looking for a phrase, put the phrase in quotation marks. For example, simply typing in *public speaking* would return all sites that contain the two words anywhere on the site. Placing the phrase in quote marks will return only sites using the phrase.

Example: *"public speaking"*

**BOOLEAN OPERATORS**

Boolean operators allow you to specify logical arguments for what you want returned in a list of matching websites. When multiple terms are typed in a search box (e.g., *tobacco addiction*), the default Boolean operator is to place *AND* between the terms. Returned websites will contain both tobacco and addiction somewhere on the page. Other Boolean operators include *NOT* (e.g., *PowerPoint NOT Microsoft*), which will return websites with the term before the operator but not sites with the term after the operator. You can also use the operator *OR* to find sites with one of two possible terms (e.g., *Coke OR Pepsi*).

**PARENTHESES**

Using parentheses allows you to nest Boolean search arguments. In the following example the search argument will look for websites containing the terms *media* and *violence* but not *television*.

Example: *(media AND violence) NOT television*

Source: Adapted from Netscape's net search tips, at [http://home.netscape.com/escapes/search/tips\\_0.html](http://home.netscape.com/escapes/search/tips_0.html).

**Finding People to Interview** As someone who needs information about a particular topic, your first step is to find the person or persons who can help you discover more information. Your instructor might have some suggestions about whom to approach. Among the easier and better sources of information are professors and administrators who are available on campus. They can be contacted during office hours or by appointment. Government officials, too, have an obligation to be responsive to your questions. Even big business and industrial concerns have public relations offices that can answer your questions. Your objective is to find someone, or a few people, who can provide you with the best information in the limited time you have to prepare your speech.

**Conducting the Interview** An interview can be an important and impressive source of information for your speech—if you conduct the interview properly. After you have carefully selected the person or persons you wish to interview, you need to observe these suggestions:

1. *On first contact with your interviewee or the interviewee's secretary, be honest about your purpose.* For example, you might say, "I want to interview Dr. Schwartz for

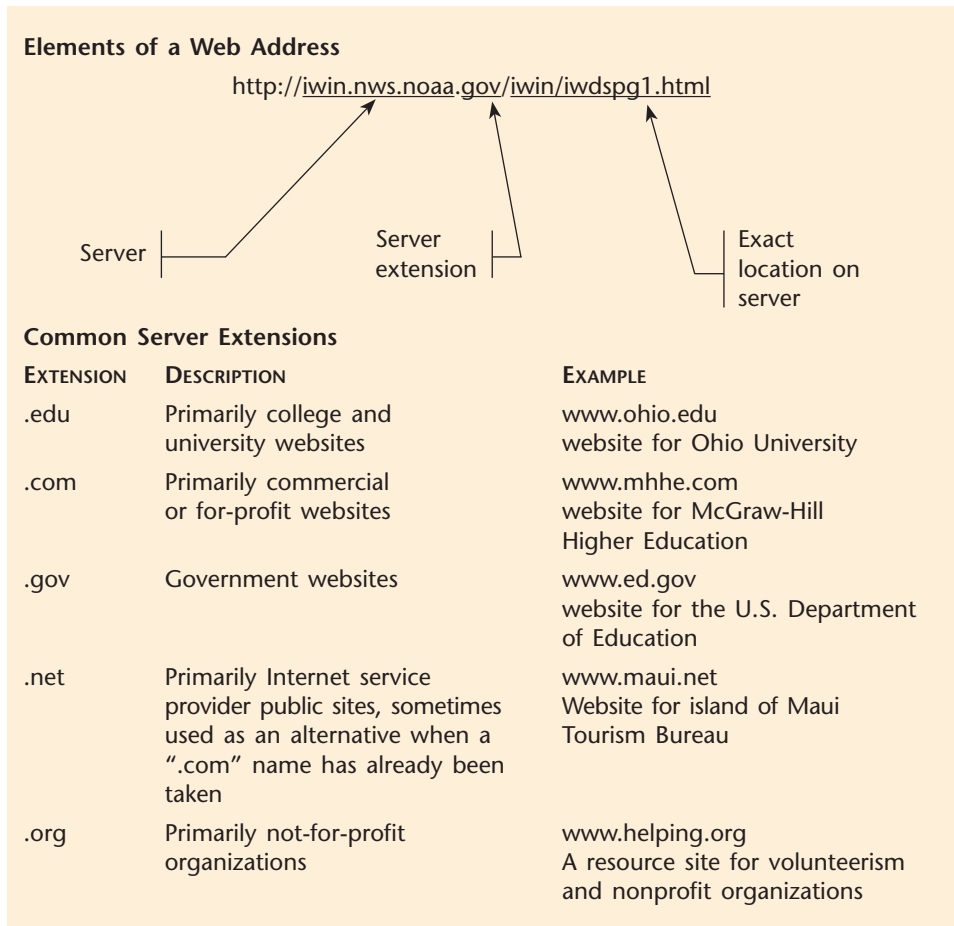


Figure 11.3 Breaking down web addresses.

- 10 minutes about the plans for student aid for next year so that I can share that information with the 20 students in my public-speaking class.” It is also wise to tell the interviewee how much time the interview will take.
2. *Prepare specific questions for the interview.* Think ahead of time about exactly what kind of information you will need to satisfy yourself and your audience. Conducting research prior to the interview is often advisable—you will be able to ask better questions. Keep your list of questions short enough to fit the time limit you have suggested to the interviewee.
  3. *Be respectful toward the person you interview.* Remember that the person is doing you a favor. You do not need to question aggressively like Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes*. Instead, dress appropriately for the person’s status, ask your questions politely, and thank your interviewee for granting you an interview.
  4. *Tell the interviewee you are going to take notes so you can use the information in your speech.* If you are going to tape-record the interview, you need to ask the interviewee’s permission, and you should be prepared to take notes in case the interviewee does not wish to be recorded. Even if you record the

interview, it's a good idea to take notes as a backup in case something happens to the tape or tape recorder.

5. *When you quote the interviewee or paraphrase the person's ideas in your speech, use oral footnotes to indicate where you got the information.* Here's an example: "According to Dr. Fred Schwartz, the director of financial aid, the amount of student financial aid for next year will be slightly less than it was this year."

Sometimes the person you interview will be a good resource for additional information. For example, one of our students interviewed the director of disability services on our campus for her informative speech about learning disabilities. He not only answered her questions but also gave her an extensive packet of information on the topic. By picking the right source to interview, the student was able to obtain all of her research in one stop.

### How Should You Cite Sources of Information Correctly?

Once you find source material, you must provide references for the source both on your outline and in your speech. **Bibliographic references** are complete citations that appear in the "references" or "works cited" section of your speech outline (or term paper). Your outline should also contain **internal references**, which are brief notations of which bibliographic reference contains the details you are using in your speech. Internal and bibliographic references help readers understand what sources were used to find specific details like statistics, quotations, and examples. Ask your instructor if a particular format should be used for references. The next chapter explains how you should prepare a bibliography for your outline using appropriate style guidelines.

In addition to citing sources in your outline, you must provide verbal citations during your presentation. Unlike the readers of a paper or speech outline, audience members are less concerned with page numbers and titles of articles. Rather, **verbal citations** tell listeners who the source is, how recent the information is, and what the source's qualifications are. The examples in Table 11.4 illustrate how to orally cite different types of sources. Of these sources, students have the most difficult time with web pages. Remember that the web address is only that—an address. Although

#### bibliographic references

Complete citations that appear in the "references" or "works cited" section of your speech outline.

#### internal references

Brief notations indicating a bibliographic reference that contains the details you are using in your speech.

#### verbal citations

Oral explanations of who the source is, how recent the information is, and what the source's qualifications are.

**TABLE 11.4** EXAMPLES OF VERBAL CITATIONS

TYPE OF SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Magazine article	"According to an article by Hannah Beech in the April 13, 2009, edition of <i>Time</i> magazine, scores of people have been injured during antigovernment protests in Bangkok, Thailand."
Research study	"Erika Kirby, a communication researcher, found in a 2006 study that businesses are starting to take on more family-like roles that blur the separation between family life and work life."
Web page	"According to a statement on the American Red Cross website, which I visited on April 13, 2009, that organization had to battle three simultaneous disasters—tornados, wildfires, and floods—during the week of April 9th."

the web address should be listed in the references or works cited page of your outline, giving the address during your presentation is seldom necessary. The exception would be if you wanted your audience to visit that particular website.

## Tips for Effective Research

Learning how to conduct effective research is essential. The web has streamlined the diversity of information, but this ease necessitates a sound research strategy. In this section we address two issues. First, we explain why consulting various types of sources is essential. Second, we discuss key criteria you should use when evaluating sources.

### *The Importance of Source Variety*

Not all sources tell you the same thing. On any given speech topic—global warming, for example—you can obtain information from each type of source: personal experience, visual and written sources, the Internet, and even personal interviews. Each type of source will yield different types of information. Personal experience might tell you how you contribute to global warming by driving your car or using electricity; magazine and newspaper articles might give general background on what global warming is; scientific journals might provide detailed statistics on how much the Earth is heating up; and web pages might describe groups committed to preventing warming. Our experience suggests that effective speakers consult all types of sources as they progress through the research process.

### *Criteria for Evaluating Sources*

Merely finding sources does not ensure that you have effectively researched your speech. You must carefully evaluate the credibility and usefulness of each source. Bourhis, Adams, Titsworth, and Harter (2008) recommend that you use the following criteria when evaluating sources:

1. *Is the supporting material clear?* Sources should add clarity to your ideas rather than confusing the issue with jargon and overly technical explanations.
2. *Is the supporting material verifiable?* Listeners and readers should be able to verify the accuracy of your sources. Although verifying information in a book is easy—the book can be checked out and read—information obtained from a personal interview with the uncle of your sister’s roommate is not.
3. *Is the source of the supporting material competent?* For each source you should be able to determine qualifications. If your source is a person, what expertise does the person have with the topic? If your source is an organization, what connection does the organization have to the issue?
4. *Is the source objective?* All sources—even news reports—have some sort of bias. The National Rifle Association has a bias against gun control; Greenpeace has a bias in favor of environmental issues; TV news programs have a bias toward vivid visual imagery. What biases do your sources have, and how might those biases affect the way they frame information?
5. *Is the supporting material relevant?* Loading your speech with irrelevant sources might make the speech seem well researched; however, critical listeners will see through this tactic. Include only sources that directly address the key points you want to make.





In addition to those suggestions, you should also look for materials that are timely and up-to-date. Some web pages might be old, or at least based on old information. Finding accurate information is necessary; finding up-to-date information adds even more credibility.

These criteria are not “yes or no” questions. Sources will meet some criteria well and fail others miserably. Your job as speaker is to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each source and determine whether to include the source in your speech. Indeed, you have an ethical responsibility to carefully evaluate sources.

## What Supporting Materials Are Appropriate?

Now that you know where to look for information, the next step is locating **supporting materials**, information you can use to substantiate your arguments and to clarify your position. In this section you will examine examples, narratives, surveys, testimonial evidence, numbers and statistics, analogies, explanations, and definitions.

### supporting materials

Information you can use to substantiate your arguments and to clarify your position.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

### *Evidence Is Proof*

*When researching a speech, inexperienced speakers often assume that the evidence they collect will act as proof supporting their claim. In fact, evidence becomes proof only when the audience accepts the accuracy of the evidence and the speaker's interpretation of what the evidence means. Because we strive for such proof in our speeches, speakers are encouraged to provide information supporting the accuracy of evidence as well as thorough explanations of what inferences should be drawn from evidence.*

*For further information see E. S. Inch & B. Warnick (2002), Critical thinking and communication: The use of reason in argument (4th ed.) (Boston: Allyn & Bacon).*

## Examples

### examples

Specific instances used to illustrate your point.

**Examples**—specific instances used to illustrate your point—are among the most common supporting materials found in speeches. Sometimes a single example helps convince an audience; other times a relatively large number of examples may be necessary to achieve your purpose. For instance, the argument that a university gives admission priority to out-of-state students could be supported by showing the difference between the numbers of in-state and out-of-state students who are accepted, in relation to the number of students who applied in each group. Likewise, in a persuasive speech designed to motivate everyone to vote, you could present cases in which several more votes would have meant a major change in election results.

You should be careful when using examples. Sometimes an example may be so unusual that an audience will not accept the story as evidence or proof of anything. A student who refers to crime in his hometown as an example of the increasing crime problem is unconvincing if his hometown has considerably less crime than

the audience is accustomed to. A good example must be plausible, typical, and related to the main point of the speech.

Two types of examples are factual and hypothetical: A *hypothetical* example cannot be verified, whereas a *factual* example can. The length of the example determines whether the example is brief or extended. The following is a brief factual example:

Several online memorial sites on Facebook illustrate how social networking sites have started to serve a larger role than simply helping people connect.

Here is an extended hypothetical example:

An example of a good excuse for a student missing class is that he or she has a serious auto accident on the way to class, ends up in the hospital, and has a signed medical statement from a physician to prove hospitalization for a week. A poor excuse for a student missing class is that the student, knowing beforehand when the final examination will be held, schedules a flight home for the day before the exam and wants an “excused absence.”

The brief factual example is *verifiable*, meaning it can be supported by a source that the audience can check. The extended hypothetical example is not verifiable and is actually a composite of excuses.

## Narratives

Whereas examples are primarily intended to present factual information, **narratives**—stories to illustrate an important point—focus more on telling a human story. Think about the difference between hearing that Michael J. Fox has Parkinson’s disease (an example), and hearing a detailed story about how his acting career has been affected by the disease—narratives provide richer detail and dimension to people’s lives.

Narratives are important parts of speeches. Think of how the 2008 presidential election was influenced by stories told about Barack Obama’s preacher, Joe the Plumber, and Sarah Palin. Stories are compelling because they not only help us understand factual information, but they allow us to identify with others. Rather than simply describing political strife in Thailand, think of how your speech would be impacted by interviewing and telling a story about a fellow college student who is from Thailand and has witnessed the turmoil firsthand. When using narratives in your speech, take care to focus on the human element, to be truthful in telling the story, and to help the audience understand what can be learned from the story. Because they tend to draw us into human dramas, narratives can sometimes cause audience members to lose sight of potential implications and outcomes.

## Surveys

Another source of supporting materials commonly used in speeches is **surveys**, studies in which a limited number of questions are answered by a sample of the population to discover opinions on issues. Surveys are found most often in magazines or journals and are usually seen as more credible than an example or one person’s experience because they synthesize the experience of hundreds or thousands of people. Public opinion polls fall into this category. One person’s experience with alcohol can have an impact on an audience, but a survey indicating that one-third of all Americans abstain, one-third drink occasionally, and one-third drink regularly



Watch “Using an Example” on the *Online Learning Center* to see how examples can be incorporated into presentations.

### narratives

Stories to illustrate an important point.

### surveys

Studies in which a limited number of questions are answered by a sample of the population to discover opinions on issues.

provides better support for an argument. As with personal experience, you should ask some important questions about the evidence found in surveys:

1. *How reliable is the source?* A report in a professional journal of sociology, psychology, or communication is likely to be more thorough and more valid than one found in a local newspaper.
2. *How broad was the sample used in the survey?* Did the survey include the entire nation, the region, the state, the city, the campus, or the class?
3. *Who was included in the survey?* Did everyone in the sample have an equally good chance of being selected, or were volunteers asked to respond to the questions?
4. *How representative was the survey sample?* For example, *Playboy's* readers may not be typical of the population in your state.
5. *Who performed the survey?* Was the survey firm nationally recognized, such as Lou Harris or Gallup, or did the local newspaper perform the survey? Did professionals such as professors, researchers, or management consultants administer the survey?
6. *Why was the survey done?* Was the survey performed for any self-serving purpose—for example, to attract more readers—or did the government conduct the study to help establish policy or legislation?

## Testimonial Evidence

### testimonial evidence

Written or oral statements of others' experience used by a speaker to substantiate or clarify a point.

### lay testimony

Statements made by an ordinary person that substantiate or support what you say.

### expert testimony

Statements made by someone who has special knowledge or expertise about an issue or idea.

### celebrity testimony

Statements made by a public figure who is known to the audience.

**Testimonial evidence**, a third kind of supporting material, is written or oral statements of others' experience used by a speaker to substantiate or clarify a point. One assumption behind testimonial evidence is that you are not alone in your beliefs, ideas, and arguments: Other people also support them. Another assumption is that the statements of others should help the audience accept your point of view. The three kinds of testimonial evidence you can use in your speeches are lay, expert, and celebrity.

**Lay testimony** is statements made by an ordinary person that substantiate or support what you say. In advertising, this kind of testimony shows ordinary people using or buying products and stating the fine qualities of those products. In a speech, lay testimony might be the words of your relatives, neighbors, or colleagues concerning an issue. Such testimony shows the audience that you and other ordinary people support the idea. Other examples of lay testimony are proclamations of faith by fundamentalist Christians at a church gathering and statements about the wonderful qualities of their college by alumni at a recruiting session.

**Expert testimony** is statements made by someone who has special knowledge or expertise about an issue or idea. In your speech you might quote a mechanic about problems with an automobile, an interior decorator about the aesthetic qualities of fabrics, or a political pundit about the elections. The idea is to demonstrate that people with specialized experience or education support the positions you advocate in your speech.

**Celebrity testimony** is statements made by a public figure who is known to the audience. Celebrity testimony occurs in advertising when someone famous endorses a particular product. In your speech you might point out that a famous politician, a syndicated columnist, or a well-known entertainer endorses the position you advocate.

Although testimonial evidence may encourage your audience to adopt your ideas, you need to use such evidence with caution. An idea may have little

credence even though many laypeople believe in it; an expert may be quoted on topics well outside his or her area of expertise; and a celebrity usually is paid for endorsing a product. To protect yourself and your audience, you should ask yourself the following questions before using testimonial evidence in your speeches:

1. Is the person you quote an expert whose opinions or conclusions are worthier than most other people's opinions?
2. Is the quotation about a subject in the person's area of expertise?
3. Is the person's statement based on extensive personal experience, professional study or research, or another form of firsthand proof?
4. Will your audience find the statement more believable because you got the quotation from this outside source?

## Numbers and Statistics

A fourth kind of evidence useful for clarification or substantiation is numbers and statistics. Because numbers are easier to understand and digest when they appear in print, the public speaker has to simplify, explain, and translate their meaning in a speech. For example, instead of saying "There were 323,462 high school graduates," say "There were over 300,000 graduates." Other ways to simplify a number like 323,462 include writing the number on a chalkboard or poster and using a comparison, such as "Three hundred thousand high school graduates are equivalent to the entire population of Lancaster."

**Statistics**—numbers that summarize numerical information or compare quantities—are also difficult for audiences to interpret. For example, an audience will have difficulty interpreting a statement such as "Honda sales increased 47%." Instead, you could round off the figure to "nearly 50%," or you could reveal the number of sales this year and last year. You can also help the audience interpret the significance with a comparison such as "That is the biggest increase in sales experienced by any domestic or imported car dealer in our city this year."

You can greatly increase your effectiveness as a speaker if you illustrate your numbers by using visual resources, such as pie charts, line graphs, and bar graphs. You can help your audience by both saying and showing your figures. You also can help your audience visualize statistics by using visual imagery—for example, "That amount of money is greater than all the money in all our local banks," or "That many discarded tires would cover our city 6 feet deep in a single year."

## Analogies

Another kind of supporting material used in public speeches is analogies. An **analogy** is a comparison of things in some respects, especially in position or function, that are otherwise dissimilar. For instance, one government official said that trying to find Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan is like trying to find one particular rabbit in the state of West Virginia. Similarly, analogies can be used to show that ancient Roman society is analogous to American society and that a law applied in one state will work the same way in another.

An analogy also provides clarification, but it is not proof because the comparison inevitably breaks down. Therefore, a speaker who argues that American society will fail just as Roman society did can carry the comparison only so far because the

### statistics

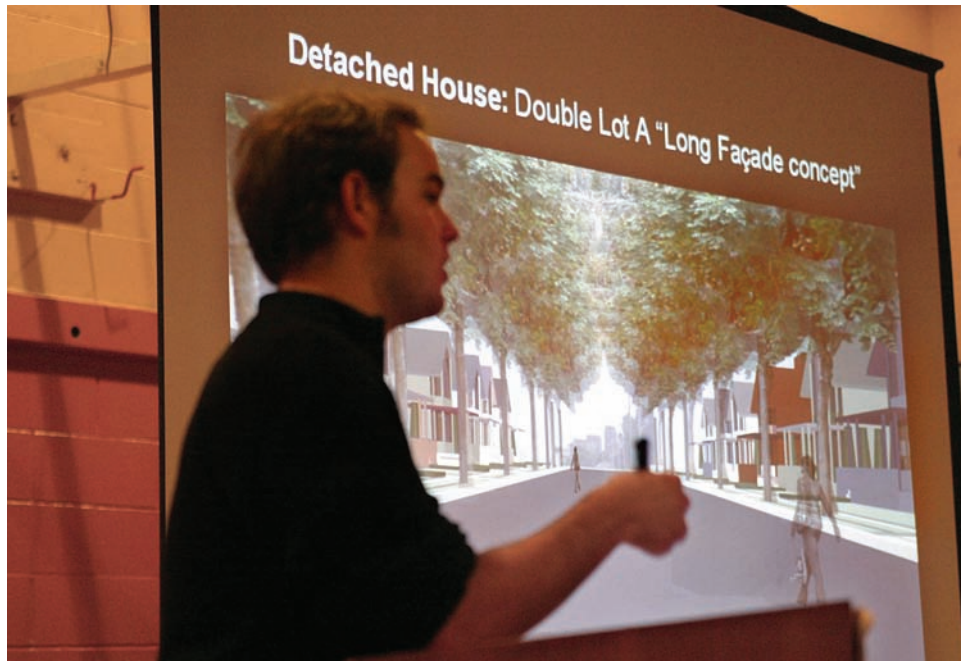
Numbers that summarize numerical information or compare quantities.



To see how to effectively present statistics, watch "Using Statistics" on the *Online Learning Center*.

### analogy

A comparison of things in some respects, especially in position or function, that are otherwise dissimilar.



form of government and the institutions in the two societies are quite different. Likewise, you can question the rabbit-in-West-Virginia analogy by pointing out the vast differences between the two things being compared. Nonetheless, analogies can be quite useful as a way to illustrate or clarify.

## Explanations

Explanations are another important means of clarification and persuasion that you will often find in written and visual sources and in interviews. An **explanation** clarifies what something is or how it works. A discussion of psychology would offer explanations and answers, as well as their relation to the field—for example, “How does Freud explain our motivations?” “What is *catharsis*, and how is it related to aggression?” or “What do *id*, *ego*, and *superego* mean?”

A good explanation usually simplifies a concept or an idea by explaining the idea from the audience’s point of view. William Safire, once a presidential speechwriter and then a syndicated columnist, provided an explanation in one of his columns about how the spelling of a word gets changed. He pointed out that experts who write dictionaries observe how writers and editors use the language. “When enough citations come in from cultivated writers, passed by trained copy editors,” he quotes a lexicographer as saying, “the ‘mistake’ becomes the spelling” (Safire, 1980). You may find, too, that much of your informative speaking is explanation.

## Definitions

Some of the most contentious arguments in our society center on **definitions**, or determinations of meaning through description, simplification, examples, analysis, comparison, explanation, or illustration. Experts and ordinary citizens have argued

### explanation

A clarification of what something is or how it works.

### definitions

Determinations of meaning through description, simplification, examples, analysis, comparison, explanation, or illustration.

for years about definitions. For instance, when does art become pornography? Is withdrawal of life-support systems euthanasia or mercy? How you define a concept can make a considerable difference.

Definitions in a public speech are supposed to enlighten the audience by revealing what a term means. Sometimes you can use definitions that appear in standard reference works, such as dictionaries and encyclopedias, but simply trying to explain the word in language the audience will understand is often more effective. For example, suppose you use the term *subcutaneous hematoma* in your speech. *Subcutaneous hematoma* is jargon used by physicians to explain the blotch on your flesh, but you could explain the term in this way: “*Subcutaneous* means ‘under the skin,’ and *hematoma* means ‘swelled with blood,’ so the words mean ‘blood swelling under the skin,’ or what most of us call a ‘bruise.’”

## Ethical Considerations

### Ethics and Source Credibility

As you have learned, credibility is a perceptual variable that is not based on external, objective measures of competence, trustworthiness, dynamism, and common ground. However, you retain an ethical obligation to project an honest image of yourself to your audience, to actually be the sort of person you purport to be. The well-known cliché that you can fool all of the people some of the time may be accurate, but an ethical communicator avoids “fooling” anyone.

To determine if you are behaving ethically, answer the following questions:

1. *Are your speech's immediate purpose and long-range goal sound?* Are you providing information or recommending change that would be determined worthy by current standards? Attempting to sell a substandard product or to encourage people to injure others would clearly not be sound; persuading people to accept new, more useful ideas and to be kinder to each other would be sound.
2. *Does your end justify your means?* This time-honored notion suggests that communicators can have ethical ends but may use unethical means of bringing the audience to a particular conclusion. You want them to join the armed forces, but should you use scare tactics to get them to join?
3. *Are you being honest with your audience?* Are you well informed about the subject instead of being a poseur who only pretends to know? Are you using good evidence and reasoning to convince your audience? Are your passions about the subject sincere?

Credibility does lie in the audience's perception of you, but you also have an ethical obligation to be the sort of person you project yourself to be. In addition, you must consider the influence of your message on the audience. Persuasive speeches, particularly, may lead to far-reaching changes in others' behaviors. Are the changes you are recommending consistent with standard ethical and moral guidelines? Have you thoroughly studied your topic so that you are convinced of the accuracy of the information you are presenting? Are you presenting the entire picture? Are you using valid and true arguments? In short, are you treating the listeners in the way you wish to be treated when someone else is speaking and you are the listener? The Golden Rule applies to the communication situation.

## The Ethical Use of Supporting Material

Throughout this book we have emphasized various ethical requirements for communication that stem from the NCA Credo on Ethics. And, at various points in this chapter, we have pointed out ethical obligations faced by speakers when searching for and using supporting materials. Recall that the first point in the NCA Credo on Ethics states that accuracy and honesty are essential for ethical communication. In this final section we summarize the ethical obligations faced by speakers when working with supporting materials:

- *Speakers have an ethical obligation to find the best possible sources of information.* The Internet and full-text databases certainly provide us with easier research options; however, these tools do not necessarily improve the quality of our research. Importantly, the best sources of information are sometimes not available online or in full-text form. When you speak, your audience depends on you to present the best and most accurate information possible. As a result, many communication instructors emphasize the importance of using *quality* sources of information during a presentation. As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, selecting a variety of sources including print sources, Internet sources, and possibly even interviews can help improve the overall quality of sources that you base your presentation on.
- *Speakers have an ethical obligation to cite their sources of information.* Of course, one reason to cite sources of information is to avoid **plagiarism**, which is the intentional use of information from another source without crediting the source. All universities have specific codes of conduct that identify sanctions levied against those who are caught plagiarizing. Although we see relatively few cases of full plagiarism, we often see students mistakenly commit **incremental plagiarism**, which is the intentional or unintentional use of information from one or more sources without fully divulging how much information is directly quoted. We commonly see students use large chunks of information from web pages and other sources—many times this information is directly copied and pasted from the website. Failing to clearly identify what is directly quoted, even accidentally, is a form of plagiarism. Moreover, your instructor will likely evaluate your speech more favorably if you interpret the meaning of short quotations for the audience rather than overrelying on very large quotations.
- *Speakers have an ethical obligation to fairly and accurately represent sources.* How often have you heard politicians and other public figures complain that the media take their comments “out of context”? To avoid unfair and inaccurate representations of sources, whether they are newspaper articles, web pages, books, or even interviews, you must ensure that you fully understand the points being made by the source. Remember, for example, that two-sided arguments are often used to present a point. A **two-sided argument** is one in which a source advocating one position presents an argument from the opposite viewpoint and then goes on to refute that viewpoint. To take an excerpt from a source in which the opposing argument is being presented for refutation and implying that the source was advocating the opposing argument is unethical. As a speaker you have liberty to disagree with points made by the sources you consult; you do not have the liberty to misrepresent those same sources.

### plagiarism

The intentional use of information from another source without crediting the source.

### incremental plagiarism

The intentional or unintentional use of information from one or more sources without fully divulging how much information is directly quoted.

### two-sided argument

A source advocating one position presents an argument from the opposite viewpoint and then goes on to refute that argument.

**get INVOLVED!**

Your skills as a public speaker and college student can be valuable to your community, but in ways that you may not immediately realize. Your ability to locate valuable information on a variety of topics is valuable to those in your community who perhaps did not grow up using the Internet on a daily basis, or even typing on a computer.

Contact your local public library and offer to compile bibliographies, or collections of research material, that can be made available to patrons of the library. You might begin by researching topics of local interest like organic farming, drug-abuse prevention, health issues, or even the economy. After identifying several high-quality sources, write a brief abstract, or summary, of each source and compile all information into an annotated bibliography. Librarians can determine a way to make information available to patrons, and depending on the resources of the library, may even be able to provide copies or links to the sources.

Locating, understanding, and incorporating supporting material is one of the most important tasks you will undertake as a presenter of information and argument. As illustrated by Table 11.1, effective research literally impacts every step in the process of preparing and delivering a presentation. Taking care to effectively and ethically use your information will make you a better speaker and will garner the respect of your peers and teachers.



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Source credibility is the audience's perception of your effectiveness as a speaker. Source credibility is important because it helps the audience understand "why you are telling us about this topic in this manner."
  - The WHY emphasizes the goal or the purpose of your presentation.
  - The YOU emphasizes you as the speaker and why you have earned the right to speak.
  - The US invites you to analyze the audience to determine their reason for listening to you.
  - THIS TOPIC asks you to analyze the appropriateness of the subject you have selected.
  - THIS MANNER requires you to consider the organization and other strategies that you selected for your presentation.
- ▶ Source credibility is created from the audience's perceptions of four dimensions of credibility.
  - Audience perception of the speaker's competence.
  - Audience perception of the speaker's trustworthiness.
  - Audience perception of the speaker's dynamism.
  - Audience perception of the speaker's common ground with the audience.
- ▶ Evidence for your speeches and other discussions come from various types of sources.
  - Your personal experience can add to your credibility and clarify your personal knowledge; however, personal experience should be carefully evaluated before use.
- Library materials come in a variety of forms. The key to finding information in the library is knowing various databases to search.
- The Internet provides quick access to a variety of information, but that information must be carefully verified for accuracy.
- When using other persons, you should carefully plan interview questions to make your use of testimony more valid.
- ▶ Citations should be used to document your use of evidence. Bibliographic citations appear on your outline whereas verbal citations are presented orally during your speech.
- ▶ When looking for evidence, eight types of supporting material are typically used: examples, narratives, surveys, testimonials, numbers and statistics, analogies, explanations, and definitions.
- ▶ Speakers are obligated to follow ethical principles for establishing credibility and using evidence.
  - You have an obligation to be true to yourself and have worthy purposes and goals. You should employ ethical means to achieve ethical ends.
  - You have an obligation to use accurate information and to cite the sources of such information.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Analogy	Explanation	Sleeper effect
Bibliographic references	Incremental plagiarism	Source credibility
Celebrity testimony	Internal references	Statistics
Common ground	Lay testimony	Supporting materials
Competence	Narratives	Surveys
Definitions	Personal experience	Testimonial evidence
Dynamism	Plagiarism	Trustworthiness
Examples	Reference librarian	Two-sided argument
Expert testimony	Search engine	Verbal citations

## Study Questions

- Which of the following statements regarding source credibility is *not* true?
  - Source credibility is the audience's perception of the effectiveness of a speaker.
  - Source credibility depends on the speaker, the subject discussed, the situation, and the audience.
  - Source credibility is something a speaker possesses.
  - The audience determines credibility.
- Which aspect of source credibility is the degree to which a speaker is perceived as honest, friendly, and honorable?
  - competence
  - trustworthiness
  - dynamism
  - common ground
- If a person speaks with vocal variety, moves toward the audience, or uses facial expressions and gestures, he or she is exhibiting which aspect of credibility?
  - competence
  - trustworthiness
  - dynamism
  - common ground
- Which of the following results in higher credibility scores?
  - disorganized speeches
  - people perceived as low in status
  - presence of nonfluencies
  - effective delivery skills
- Which of the following can be effectively utilized when gathering evidence for your speeches?
  - personal experience
  - library resources
  - the Internet
  - all of the above
- Which type of source undergoes blind peer review to ensure high-quality information and contains specified studies?
  - nonfiction books
  - academic journal articles
  - government documents
  - trade journal articles
- Brief notations in your outline that indicate a reference used in your speech are called \_\_\_\_\_ references, while \_\_\_\_\_ references are complete citations that appear in the "references" section of the speech outline.
  - internal; bibliographic
  - verbal; internal
  - bibliographic; external
  - external; verbal
- When evaluating sources, you should ensure that the supporting material
  - contains jargon and technical explanations
  - comprises relevant and irrelevant information
  - contains bias and is subjective
  - is verifiable
- Which type of supporting material includes written or oral statements of others' experiences?
  - examples
  - testimonial evidence
  - numbers and statistics
  - definitions
- Information used to substantiate arguments and clarify a speaker's position is called
  - competence
  - sleeper effect
  - supporting materials
  - dynamism

### Answers:

1. (c); 2. (b); 3. (c); 4. (d); 5. (d); 6. (b); 7. (a); 8. (d); 9. (b); 10. (c)

## Critical Thinking

- As a speaker presenting to your class, what topics do you feel most credible speaking about? Why do you feel as such?
- When watching the news or reading a newspaper, note whether the newscasters or writers cite their sources. Do they appear less credible if they do not mention where the information originated? Give examples.

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

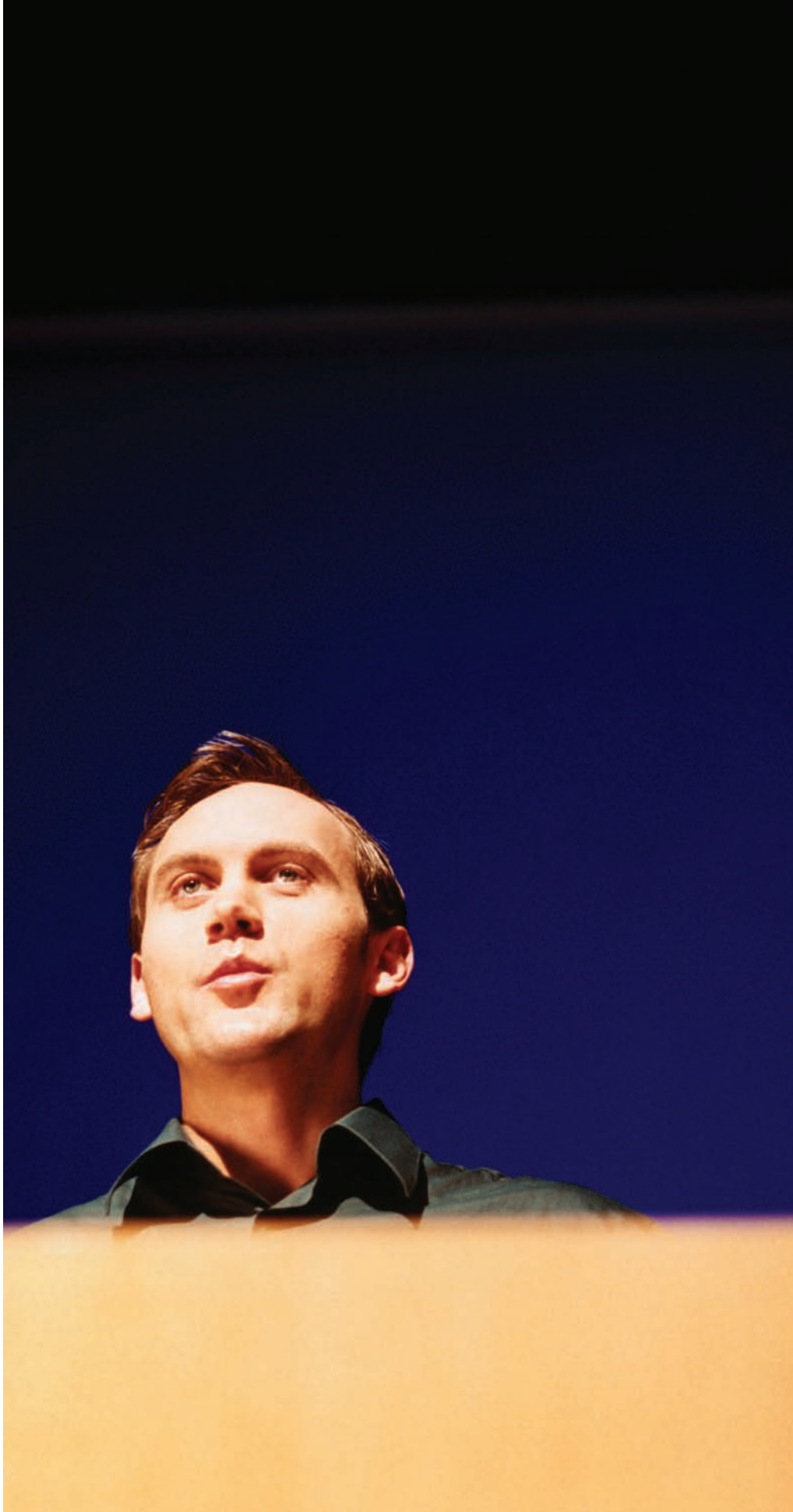
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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Deliver a purposeful introduction.
2. Devise creative openings for your presentation.
3. Apply the principles of outlining.
4. Choose an outline that best fits your topic.
5. Use transitions and signposts.
6. Deliver an appropriate conclusion.



# ORGANIZING YOUR PRESENTATION

**In this chapter you will learn how to organize your presentation.** You will examine the three main parts of a speech: introduction, body, and conclusion. You will learn the functions of each part and how to effectively organize the content. Understanding the parts of a speech, the functions of each part, and ways to organize the entire message is essential to becoming a successful presenter.



**Alaska Governor Sarah Palin’s acceptance speech** to the Republican National Convention in September 2008 was a make-or-break event for her and her running mate. Because she was unknown to much of the country, the speech gave Palin both a challenge and an opportunity: she needed to introduce herself, to define herself in relationship to Senator John McCain’s presidential bid, and to prove that she was an asset to the ticket. Initial opinion found that she acquitted herself superbly in all these areas.

Palin’s words were tightly focused on describing her simple middle-class background and her lofty American ideals, and her delivery was crisp and confident. Her speech was well organized, beginning with a paean to her running mate’s courage and steadfastness and moving quickly to a description of her family, her background, and her qualifications for office. Her biographical sketch was organized to give her many opportunities to mock her Democratic opponents and deliver well-aimed jabs at their ideas and programs. The final section consisted of a litany of criticisms of the opposing candidate’s political positions. Her delighted audience stopped her many times to applaud and cheer. Many of her remarks became campaign catchwords: “I told the Congress, ‘Thanks, but no thanks,’ on that Bridge to Nowhere.”

Reaction to the speech was favorable: most commentators quickly concluded that Palin did what she needed to do. Jay Carney of *Time* summed it up by saying, “Two things are clear after Sarah Palin made her do-or-die debut before 20-plus million people tonight. She is amazingly self-confident. And she knows how to nail a speech.” Ben Smith of *Politico* agreed: “She was confident but not too confident, sweet and folksy without overdoing it.” Joe Klein, also writing for *Time*, commented on the delivery and organization: “Sarah Palin . . . delivered a brilliant speech. It was a classic Republican speech—written by Matthew Scully of the Bush speechwriting shop—chock full of conservative populism, . . .”

*How you organize a speech sends signals to audience members. Sarah Palin won points for her ability to smoothly and succinctly accomplish her major goals of telling her own story, building up her running mate, and knocking down her competition. Her speech was organized in a way that allowed for clear and smooth transitions between its major sections. This chapter will teach you about organization by discussing the key elements of a speech—the introduction, body, and conclusion—as well as how to outline your speech effectively.*

Sources: (text of speech) [http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/conventions/videos/transcripts/20080903\\_PALIN\\_SPEECH.html](http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/conventions/videos/transcripts/20080903_PALIN_SPEECH.html); (reaction to the speech) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/04/sarah-palin-speech-reacti\\_n\\_123767.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/04/sarah-palin-speech-reacti_n_123767.html)

## The Introduction

### introduction

The first part of your presentation, where you fulfill the five functions of an introduction.

The **introduction** is the first part of your presentation, where you fulfill the five functions of an introduction. The introduction is important because audiences use it to “size up” a speaker. In the first few sentences, and certainly in the first few minutes of a speech, audience members decide whether to listen to you. They also decide whether your topic is important enough to hear. In those crucial early minutes, you can capture your audience’s attention and keep their focus, or you can lose

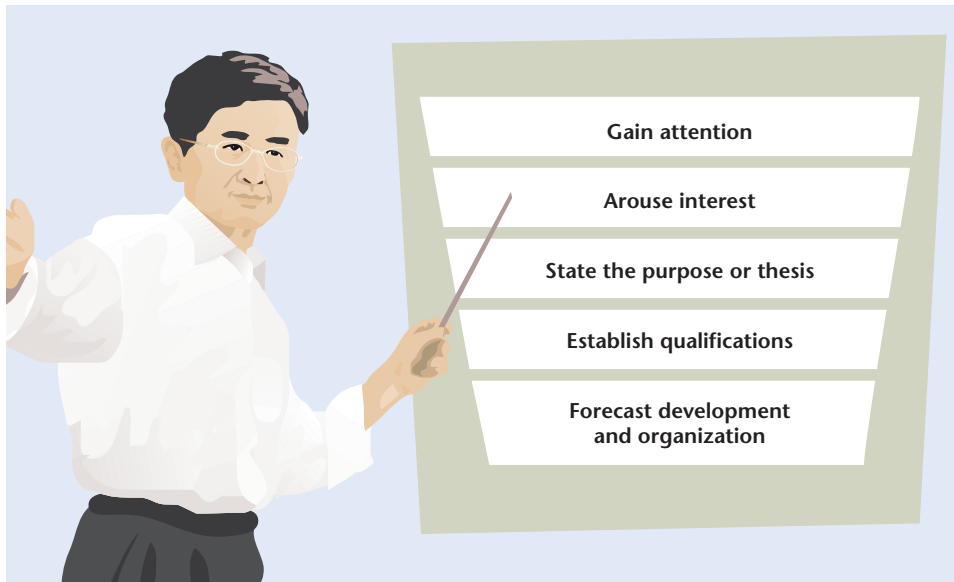


Figure 12.1 Functions of an introduction.



View an animation of this illustration on the *Online Learning Center*.

## TRY THIS

List the five functions of an introduction. Make sure the introduction of your speech includes these functions.

their attention—perhaps for the remainder of the presentation. This section of the chapter is devoted to helping you compose the best possible introduction, one that will grab your audience’s attention and keep their minds on your topic.

The five functions of an introduction are illustrated in Figure 12.1. You do not need to fulfill these five functions in this order. Gaining audience attention often comes at the beginning, but maintaining attention is an important function throughout the speech. Forecasting the speech’s organization often comes toward the end of an introduction, but even that function does not have to be last.

To assist you in composing an introduction for your public presentation, this section systematically explores the five functions and presents some examples.

## Gaining and Maintaining Audience Attention

The first function of an introduction is to gain and maintain attention. You gain and maintain the audience’s attention by involving your audience in your topic. Here are some suggestions:

1. *Bring to the presentation the object or person about which you are going to speak.* A student speaking on health foods brings a tray full of health foods, which he shares with the audience after the speech; a student speaking on weightlifting brings her 250-pound friend to demonstrate the moves during the speech.
2. *Invite your audience to participate.* Ask questions and invite audience members to raise their hands and answer. Or have everyone stand up and perform the exercise that you are teaching them.





▲ Ministers often invite the congregation to participate actively in the service.



See how to relate a story, cite a quotation, or arouse interest in your introduction by viewing clips on the *Online Learning Center*.

3. *Let your clothing relate to your presentation.* A nurse talking about the dangers of acute hepatitis wears a nurse's uniform; a construction worker dons a hard hat.
4. *Exercise your audience's imagination.* Have the audience members close their eyes and imagine they are standing on a ski slope, standing before a judge on a driving-while-intoxicated charge, or slipping into a cool Minnesota lake when Miami and Houston are humid and steamy.
5. *Start with sight or sound.* One student gave a powerful presentation on motorcycle safety. He showed six slides as he talked about the importance of wearing a helmet while driving a motorcycle. Only one item appeared in color on each slide: a crushed or battered helmet that had been worn by someone who lived through a motorcycle accident. His words spoke of safety; the battered helmets reinforced the message.
6. *Arouse audience curiosity.* Five hundred white people gathered to hear a presentation on diversity. The speaker was a Chinese man dressed in traditional Chinese attire. He started his presentation by saying nothing; he just slowly scanned his audience. The audience, accustomed to speakers who start by speaking, was mystified but exceedingly attentive. They were very curious about his quiet demeanor. Then he said, "Do you know how it feels to stand in front of a group this large and to see no one who looks like you?"
7. *Role-play.* A student invites an audience member to pretend to be a choking victim. The speaker then "saves" the victim by using the maneuver she is teaching the audience.
8. *Show a very short video.* A football player speaking on violence in that sport shows a short video of punt returns. He points out which players were deliberately trying to maim their opponents with face guards—as they have been taught to do.

9. *Present a brief quotation or have the audience read something you provided.* One enterprising student handed every class member an official-looking letter right before his speech. Each letter was a personalized summons to court for a moving violation that was detected by a police-owned spy camera at a busy intersection.
10. *State striking facts or statistics.* A student notes that 3,000 people died on September 11, 2001, at the hands of terrorists, and around 3,000 American soldiers had lost their lives in Iraq by November 2006. But, she continues, these numbers pale in comparison to the 23,000 Americans who died in a single battle, the Battle of Antietam, on April 17, 1862, in our own Civil War (Von Drehle, 2001).
11. *Self-disclose.* Tell audience members something about yourself—related to the topic—that they would not otherwise know: “I took hard drugs for six years”; “I was an eagle scout”; “I earn over \$50,000 a year—legally.”
12. *Tell a story, a narration.* A student tells this story: The little boy asked his grandfather if he was a hero because the grandson had heard that his grandpa fought in Vietnam when he was a young man. “No,” said the old man, “I was not a hero, but I was in an entire battalion of heroes.”

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

You can use metaphors to gain your audience’s attention. For example, in Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech “I Have a Dream,” he began by comparing the Emancipation Proclamation to a “great beacon light of hope” to African-Americans who had been “seared in the flames of withering injustice.” He went on to describe the proclamation as a “joyous day-break” that ended the “long night of captivity” (King, 1968). Such metaphors continue to inform racial rhetoric in our country. Pair off with another classmate and identify a speech topic and a related metaphor that could be used to gain the audience’s attention.

## TRY THIS

See if you can determine how you decide that a presentation is organized. What are the verbal and nonverbal signs of organization? What words signal organization? What are the clues that tell you the speaker is organized? Can you use some of these techniques in your own presentation?

The preceding 12 suggestions for gaining and maintaining audience attention certainly are not the only possibilities, but they have all been used successfully by other students. Your introduction should not simply imitate what you read in this book; instead, think of ideas of your own that will work best for you and your audience.

Some words of caution about gaining and maintaining attention: No matter what method you use for gaining audience attention, avoid being overly dramatic. A student who pre-

tended to cut himself and shot fake blood all over the front of the room got his teacher and his audience so upset that they could not listen to his presentation.

Always make sure your attention-getting strategy is related to your topic. Some speakers think every public speech must start with a joke. Starting with a joke is a big mistake if you are not good at telling jokes or if your audience is not interested in hearing them. Jokes can be used in the introduction of a speech if they are topically relevant, but they are just one of hundreds of ways a speaker can gain attention.

Another overused device is writing something such as “s-e-x” on the chalkboard and then announcing your speech has nothing to do with sex but that you wanted to get the audience’s attention. Again, the problem with this approach is that the attention-getting strategy has nothing to do with the topic. Finally, be wary of guests, animals, and PowerPoint because all three can eliminate you from the speaking situation: They will get all the attention, and they will become the presentation instead of you.

### Arousing Audience Interest

The second function of an introduction is to arouse audience interest in the subject matter. The best way to arouse audience interest is to show clearly how the topic is related to the audience. A highly skilled speaker can adapt almost any topic to a given audience. Do you want to talk about collecting coins? Thousands of coins pass through each person’s hands every year. Can you tell your audience how to spot a rare one? If you can arouse the audience’s interest in currency, you will find it easier to encourage them to listen to your speech about the rare coins you have collected. Similarly, speeches about your life as a mother of four, a camp counselor, or the manager of a business can be linked to audience interests. The following good example relates the topic to the audience; these words are quoted from a student speech on drinking and driving:



Do you know what the leading cause of death is for people who attend this college? Some of you might think it is a disease that causes the most deaths—cancer, heart attacks, or AIDS. No, the leading cause of death among students at this college is car accidents. Not just ordinary car accidents, but accidents in which the driver has been drinking.

The speaker related her topic to the audience by linking a national problem to her own college. She prepared the audience to receive more information and ideas about this common problem.

### Stating the Purpose or Thesis

The third function of an introduction is to state the purpose or thesis of your speech. Why? Because informative speeches invite learning, and learning is more likely to occur if you reveal to the audience what you want them to know. Consider the difficulty of listening to a history professor who spends 50 minutes telling you every detail and date related to the Crusades. Observe how much more easily you can listen to a professor who begins the lecture by stating what you are supposed to learn: “I want you to understand why the Crusades began, who the main participants were, and when the Crusades occurred.”

The following are four examples of statements of purpose or thesis:

Thesis statement for a demonstration speech: “This afternoon I am going to demonstrate how you can mix three common household products to make your own antiseptic that you can use to reduce germs in your home.”

Thesis statement for an informative speech: “Today I ask you to remember at least three of the five methods that I will recommend to avoid identity theft.”

Thesis statement for a persuasive speech: “After you hear me today you will be eager to join our movement to change the grading system at this college.”

Thesis statement for an inspirational or motivational speech: “Our banquet tonight is to remind us of the sacrifice our soldiers made on our behalf.”

In speaking, as in teaching, audience members are more likely to learn and understand if your expectations are clear. That goal can be accomplished by stating the purpose in the introduction. Sometimes in a persuasive speech you may wish to delay revealing your purpose until you have set the stage for audience acceptance. Under most circumstances, though—and especially in informative speeches—you should reveal your purpose or thesis in your introduction.

### Establishing Your Qualifications

The fourth function of an introduction is to describe any special qualifications you have to enhance your credibility. You can talk about your experience, your research, the experts you interviewed, and your own education and training in the subject. Although you should be wary about self-praise, you need not be reserved in stating why you can speak about the topic with authority. The following is an example of establishing credibility through self-disclosure:

You can probably tell from my fingernails that my day job is repairing automobiles, a job I have held at the same dealership for over 12 years. I have repaired thousands of cars. That is why I want to tell you today why you and your insurance company have to pay such high prices for repair.

For more information on establishing source credibility, return to chapter 11 on this subject.

### Forecasting Development and Organization

The fifth function of an introduction is to forecast the organization and development of the presentation. The forecast provides a preview of the main points you plan to cover. Audience members feel more comfortable when they know what to expect. You can help by revealing your plan for the speech. Are you going to discuss a problem and its solution? Are you going to make three main arguments with supporting materials? Let your audience know what you plan to do early in your speech. A forecast follows. Is it adequate in forecasting organization and development?

Today I plan to present three good reasons why race should be a factor in college admissions.

### Sample Introduction That Fulfills the Five Functions

Below you will find Lana Waters' introduction to an informative speech about Internet file sharing. The audience already knew Lana as a student in her 30s who had served in the U.S. Marines as a reporter/broadcaster who was well-acquainted with Internet issues. Below is her introduction to an informative presentation.

Copyright Infringement  
by Lana Waters

Throughout history people have been creating and distributing copyrighted material. In the process some of this copyrighted material has been reproduced and used by others who did not create the material. In fact, I would be willing to bet that many of you have downloaded music and images you have found on the Internet. You may think what you are doing is fine when actually you may be committing an illegal act.

A few short years ago this university had several students charged with copyright infringement because they were file sharing. They were legally wrong, but file sharing can be

*Arouses audience interest with historical relevance.*

*Relates topic to audience.*

*Gains audience attention.*

<i>Announces topic.</i>	beneficial if used correctly. The question is: What is “acceptable use” of copyrighted material and what is illegal use?
<i>Relates topic to speaker.</i>	Today—after studying this issue—I will answer that question, especially about Internet file sharing. I personally believe that individuals should be able to share copyrighted material over the Internet without the risk of legal consequences. To prove my point I will provide a brief look backward at how shared copyright material has helped shape technology in the USA. I will also explain some major court cases that brought us to our current copyright laws. Finally, I will reveal why I think certain types of Internet file sharing can be beneficial. Let us begin by exploring the brief history of this issue.
<i>Forecasts organization and development.</i>	
<i>Transitions to the body.</i>	

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Clarity Behaviors Inventory

The first step in understanding how to sound organized when presenting information is to learn how others do this. As college students, you have the opportunity to watch teachers present information nearly every day. Below are 12 statements describing things that a teacher might do. Select a teacher from another class, and think of that teacher when responding to the statements. Use the following scale to respond:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

1. The teacher verbally stresses important issues presented in the lecture.
2. Written examples of topics covered in the lecture were provided to the class in the form of handouts or visual materials (e.g., PowerPoint, dry-erase board, or chalkboard).
3. The organization of the lecture was given to me in written form, either on paper or as part of a visual aid, like an overhead or the chalkboard.
4. The teacher tells us what definitions, explanations, or conclusions are important to make note of.
5. The teacher explains how we are supposed to see relationships between topics covered in the lecture.
6. The teacher provides us with written descriptions of the most important things in the lecture.
7. The teacher explains when she/he is presenting something that is important for us to know.
8. The teacher provides us with written or visual definitions, explanations, or conclusions of topics covered in the lecture.
9. The teacher verbally identifies examples that illustrate concepts we are supposed to learn from the lecture.
10. Written explanations of how ideas in the lecture fit together are presented on the chalkboard, overhead, PowerPoint, or in handouts.
11. The teacher explains when he/she is providing an important definition or explanation of a concept.

Source: Titsworth, S., Novak, D., Hunt, S. & Meyer, K. (2004). *The effects of teacher clarity on affective and cognitive learning: A causal model of clear teaching behaviors*. International Communication Association, May, New Orleans, LA.

## The Body

Most speakers begin composing their presentations with the body rather than the introduction because they need to know the content of the presentation to write an effective introduction.

The **body** of a presentation is the largest portion of the presentation in which you place your arguments and ideas, your evidence and examples, your proofs and illustrations, and your stories and testimonials. Since you usually do not have time to state in a presentation everything you know about a subject, you need to decide what information to include and what to exclude. Because the material you will use may not all be of equal importance, you need to decide placement—first, last, or in the middle. Selecting, prioritizing, and organizing are three skills that you will use in developing the body of your speech.

Just as the introduction of a speech has certain functions to fulfill, so does the body. Following are the main functions of the body:

1. Increase what an audience knows about a topic (informative presentation).
2. Change an audience's attitudes or actions about a topic (persuasive presentation).
3. Present a limited number of arguments, stories, and/or ideas.
4. Provide support for your arguments and/or ideas.
5. Indicate the sources of your information, arguments, and supporting materials.

You already know something about organization. Every sentence you utter is organized. The words are arranged according to rules of syntax for the English language. Even when you are in conversation, you organize your speech. The first statement you make is often more general than that which follows. For instance, you might say, "I don't like DeMato for Congress," after which you might say why you don't like DeMato. You probably don't start by stating a specific fact, such as DeMato's voting record, her position on health care, or her torrid love life. Likewise, when we compose a speech,

### body

The largest part of the presentation, which contains the arguments, evidence, and main content.

Here are some tips for strengthening your introduction by avoiding some common mistakes:

- Do not start talking until you are up in front and settled. Starting your speech on the way up to the lectern is bad form.
- Do not say negative things about you or your abilities: "I'm not used to public speaking," "I've never done this before," "I couldn't be more nervous than I am right now." You are supposed to build your credibility in the introduction, not give an audience more doubts about your ability.
- Do not let your nonverbal unease overcome your message. Crossing your legs, refusing to look at the audience, jingling the change in your pocket, repeatedly pushing your hair off your face—all of these signal to the audience your lack of confidence. So, act confident even if you are not.
- Do not say negative things about your message: "I didn't have much time to prepare this speech," "I couldn't find much information on my topic," or "I really don't know much about this issue." Do the best you can to convey your message, but do not tell the audience to disregard your message.

**Figure 12.2** Tips for a better introduction.

we tend to limit what we say, prioritize our points, and back them as necessary with support—all organized according to principles we have either subconsciously learned (as in the rules of syntax) or consciously studied (as in the rules of organization).

## The Principles of Outlining

### outline

A written plan that uses symbols, margins, and content to reveal the order, importance, and substance of a presentation.

An **outline** is a written plan that uses symbols, margins, and content to reveal the order, importance, and substance of your speech. An outline shows the sequence of your arguments or main points, indicates their relative importance, and states the content of your arguments, main points, and subpoints. The outline is a simplified, abstract version of your speech.

Why should you learn how to outline? Here are three good reasons:

- Outlining is a skill that can be used to develop written compositions, to write notes in class, and to compose speeches.
- Outlining reinforces important skills like determining what is most important, what arguments and evidence will work best with this audience, and roughly how much time and effort will go into each part of your presentation.
- Outlining encourages you to speak conversationally because you do not have every word in front of you.

You will find that learning how to outline can provide you with a useful tool in your classes and at work. Outlining is versatile and easy to learn as long as you keep six principles of outlining in mind:

- *Principle 1: Link outline to purpose.* All the items of information in your outline should be directly related to your purpose and long-range goal. The **immediate purpose** is what you expect to achieve *on the day of your presentation*. You might want the audience to be able to distinguish between a row house and a townhouse, to rent a particular DVD, or to talk with others about a topic. All of these purposes can be achieved shortly after the audience hears about the idea. The **long-range goal** is what you expect to achieve by your message in the days, months, or years ahead. You may be talking about a candidate two months before the election, but you want your audience to vote a certain way at that future date. You may want to push people to be more tolerant toward persons of your race, gender, sexual preference, or religion, but tolerance is more likely to develop over time than instantly—so your goal is long-range.
  - *Principle 2: Your outline is an abstract of the message you will deliver.* A simplification, the outline should be less than every word you speak but should include all important points and supporting materials. Some instructors say an outline should be about one-third the length of the actual presentation, if the message were in manuscript form. However, you should ask what your instructor expects in an outline, because some instructors like to see a very complete outline, whereas others prefer a brief outline. Nonetheless, the outline is not a manuscript but an abstract of the talk you intend to deliver, a plan that includes the important arguments or information you intend to present.
  - *Principle 3: Each outline part is a single idea.* That is, the outline should consist of single units of information, usually in the form of complete sentences that express a single idea correctly presented below.

### immediate purpose

What you expect to achieve on the day of your presentation.

### long-range goal

What you expect to achieve by your message in the days, months, or years ahead.



- I. Government regulation of handguns should be implemented to reduce the number of murders in this country.
  - A. Half of the murders in the United States are committed by criminals using handguns.
  - B. Half of the handgun deaths in the United States are caused by relatives, friends, or acquaintances of the victim.
- *Principle 4: Your outline symbols signal importance.* In the example the **main points**, or most important points, are indicated with Roman numerals, such as I, II, III, IV, and V. The number of main points in a 5- to 10-minute message, or even a longer presentation, should be limited to the number you can reasonably cover, explain, or prove in the time permitted. Most 5-minute messages have from one to three main points. Even hour-long presentations must have a limited number of main points because most audiences are unable to remember more than seven main points.
 

**Subpoints**, the points supporting the main points, or those of less importance, are indicated with capital letters, such as A, B, C, D, and E. Ordinarily, two subpoints under a main point are regarded as the minimum if any subpoints are to be presented. As with the main points, the number of subpoints should be limited; otherwise, the audience may lose sight of your main points. A good guideline is to present two or three of your best pieces of supporting material in support of each main point.
- *Principle 5: Your outline margins signal importance.* The larger the margin on the left, the less important the item is to your purpose. However, the margins are coordinated with the symbols explained previously; thus the main points have the same left margin, the subpoints have a slightly larger left margin, the sub-subpoints have a still larger left margin, and so on. A correct outline with the appropriate symbols and margins follows.

**main points**

The most important points in a presentation; indicated by Roman numerals in an outline.

**subpoints**

The points in a presentation that support the main points; indicated by capital letters in an outline.

## Why We Need Embryonic Stem Cell Research by Amber Rasche

### Introduction

- I. As a person with diabetes in my family, I have been very concerned about the possibility of cures for this dreaded disease.
  - A. Today I am going to talk with you about the importance of embryonic stem research in finding a cure.
  - B. I hope you will care about this subject because none of us know who is going to suffer from this increasingly common disease.
  - C. I will approach this subject by revealing how stem cell research became controversial, how the government slowed progress, and why you should agree with me that embryonic stem cell research needs to proceed.

### Body

- II. In the search for a cure, James Thomson in 1998 was the first biologist to isolate human embryonic stem cells.
  - A. The goal of this research is to use stem cells to replace cells that have failed in the human body.
  - B. Congress passed a bill in October 1998 prohibiting experimentation with embryonic stem cells except under very limited circumstances.
  - C. Congress banned funding for any experimentation that would harm embryos.
  - D. President Bush allowed research to continue on stem cells created before August 2001.

*Speaker credibility: links speaker to topic.*

*Speaker announces topic.*

*Speaker relates topic to audience.*

*Speaker forecasts organization of presentation.*

*Speaker states immediate persuasive purpose.*

*Principle 1: Outline links all major points to purpose.*

*Principle 2: Outline simplifies and reduces presentation to series of related sentences.*

*Principle 3: Each item in outline is one sentence.*



*Principle 4: Symbols (I, II, and A, B, etc.) indicate main and subordinate ideas.*

*Principle 5: Margins (far left for main points and indented for subordinate points) indicate importance.*

*Principle 6: Each item is in parallel form.*

### parallel form

The consistent use of complete sentences, clauses, phrases, or words in an outline.

### rough draft

The preliminary organization of the outline of a presentation.

- III. People favoring stem cell research demonstrate that the prohibition is unnecessarily keeping us from medical advances.
- A. Experts estimate that 400,000 embryos already exist in fertility clinics.
  - B. Most of the existing embryos are discarded if they are not donated to science.

### Conclusion

- IV. Now that you have heard the history and the controversy surrounding cell research, I hope you will join me in keeping the government out of medical research so thousands of people with diseases like diabetes can have the hope of a cure in the near future.

- *Principle 6: Use parallel form.* **Parallel form** involves the consistent use of complete sentences, clauses, phrases, or words, but not a mixture of these. Hacker (1995), in her text on writing, says, “Readers expect items in a series to appear in parallel grammatical form” (p. 63). The same could be said of listeners. Most teachers prefer an outline consisting entirely of complete sentences because such an outline reveals more completely the speaker’s message. An outline like the one on stem cell research is composed entirely of complete sentences; the form is parallel because no dependent clauses, phrases, or single words appear in the outline.

## The Rough Draft

Before you begin composing your outline, you can save time and energy by (1) selecting a topic that is appropriate for you, your audience, your purpose, and the situation; (2) finding arguments, examples, illustrations, quotations, stories, and other supporting materials from your experience, from written and visual resources, and from other people; and (3) narrowing your topic so that you can select the best materials from a large supply of available items.

Once you have gathered materials consistent with your purpose, you can begin by developing a **rough draft** of your outline—a preliminary organization of the outline. The most efficient way to develop a rough draft is to choose a limited number of main points important for your purpose and your audience.

Next, you should see what materials you have from your experience, from written and visual resources, and from other people to support these main ideas. You need to find out if you have any materials that support your subpoints—facts, statistics, testimony, and examples. In short, you assemble your main points, your subpoints, and your sub-subpoints for your speech, always with your audience and purpose in mind. What arguments, illustrations, and supporting materials will be most likely to have an impact on the audience? Sometimes speakers get so involved in a topic that they select mainly those items that interest them. In public speaking you should select the items likely to have the maximum impact on the audience, not on you.

Composing an outline for a speech is a process. Even professional speechwriters may have to make important changes to their first draft. Some of the questions you need to consider as you revise your rough draft follow:

1. Are your main points consistent with your purpose?
2. Do your subpoints and sub-subpoints relate to your main points?
3. Are the items in your outline the best possible ones for this particular audience, for this topic, for you, for the purpose, and for the occasion?
4. Does your outline follow the principles of outlining?

Even after you have rewritten your rough draft, you would be wise to have another person—perhaps a classmate—examine your outline and provide an opinion about its content and correctness.

The next outline is an example of what a rough draft of a speech looks like:

**Blogging**  
by Daniel Kalis

**Introduction**

My immediate purpose is to help my audience understand the origins, present practice, and the future of blogging.


- I. What is blogging and what is its importance now and in the future?
  - A. What is blogging?
  - B. Why important?
- II. History
  - A. Origin
    1. When?
    2. Who?
  - B. Original uses
- III. Present
  - A. Reasons for popularity
  - B. Complications
- III. Future
  - A. Trends
  - B. Genres
- IV. Conclusion: Blogging is growing exponentially because of its many possibilities.

*Rough draft can have sentences, phrases, or just a word or two to indicate your overall plan for presentation.*

*Rough draft should be easy to change as you decide what to keep and what to discard based on what you can find about topic.*

*Rough draft is an early plan containing cues about what you want to say.*

A rough draft of a speech does not necessarily follow parallel form, nor is it as complete as the sentence outline, which often develops out of the rough draft. Mostly, the rough draft provides an overview so that you can see how the parts of the speech—the main points and subpoints—fit together. When you are ready to finalize your outline, you have several options. The key-word and sentence outlines, are two possibilities.

 A great deal of research shows that ESL speakers benefit from pre-planning strategies like preparing outlines before speaking or writing. Specifically, preparing outlines has been shown to improve language fluency while also increasing the depth and complexity of the ideas presented. In essence, outlines help you speak more clearly and develop more advanced ideas for your audience.

Outlines are effective as a final step in preparing a presentation because they help you formalize the ideas you want to present. Research reported by a researcher from the University of London suggests that for ESL speakers the use of concept mapping before constructing an outline may be beneficial (Ojima, 2006). Concept mapping involves the use of a visual flowchart to show relationships among key concepts related to your topic. Ojima found that the use of a concept map resulted in a better written product because students did not have to simultaneously brainstorm/formalize ideas while also concentrating on writing in a second language. Of course, concept mapping is a tool that could be beneficial for all students, not just non-native speakers. By using concept mapping, you are more likely to consider how your ideas flow together—something that outlines tend to obscure.

## The Sentence Outline

The sentence outline does not have all of the words that will occur in the delivered speech, but it does provide a complete guide to the content. A **sentence outline** consists entirely of complete sentences. It shows in sentence form your order of presentation; what kinds of arguments, supporting material, and evidence you plan

### sentence outline

An outline consisting entirely of complete sentences.



to use; and where you plan to place them. A look at your outline indicates strengths and weaknesses. You might note, for instance, that you have insufficient information on one main point or a surplus of information on another.

In addition to the sentence outline itself, you may want to make notes on the functions being served by each part of your outline. For example, where are you trying to gain and maintain attention? Where are you trying to back up a major argument with supporting materials such as statistics, testimony, or specific instances? A sentence outline, along with side notes indicating functions, is a blueprint for your speech. The sentence outline can strengthen your speech performance by helping you present evidence or supporting materials that will make sense to audience members and will help you inform or persuade them.

The outline that follows is based on a student's speech. The immediate purpose of the presentation was to explain the reasons why students should eat breakfast. The action goal of the speech was to persuade classmates to get in the habit of eating breakfast every day. Notice that every entry in the outline is a sentence.

### Why All College Students Should Eat Breakfast by Michael Burns

#### Introduction

- I. Many people choose to sleep 30 minutes longer every day rather than take the time to eat breakfast.
  - A. How many of you ate breakfast this morning? Your cup of coffee does not count. (*show of hands*)
  - B. College students who eat breakfast perform better in classes and are healthier.
  - C. Eating breakfast should be a part of all college students' daily schedules.

#### Body

- II. There are many reasons why eating breakfast is beneficial.
  - A. Breakfast is a great way to jumpstart your metabolism and your day.
  - B. Students who eat breakfast are healthier than students who don't eat breakfast.
    1. WebMD reports that people who eat breakfast are less overweight than people who don't eat breakfast.
    2. The Florida Department of Citrus claims that people who eat a breakfast that includes a glass of orange juice have a stronger immune system.
  - C. Students who eat breakfast also perform better in school.
    1. Mayo Clinic doctors have reported that people who eat breakfast regularly have more energy and are able to focus longer on tasks.
    2. The American Dietetic Association claims that students who eat breakfast are more likely to have better concentration and problem-solving skills than students who don't eat breakfast.

#### Conclusion

- III. As college students, we need to eat breakfast daily.
  - A. Eating breakfast every day will make us healthier.
  - B. Eating breakfast every day will improve our performance in classes.
  - C. Eating breakfast should be just as an important to our daily schedules as taking a shower.

## cultural note

### Different Cultures Use Different Organizational Patterns

The dominant culture in North America embraces linear organizational patterns that move from a distinct beginning to a middle and end, that tend to state early and boldly who the speaker is and what the main point is, and that are rather detailed in structure with main points, subpoints, and even sub-subpoints. Do not assume that other cultures are the same. For example, in some Pacific Rim cultures, speakers start their presentations by putting themselves down instead of building up their credibility in an introduction; some Native American groups fill their messages with colorful imagery, metaphors, and illustrative stories instead of generating arguments and evidence; and some co-cultures, including African-Americans, hit on a recurring refrain with a pattern of organization that keeps circling back to a main point with many related narratives between each repetition. When addressing people from cultures different from your own, you should be aware of how they like to organize their messages.

### The Key-Word Outline

Using a manuscript for your entire speech may invite you to become too dependent on the manuscript. Too much attention to notes reduces your eye contact and minimizes your attention to audience responses. Nonetheless, you can become very proficient at reading from a manuscript on which you have highlighted the important words, phrases, and quotations. A complete sentence outline may be superior to a manuscript in that it forces you to extemporize, to maintain eye contact, and to respond to audience feedback. Key words and phrases can also be underlined or highlighted on a sentence outline. An alternative method is simply to use a **key-word outline**, an outline consisting of important words or phrases to remind you of the content of the speech.

A key-word outline shrinks the ideas in a speech considerably more than does a sentence outline. A key-word outline ordinarily consists of important words and phrases, but it can also include statistics or quotations that are long or difficult to remember. The following outline came from a student's speech. Notice how the key-word format reduces the content to the bare essentials.

#### key-word outline

An outline consisting of important words or phrases to remind you of the content of the presentation.

#### The Youth Vote by Amanda Peterson

##### Introduction

- I. Politicians ignore youth vote
  - A. Mostly 18- to 24-year-olds don't vote
  - B. Statistics on voting
  - C. Forecast of the reasons

##### Body

- II. Youth apathetic to politics
  - A. Sports & beer more interesting
  - B. Don't know who represents them
- III. Politics unappealing
  - A. Partisanship
  - B. Political scandals

A key-word outline fits easily on 3-by-5-inch or 4-by-6-inch note cards or on 8½-by-11-inch paper. If you choose note cards, the following suggestions may be useful:

1. Write instructions to yourself on your note cards. For instance, if you are supposed to write the title of your speech and your name on the chalkboard before your presentation begins, then you can write that instruction on the top of your first card.
2. Write on one side of the cards only. To use more cards with your key-word outline on one side only is better than to write front and back, which is more likely to result in confusion.
3. Number your note cards on the top so that they will be unlikely to get out of order. If you drop them, you can quickly reassemble them.
4. Write out items that might be difficult to remember. Extended quotations, difficult names, unfamiliar terms, and statistics are items you may want to include on your note cards to reduce the chances of error.
5. Practice delivering your presentation at least two times using your note cards. Effective delivery may be difficult to achieve if you have to fumble with unfamiliar cards.
6. Write clearly and legibly.

Figure 12.3 Tips for using note cards.

### Conclusion

- IV. What solution?
  - A. More focus on youth
  - B. More attention on campus

Figure 12.3 gives tips for using key-word note cards in your presentations.

## Organizational Patterns

### organizational patterns

Arrangements of the contents of a presentation.

The body of a presentation can be outlined using a number of **organizational patterns**, arrangements of the contents of the message. Exactly which pattern of organization is most appropriate for your presentation depends in part on your purpose and on the nature of your material. For instance, if your purpose is to present a solution to a problem, your purpose lends itself well to the problem/solution organizational pattern. If your material focuses on something that occurred over time, then it might be most easily outlined within a time-sequence pattern.

In this section we will examine five organizational patterns. These four patterns are prototypes from which a skilled presenter can construct many others. Also, a number of organizational patterns may appear in the same message: An overall problem/solution organization may have within it a time-sequence pattern that explains the history of the problem.

### The Time-Sequence Pattern

### time-sequence pattern

A method of organization in which the presenter explains a sequence of events in chronological order.

The **time-sequence pattern** is a method of organization in which the presenter explains a sequence of events in chronological order. Most frequently seen in informative presentations, this pattern can be used in presentations that consider the past, present, and future of an idea, an issue, a plan, or a project. This pattern is most useful for such topics as the following:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| How the Salvation Army Began | The Future of Space Exploration           |
| The Naming of a Team         | The Development of Drugs for Treating HIV |

Any topic that requires attention to events, incidents, or steps that take place over time is appropriate for this pattern of organization. Following is a brief outline of a composition organized in a time-sequence pattern:

### How Ford Drove the Auto Industry by Jared Fougner

**Purpose:** I plan to highlight the history of the Ford Motor Company in the USA from its beginnings to today so my audience will be informed about this important background in a truly American industry.

#### Introduction

- I. I've been interested in the automobile industry for many years, but until the recent financial troubles I never thought much about the vital role that the first mass-production automobile company, Ford, had on our industrial base.
  - A. Automobiles play a vital role in all of our lives.
  - B. Automobiles are important to the economy.
  - C. As we march through automobile history, we will see how new technology moves us toward a healthier environment.

*Relates source credibility.*

*Announces topic.*

*Relates topic to audience.*

*Reveals purpose.*

*Shows organization.*

#### Body

- II. Ford started the auto industry and continued through the company's early, middle, and late years to be a key player in the auto industry.
  - A. In the early years Ford experimented, developed mass production, and created cars ahead of their time.
    1. Henry Ford ran the first experimental car, the Quadricycle, down Detroit streets in 1896.
    2. Dr. Ernst Pfennig of Chicago purchased the first Ford vehicle in 1903.
  - B. In the middle years Ford produced some of the nation's best selling vehicles.
    1. Ford releases the F-series pickup trucks in 1948 that even today outnumber all competitors.
    2. Ford launches the Taurus, another top seller, in 1986.
  - C. In modern times Ford innovates and competes in an ever-tightening market.
    1. In 2000 Ford innovates with a Taurus Flex Fuel Vehicle.
    2. In 2005 Ford innovates with the Escape Hybrid.
    3. In 2009 Ford works on developing hydrogen technology.

*Forecasts chronological order.*

*Introduces part I: Early years.*

*Offers example.*

*Offers example.*

*Introduces part II: Middle years.*

*Offers example.*

*Offers example.*

*Introduces part III: Modern times.*

*Offers three examples.*

#### Conclusion

- III. Ford Motor Company was a pioneer industry that evolved over the years and contributed mightily to our daily life.
  - A. Now you know that Henry Ford started the Industrial Revolution in this country with the mass production of autos.
  - B. With the advent of mass-produced cars came a need for an extensive system of hard-surface roads, highways, and interstates that changed the face of America.
  - C. I hope that my look backward at one U.S. industry gives you new appreciation of Ford's contribution to our society.

*Summarizes topic.*

*Signals ending with review.*

*Offers example of effect.*

*Fulfills purpose.*

(Jared Fougner wrote this outline. A communication major, he sold retail successfully before returning to complete his undergraduate education. Very much at peace with himself, he continues to like automobiles.)

#### **cause/effect pattern**

A method of organization in which the presenter first explains the causes of an event, a problem, or an issue and then discusses its consequences, results, or effects.

### *The Cause/Effect Pattern*

In using a **cause/effect pattern**, the presenter first explains the causes of an event, a problem, or an issue and then discusses its consequences, results, or effects. The

presentation may be cause–effect, effect–cause, or even effect–effect. A presentation on inflation that uses the causal-sequence pattern might review the causes of inflation, such as low productivity, and review the effects of inflation, such as high unemployment and interest rates. The cause/effect pattern is often used in informative presentations that seek to explain an issue. This pattern differs from the problem/solution pattern in that the cause/effect pattern does not necessarily reveal what to do about a problem; instead, the organization allows for full explanation of an issue. An example of the cause/effect pattern follows.

### Confessions of a Smoker by Linzey Crockett

**Purpose:** This speech by a confessed smoker notes the effects of smoking on the health of the smoker, an effect that includes an early death.

#### Introduction

- I. I'm a guy from South Chicago who has smoked at least 10 or more cigarettes a day for the past 15 years, a habit that will greatly increase my chances of getting lung cancer.
  - A. Smoking is an addiction that is exceedingly difficult to beat.
  - B. I've been in denial for years about how smoking is damaging my lungs.
  - C. Today I will talk with you about the effects of smoking on the human body because I want you to know how lucky you are if you don't smoke and how threatened you are if you do.

#### Body

- II. Smoking has physiological effects on heart and blood.
  - A. Smoking increases the heart rate.
  - B. Smoking increases blood pressure but slows the blood flow by constricting arteries and veins.
  - C. Smoking increases your chances of both heart attack and stroke.
- III. Carbon monoxide increases while oxygen depletes when you smoke.
  - A. When you inhale a cigarette, carbon monoxide immediately flows throughout the body to make the heart and lungs work harder.
  - B. Oxygen has difficulty reaching the extremities.
- IV. As the cigarette burns close to your mouth the dangerous toxins concentrate in the cigarette butt.
  - A. Tobacco tar is a known carcinogen, a cancer-producing agent.
  - B. Nicotine from tobacco can increase cholesterol levels which corrode the arterial system.

#### Conclusion

- V. Smoking cigarettes can and will lead to pulmonary problems like lung cancer and emphysema, diseases that lead to an early death.
  - A. Smoking affects heart rate and blood pressure which makes the smoker vulnerable to heart attack and stroke.
  - B. Toxins like tobacco tar and nicotine increase cholesterol and contribute to cardiovascular disease, a result of smoking and major cause of premature death.
  - C. I hope you now know considerably more about the physiological effects of smoking and why the habit is dangerous.

(The speaker in this example is an African-American male in his thirties who is a McNair Scholar, a person who gets his way paid to graduate school.)

*Relates source credibility.*

*Gains attention.*

*Uses cause/effect argument.*

*Offers fact.*

*Gives personal testimony.*

*Provides purpose.*

*Relates topic to audience.*

*Provides main argument on causes.*

*Offers supporting fact.*

*Offers supporting facts.*

*Relates serious effects.*

*States second argument.*

*Offers supporting fact.*

*Offers supporting fact.*

*States third argument.*

*Offers supporting fact.*

*Offers supporting fact.*

*Provides cause/effect argument.*

*Summarizes argument.*

*Reviews facts.*

*Restates purpose.*

The cause/effect pattern of organization is a common pattern in fields as varied as medicine (tobacco causes cancer), economics (inflation causes recession), and religion (lack of faith results in damnation).

### **The Problem/Solution Pattern**

The third pattern of organization, used most often in persuasive presentations, is the **problem/solution pattern**, in which the presenter describes a problem and proposes a solution. A message based on this pattern can be divided into two distinct parts, with an optional third part in which the presenter meets any anticipated objections to the proposed solution.

The problem/solution pattern can contain other patterns. For example, you might discuss the problem in time-sequence order, and you might discuss the solution using a topical-sequence pattern. Some examples of problem/solution topics follow:

Reducing Fat in Your Diet	Helping the Homeless
A New Way to Stop Smoking	Eliminating Nuclear Waste

Each example implies both a problem and a solution.

The problem/solution pattern of organization requires careful audience analysis because you have to decide how much time and effort to spend on each portion of the speech. Is the audience already familiar with the problem? If so, you might be able to discuss the problem briefly, with a few reminders to the audience of the problem's seriousness or importance. On the other hand, the problem may be so complex that both the problem and the solution cannot be covered in a single presentation. In that case you may have found a topic that requires both a problem presentation and a solution presentation. Your audience analysis is an important first step in determining the ratio of time devoted to the problem and to the solution.

A problem/solution speech in outline form looks like this:

#### **Routine Body Shrinking** by Greg Heller

**Purpose:** This presentation will persuade the audience to start a steady and well-planned exercise routine with positive, beneficial, and healthy results.

#### **Introduction**

- I. For years I was a fat guy, but since 2005 I have lost 130 pounds (the equivalent of another person) by simply starting and maintaining an exercise routine.
  - A. My personal experience will help you see the benefits of a well-planned routine to lose weight.
  - B. My personal experience will reveal the effects of an exercise routine and the real benefits so you can have the same kind of success without much stress.

#### **Body**

- II. Over the last decade many high-quality studies have proven the benefits of exercise.
  - A. Regular exercise increases stamina, agility, coordination, and balance.
  - B. Physical activity promotes a healthier lifestyle.
- III. What did a well-planned workout regimen do for me?
  - A. I lost weight and gained a normal metabolism.
  - B. I could run long distances and remain alert all day.
  - C. I felt much better about myself and how I looked.



#### **problem/solution pattern**

A method of organization in which the presenter describes a problem and proposes a solution to that problem.

*Relates topic to speaker.  
Source credibility.*

*Gains attention.*

*Relates topic to audience.*

*Announces topic.*

*Reveals organization.*

*Announces purpose.*

*States first argument.*

*Offers support for claim.*

*Offers support for claim.*

*States second argument.*

*Offers support for claim.*

*Offers support for claim.*

*Offers support for claim.*



*Summary/review.*

*Offers ethos: personal proof.*

*States action purpose.*

### Conclusion

- IV. Launching and sustaining a well-structured exercise routine yields benefits uncovered in studies and demonstrated in my own life.
- A. No longer obese, my new body is evidence of the effects of a structured workout routine.
- B. Now that you know the benefits, have heard about the studies, and see me in the flesh (actually a lot less flesh), you should consider an exercise routine for a healthier self.

(Greg Heller is a communication major and ROTC student who will be pursuing graduate studies in student affairs after serving in the army. He served in leadership positions in dozens of organizations as his new thin self.)

## The Topical-Sequence Pattern

### topical-sequence pattern

A method of organization that emphasizes the major reasons an audience should accept a point of view by addressing the advantages, disadvantages, qualities, and types of person, place, or thing.

The **topical-sequence pattern**, used in both informative and persuasive presentations, emphasizes the major reasons the audience should accept a point of view by addressing the advantages, disadvantages, qualities, and types of person, place, or thing. The topical-sequence pattern can be used to explain to audience members why you want them to adopt a certain point of view. This pattern is appropriate when you have three to five points to make, such as three reasons people should buy used cars, four of the main benefits of studying speech, or five characteristics of a good football player. This pattern of organization is among the most versatile. Here is the topic sequence outline for a message informing the audience about global warming.

### Global Warming: What Can You Do?

by Emily Holt

**Purpose:** This speech informs by exploring the negative effects of global warming and persuades the audience to take steps to avoid even more damage to the earth.

#### Introduction

- I. Always interested in the natural world and the out-of-doors with Mother Nature, I study global warming and passionately spread the word on how to reduce the harmful effects.
- A. The effects of global warming on the environment and on human life impact us all.
- B. “Global warming” refers to the warm blanket of carbon dioxide that now envelops the earth with more CO<sub>2</sub> than in the past 650,000 years.
- C. By the end of this presentation I hope you will understand the magnitude of the problem and that you will feel confident that you can make a positive difference in helping planet earth.

#### Body

- II. As a direct consequence of human activity the average global temperature rises, causing glacial melting, arctic ice shrinkage, and rising sea levels.
- A. Since 1980, glacial melting has increased rapidly threatening the existence of global glaciers.
- B. Since the end of the nineteenth century (the 1800s) the total surface area of glaciers has decreased by 50%.
- C. Rising ocean levels—an estimated six feet over the next 100 years (or sooner)—will be catastrophic to coastal regions and waterways where most humans live.
- III. You can make smart choices in your daily life, choices which will affect your contribution to reducing global warming.

*Relates speaker to topic.*

*Relates topic to audience.*

*Defines key term.*

*Forecasts organization.*

*States purpose.*

*Provides first argument & overview.*

*Includes fact to support argument.*

*Includes fact to support argument.*

*Uses prediction to support argument.*

*Provides second main argument.*

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| A. One smart choice is to buy at a farmer's market to avoid shipping costs and to obtain fresher food.   | <i>Offers three choices.</i>      |
| B. Another smart choice is to buy a fuel-efficient car because such vehicles leave a smaller carbon footprint.                                 | <i>Provides possible actions.</i> |
| C. Unplug unused electronics because anything turned on means your energy supplier has to burn or turn something that can emit carbon dioxide. | <i>Relates intended outcomes.</i> |

**Conclusion**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| IV. We have looked at the issue of global warming, explored some evidence of global warming's existence, and looked at some ways that you as an individual or as a family can decrease CO <sub>2</sub> and help reduce global warming. | <i>Provides summary/review and intended result.</i> |
|--|---|

**Transitions and Signposts**

So far, you have examined organization in its broadest sense. To look at the presentation as a problem/solution or cause/effect pattern is like looking at a house's first floor and basement. We also need to look more closely at the design of the presentation by examining the elements that connect the parts of a speech—transitions and signposts.

A **transition** is a bridge between sections of a message that helps a presenter move smoothly from one idea to another. Transitions also relax the audience momentarily. A typical transition is a brief flashback and a brief forecast that tells your audience when you are moving from one main point to another.

The most important transitions are between the introduction and the body, between the main points of the body, and between the body and the conclusion of the presentation. Other transitions can appear between the main heading and main points, between main points and subpoints, between subpoints and sub-subpoints, between examples, and between visual aids and the point being illustrated. Transitions can review, preview, or even be an internal summary, but they always explain the relationship between one idea and another. Transitions are the mortar between the building blocks of the speech. Without them cracks appear, and the structure is less solid. Table 12.1 gives examples of transitions.

**Signposts** are ways in which a presenter signals to an audience where the presentation is going. Signposts, as the name implies, are like road signs that tell a driver there is a curve, bump, or rough road ahead; they are a warning, a sign that the presenter is making a move. Whereas transitions are often a sentence or two,

**transition**

A bridge between sections of a presentation that helps the presenter move smoothly from one idea to another.

**signposts**

Ways in which a presenter signals to an audience where the presentation is going.

**TABLE 12.1** EXAMPLES OF TRANSITIONS

*Transition from one main point to another:* "Now that we have seen why computers are coming down in cost, let us look next at why software is so expensive."

*Transition from a main point to a visual aid:* "I have explained that higher education is becoming more and more expensive. This bar graph will show exactly how expensive it has become over the past 5 years."

*Transition that includes a review, an internal summary, and a preview:* "You have heard that suntanning ages the skin, and I have shown you the pictures of a Buddhist monk and a nighttime bartender who hardly ever exposed themselves to direct sunlight. Now I want to show you a picture of a 35-year-old woman who spent most of her life working in direct sunlight."

**TABLE 12.2** EXAMPLES OF SIGNPOSTS

"First, I will illustrate . . ."	"A second idea is . . ."
"Look at this bar graph . . ."	"Another reason for . . ."
"See what you think of this evidence . . ."	"Finally, we will . . ."

**TRY THIS**

*How do you know when a speaker is drawing to a close? What signs, cues, or signals occur to prepare you for the end of a presentation? How will you indicate to an audience that your presentation is ending?*

signposts can be as brief as a few words. Transitions review, state a relationship, and forecast; signposts merely point.

Beginning presenters often are admonished by their instructors for using signposts that are too blatant: "This is my introduction," "Here is my third main point," or "This is my conclusion." More experienced presenters choose more subtle but equally clear means of signposting: "Let me begin by showing you . . .," "A third reason for avoiding the sun is . . .," or "The best inference you can draw from what I have told you is . . ." Table 12.2 gives examples of signposts.

Transitions and signposts help presenters map a message for the audience. Transitions explain the relationships in the message by reflecting backward and forward. Signposts point more briefly to what the presenter is going to do at the moment. Both transitions and signposts help bind the message into a unified whole.

## The Conclusion

Like the introduction, the **conclusion** fulfills functions. The conclusion finishes the presentation by fulfilling the four functions of an ending. The four functions of a conclusion need not occur in the order shown here, but they are all normally fulfilled in the last minutes of a presentation:

1. Forewarn the audience that you are about to finish.
2. Remind the audience of your central idea and the main points of your presentation.
3. Specify what the audience should think or do in response to your speech.
4. End the speech in a manner that makes audience members want to think and do as you recommend.

Let us examine these functions of a conclusion in greater detail.

The first function, the **brakelight function**, warns the audience that the end of the presentation is near. Can you tell when a song is about to end? Do you know when someone in a conversation is about to complete a story? Can you tell in a TV drama when the narrative is drawing to a close? The answer to these questions is usually yes because you get verbal and nonverbal signals that songs, stories, and dramas are about to end.

How do you use the brakelight function in a presentation? One student signaled the end of her speech by saying, "Five minutes is hardly time to consider all the complications of this issue. . . ." By stating that her time was up, she signaled her conclusion. Another said, "Thus men have the potential for much greater role flexibility than

**conclusion**

The part that finishes the presentation by fulfilling the four functions of an ending.

**brakelight function**

A forewarning to the audience that the end of the presentation is near.

our society encourages. . . .” The word *thus*, like *therefore*, signals the conclusion of a logical argument and indicates that the argument is drawing to a close.

The second function of a conclusion—reminding the audience of your central idea or the main points in your message—can be fulfilled by restating the main points, summarizing them briefly, or selecting the most important point for special treatment. Elizabeth Nnoko ended her persuasive speech on legalizing drug purchases from Canada by briefly summarizing her message:

We have discussed the rising cost of prescription drugs, the problem with Medicare, myth and reality concerning importation of prescription drugs, and solutions that can be implemented to solve this issue.

The third function of a conclusion is to specify what you expect audience members to do as a result of your presentation. Do you want the audience to simply remember a few of your important points? Then tell them one last time the points you think are worth remembering. Do you want the audience to write down the argument they found most convincing, sign a petition, or talk to their friends? If so, you should state what you would regard as an appropriate response to your presentation. One student’s presentation on unions concluded with the slogan “Buy the union label.” Her ending statement specified what she expected of the audience.

The fourth function of a conclusion is to end the presentation in a manner that makes audience members want to think and do as you recommend. You can conclude with a rhetorical question: “Knowing what you know now, will you feel safe riding with a driver who has had a few drinks?”; a quotation: “As John F. Kennedy said, ‘Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names’ ”; a literary passage: “We conclude with the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, ‘It is one light which beams out a thousand stars; it is one soul which animates all men’ ”; or an action that demonstrates the point of the presentation: The speaker quickly assembles an electric motor for the class and shows that it works, the speaker twirls and does the splits in one graceful motion, or an experiment is completed as the mixture of baking soda and vinegar boils and smokes.

Some cautions about conclusions: In ending a presentation, as in initiating one, you need to avoid being overly dramatic. At one large college in the Midwest, the communication classes were taught on the third floor of the building. In one classroom a student was delivering a presentation about insanity. As the speech progressed, the class became increasingly aware that the young man delivering the presentation had a few problems. At first, he was difficult to understand: Words were run together, parts of sentences were incoherent, and pauses were too long. Near the end of the speech, the young man’s eyes were rolling, and his jaw had fallen slack. At the very end of the presentation, he looked wildly at the audience, ran over to the open window, and jumped. The class was shocked. The instructor and students rushed to the window, expecting to see his shattered remains. Far below, on the ground, were 20 fraternity brothers holding a large firefighter’s net, with the speaker waving happily from the center.

A better idea is to conclude your presentation with an inspirational statement, words that make audience members glad they spent the time and energy listening to you. One student delivered a single line at the end of his talk on using seatbelts that summarized his message and gave his audience something to remember: “It is not who is right in a traffic accident that really counts,” he said, “it is who is left.” That conclusion was clever, provided a brief summary, and was an intelligent and safe way to end a presentation.

### What to Avoid in a Conclusion

- Do not just end abruptly with no forewarning.
- Remind the audience of your main points but do not provide a detailed replay of everything you did in the speech.
- Do not say negative things about your own presentation: “Well, I guess that didn’t go so well,” “Probably I should have done more research,” or “I sure blew that assignment.”
- Do not let your own nonverbal communication signal a poor presentation by letting your voice trail off at the end, by dropping your arms and looking defeated, or by walking off to your seat as you finish.

### Sample Conclusion That Fulfills the Four Functions

Following is the conclusion of a speech by Heather Athey about car phones and teen accidents. The side notes indicate how she fulfilled the functions of a conclusion.

*Uses brakelight function: Warns that ending is near.*

As you can see, car accidents are the leading cause of death for adolescents 15–20 years of age; therefore, a cell phone in adolescents’ hands can be a recipe for disaster. I hope you are now aware of the dangers of teens using cell phones while driving. If you want further evidence, please ask me later.

*Reminds audience of main points: summary*

I have covered the basics: 6,000 teens die each year because of car accidents, teenagers’ judgments deteriorate greatly with distractions, and 50% of teenagers crash within the first six months of receiving their license.

*Specifies what the audience should do.*

Cell phone distractions can be easily prevented and can save lives. A law against teen use of cell phones while driving has worked in the state that adopted such a law. Our state should join them. Next time you hear talk about this proposed law, I hope you will think about the facts I have shared with you and tell others why teenagers should not be allowed to talk on cell phones while driving.

*Ends by recommending an action.*

If you want to keep the roads safer for you and all of your family and friends, you will help get this law in place in our state.

## The References

### references

A list of sources used in a presentation.

When you have completed your outline, you may be asked to provide a list of **references**, or the sources you used in your presentation. The main idea behind a reference list is to inform others of what sources you used for your speech and to enable them to check those sources for themselves. Each entry in your references should be written according to a uniform style. Several accepted style manuals can answer your questions about the correct format: *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA), *The MLA Handbook*, and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Since some teachers prefer MLA and others prefer APA, you should ask your instructor’s preference. This textbook relies on the APA for its bibliography style, but if your teacher prefers MLA style then both styles are illustrated below for various media. In addition this section reveals a proper way to cite the source orally as you would in a presentation.

Common sources of reference material for student presentations are newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, the Internet, and interviews. The correct forms for these sources are as follows:

### Newspaper

APA style

Roepke, D. (2008, March 1). Picture imperfect. *The Forum*, pp. A1, A10.

MLA style

Felz, Amelia. "Bison Ambassadors honor apple polishers." *The Spectrum*. 13 Feb. 2009: 1.

How to cite orally: "According to last Friday's *Spectrum*, our student paper revealed on page one that our student ambassadors selected four communication professors to be honored."

### Magazine

APA style

Bertsche, R., & Merritt, J. (2009, March). The hottest jobs right now. *Women's Health*, 106–107.

MLA style

Walton, Larry. "Letter of the Month." *Motor Trend*. April 2009: 20.

How to cite orally: "Larry Walton, a California highway patrol officer for 33 years, says in the April 2009 *Motor Trend* 'Letter of the Month' that after investigating thousands of auto accidents speed is the major cause."

### Journal

APA style

Bigby, J.A., & Ashley, S. (2008). Disparities in surgical care: Strategies for enhancing provider-patient communication. *World Journal of Surgery*, 32, 529–532.

MLA style

Bolkan, San, and John Daly. "Organizational Responses to Consumer Complaints: An Examination of Effective Remediation Tactics." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 37 (2009): 21–39.

How to cite orally: "Bolkan and Daly in the February 2009 *Journal of Applied Communication Research* found that simply taking responsibility for a company's errors may not be sufficient."

### Book

APA style

Buhszpan, D. (2003). *The Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

MLA style

Pearson-Nelson, Benjamin. *Understanding Homicide Trends: The Social Context of a Homicide Epidemic*. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2008.

How to cite orally: "In the preface to his 2008 book, *Understanding Homicide Trends*, Pearson-Nelson says 'criminologists lack a thorough understanding of how trends in homicide operate.'"

## e-note

## Online Guides to Stylebooks for Footnotes and References

Two of the main styleguides have websites and a few actually reveal information about formatting and writing footnotes and references. Mainly, however, these websites tell you how to subscribe to a service or how to buy a guide in print.

**www.apastyle.org.** The American Psychological Association Online Manual provides a guide to the style used in this textbook and by the National Communication Association publications.

**www.mla.org/style.** The Modern Language Association's website mainly leads you to stylebooks you can purchase for a reasonable price or to online services that you can buy.

**owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560\_01.** This source provides online examples of formatting and other APA writing guidelines.

## Internet

APA style

Bakken, R. (2009, February 8). Economy's grip tightens. *Grand Forks Herald* [electronic version], A1. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from <http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/author/id/35/>

MLA style

Bakken, Ryan. "Economy's grip tightens." *Grand Forks Herald*. 8 Feb. 2009. Retrieved March 3, 2009 from <http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/author/id/35/>.

How to cite orally: "As reporter Bakken said in his article "Economy's grip tightens" in the electronic version of the *Grand Forks Herald* on February 8th: 'Even North Dakota, one of only four states out of fifty with a budget surplus, may begin to feel the financial pinch because of outside forces.'"

## Interview

Okigbo, C. (2006, September 18). [Personal interview].

Pamphlets, handbooks, and manuals may not have complete information about who wrote them, who published them, or when they were published. In that case you are expected to provide as much information as possible so that others can verify the source.

If you find sources you do not know how to place in reference form, you can ask your bookstore or a librarian for *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, *The MLA Handbook*, or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. An excellent reference work designed for communication students is *A Style Manual for Communication Majors* (Bourhis, Adams, & Titsworth, 1999).

College composition texts also include the standard forms for footnote and reference entries.

# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ An effective introduction fulfills five functions, which can occur in any order:
  - It gains and maintains audience attention.
  - It arouses audience interest in the topic.
  - It states the purpose of the presentation.
  - It describes the presenter's qualifications.
  - It forecasts the organization and development of the presentation.
- ▶ An effective outline for a presentation follows six principles:
  - It relates the information presented to the immediate purpose and long-range goal.
  - It is an abstract of the message you will deliver.
  - It expresses ideas in single units of information.
  - It indicates the importance of items with rank-ordered symbols.
  - It provides margins that indicate the importance of each entry visually.
  - It states entries in parallel form (such as complete sentences, as in this list).
- ▶ The most frequently used patterns of organization in public presentations are:
  - Time-sequence pattern, or chronology, with items presented serially over time.
  - Topical-sequence pattern, with items listed as a limited number of qualities or characteristics.
  - Problem/solution pattern, which poses a problem followed by a suggested solution.
  - Cause/effect pattern, which posits a cause that results in some effect.
- ▶ Transitions and signposts link ideas and indicate direction to the audience.
- ▶ An effective conclusion fulfills certain functions:
  - It forewarns listeners that the presentation is about to end.
  - It reminds the audience of the central idea and main points of your presentation.
  - It specifies what you expect from the audience as a result of the presentation.
  - It ends the presentation in a manner that encourages the audience to think and act as you recommend.
- ▶ Often a list of references, or sources, accompanies the complete outline.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Body	Long-range goal	Rough draft
Brakelight function	Main points	Sentence outline
Cause/effect pattern	Organizational patterns	Signposts
Conclusion	Outline	Subpoints
Immediate purpose	Parallel form	Time-sequence pattern
Introduction	Problem/solution pattern	Topical-sequence pattern
Key-word outline	References	Transition

## Study Questions

1. Which function of the introduction shows how the topic is related to the audience?
  - a. gaining and maintaining audience attention
  - b. arousing audience interest
  - c. stating the purpose or thesis
  - d. establishing speaker qualifications
2. Stating your purpose in the introduction
  - a. is necessary because informative speeches do not invite learning, and this is your only opportunity to explain
  - b. is unnecessary



- c. is necessary in both informative and persuasive speeches
  - d. is important because audience members are more likely to learn and understand if your expectations are clear
3. When developing the body of a speech, you must
    - a. select, prioritize, and organize
    - b. write your introduction first
    - c. use as much information as possible
    - d. utilize sources but not cite them
  4. Which of the following statements is *not* true with regard to outlining?
    - a. It uses symbols, margins, and content to reveal the order, importance, and substance of a presentation.
    - b. All items of information in your outline do not need to be directly related to the speech's purpose and long-range goal.
    - c. It encourages a conversational speaking tone because not every word is in front of you.
    - d. Items should appear in parallel form.
  5. Which type of outline consists mostly of important words or phrases but not complex information?
    - a. main point
    - b. sentence
    - c. key-word
    - d. cause/effect pattern
  6. If you were giving a speech about the parking problem at your university with possible means to resolve it, which organizational pattern would be best?
    - a. time-sequence
    - b. cause/effect
    - c. problem/solution
    - d. topical
  7. When a presenter explains a progression of events in chronological order, he or she is most likely using which organizational pattern?
    - a. time-sequence
    - b. cause/effect
    - c. problem/solution
    - d. topical
  8. Which of the following help speakers move from one idea to another by reviewing, stating a relationship, and forecasting?
    - a. transitions
    - b. signposts
    - c. subpoints
    - d. goals
  9. Reminding the audience of the speech's central idea and main points, specifying what is expected of audience members, and ending soundly are functions of the
    - a. introduction
    - b. transitions
    - c. brakelight
    - d. conclusion
  10. A reference list is
    - a. a list of the sources used in a presentation
    - b. written according to a uniform style such as APA or MLA
    - c. used to inform others of what sources were used in the speech
    - d. all of the above

#### Answers:

1. (b); 2. (d); 3. (a); 4. (b); 5. (c); 6. (c); 7. (a); 8. (a); 9. (d); 10. (d)

## Critical Thinking

1. Using the suggestions from the text, how would you begin your speech in order to gain the audience's attention if your speech topic was movies? Your university? Problems of the world such as war, famine, or poverty? Why did you choose these methods?
2. What happens on morning talk shows when the hosts wish to change subjects? Do they transition smoothly or simply announce the next topic? As a listener, which do you prefer?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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- Bourhis, J., Adams, C., & Titsworth, S. (1999). *A style manual for communication majors* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
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- King, M. L. (1968). *The peaceful warrior*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Ojima, M. (2006). Concept mapping as pre-task planning: A case study of three Japanese ESL writers. *System*, 34, 566–585.
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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. State the advantages and disadvantages of each mode of delivery.
2. Name and explain each of the vocal aspects of delivery.
3. Name and explain each of the bodily aspects of delivery.
4. Understand when and why you should use visual resources in your speech.
5. Demonstrate the use of visual resources effectively and correctly in a speech.





# DELIVERY AND VISUAL RESOURCES

**Many presentations with good content never reach the listener because of poor delivery skills.** This chapter explores the delivery of your presentation and the various visual aids you may use. You will discover four modes of delivery and the various vocal and bodily aspects of delivery. Attention in a public presentation is supposed to be on you, not on your PowerPoint, but you will learn in this chapter that you can use Internet resources like YouTube, Google photos, and PowerPoint graphics to make your presentation attractive to the eye and the ear.

**Students, faculty, and proud parents gathered for** commencement at the University of Pennsylvania. The speaker, as is typical in such cases, embarked on a speech to inspire the students to use their gifts and talents to improve the lives of others. At one point he challenged them with questions: “What’s the big idea? What’s *your* big idea? What are you willing to spend your moral capital, your intellectual capital, your cash, your sweat equity in pursuing outside of the walls of the University of Pennsylvania?” He spoke movingly of the need to address significant “moral blind spots,” ranging from racism and poverty to the spread of AIDS in Africa.

Planners for the commencement did not want a typical speaker; they wanted a “rock star” speaker with global recognition. Their choice was not the U.S. president or the secretary general of the United Nations or a foreign dignitary. They literally found a rock star—Bono, lead singer for U2. Imagine what it would be like to listen to someone with the natural instincts of a performer delivering an impassioned plea to stop needless death and discrimination. Think how Bono might have used his offbeat humor, musician’s timing, and dramatic gestures to accentuate his message. When someone with Bono’s skills delivers a message, audience members sit up and pay attention.

*A convincing delivery and effective visual aids can make even an average speech sound great. Although we may not all have Bono’s natural performing instincts, we can learn to present our message effectively and to use meaningful visual resources. In this chapter you will learn how to use eye contact, your voice, PowerPoint, and other resources to improve the presentation of your ideas.*

## What Is Delivery?

### delivery

The presentation of a speech using your voice and body to communicate your message.

Delivery is the presentation of a speech using your voice and body to communicate your message. People have contradictory ideas about the importance of speech delivery. Some people think, “It’s not what you say but how you say it that really counts.” According to others, “What you say is more important than how you say it.” Actually, what you say *and* how you say it are both important, but some researchers suggest that the influence of delivery on audience comprehension is overrated (Petrie, 1963). Those who challenge the importance of delivery do not say that delivery is unimportant; rather, in evaluating the relative importance of delivery and content, they see content as more important than delivery (Gundersen & Hopper, 1976). That said, the effective public speaker cannot ignore the importance of delivery.

## What Are Four Modes of Delivery?

The four modes of delivery—extemporaneous, impromptu, manuscript, and memorized—vary in the amount of preparation required and their degree of spontaneity. Although the four modes are all possible choices, students of public speaking are least likely to use the manuscript and memorized modes. They may be asked to try

the impromptu mode at times, but most speech assignments require the extemporaneous mode.

## The Extemporaneous Mode

A presentation delivered in the **extemporaneous mode** is carefully prepared and practiced, but the presenter delivers the message conversationally without heavy dependence on notes. This mode is message- and audience-centered, with the speaker focused not on the notes but on the ideas being expressed. Considerable eye contact, freedom of movement and gesture, the language and voice of conversation, and the use of an outline or key-words to keep the speaker from reading or paying undue attention to the written script characterize this mode.

The word *extemporaneous* literally means “on the spur of the moment” in Latin; however, as practiced in the classroom, this mode of delivery only appears to be spontaneous. The speaker may choose different words as the speech is practiced and as she or he finally delivers the message, but the focus is on communicating the message to the audience.

You have seen this mode of delivery in the classroom, in some professors’ lectures, sometimes in the pulpit, often in political and legal addresses, and usually in speeches by athletes, businesspeople, and community leaders who are experienced speakers. This mode is the one you will learn best in the classroom and the one that has the most utility outside the classroom.

## The Impromptu Mode

In the **impromptu mode** you deliver a presentation without notes, plans, or formal preparation and with spontaneity and conversational language. The word *impromptu* has Latin and French roots and means “in readiness.”

You use the impromptu mode when you answer a question in class, when you say who you are, and when you give people directions on the street. You cannot say much in these situations unless you are “in readiness,” that is, unless you know the answers. Ordinarily, this mode of delivery requires no practice and no careful choice of language. The impromptu mode encourages you to “think on your feet” without research, preparation, or practice.

## The Manuscript Mode

As the name implies, in the **manuscript mode** you deliver a presentation from a script of the entire speech. The advantage of this mode is that the presenter knows exactly what to say. The disadvantages are that the written message invites a speaker to pay more attention to the script than to the audience, discourages eye contact, and prevents response to audience feedback.

Politicians, especially those who are likely to be quoted, as well as clergy and professors, sometimes use this mode of delivery, but students are rarely asked to use this mode except when reading an essay, poem, or short story to the class.

## The Memorized Mode

A presentation delivered in the **memorized mode** is committed to memory. This mode requires considerable practice and allows ample eye contact, movement, and gestures. However, this mode discourages the speaker from responding to feedback,

### extemporaneous mode

A carefully prepared and researched presentation delivered in a conversational style.

### impromptu mode

Delivery of a presentation without notes, plans, or formal preparation; characterized by spontaneity and conversational language.

### manuscript mode

Delivery of a presentation from a script of the entire speech.

### memorized mode

Delivering a presentation that has been committed to memory.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Perceived Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Scale

One way to learn about your delivery is to think carefully about how others deliver presentations. As a college student you get to observe presentations nearly every day when you watch teachers lecture. Below you will find statements describing how your teacher uses various nonverbal delivery techniques. Select the teacher from the class immediately before your communication class, and with that teacher in mind, answer the following questions using this scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

1. The teacher gestures while talking to the class.
2. The teacher uses a dull/monotone voice while talking to the class.
3. The teacher looks at the class while talking.
4. The teacher smiles at the class while talking.
5. The teacher has a very tense body position while talking to the class.
6. The teacher moves around the classroom while teaching.
7. The teacher looks at the board, visual materials, or notes while teaching.
8. The teacher has a very relaxed body position while talking to the class.
9. The teacher smiles at individual students in the class.
10. The teacher uses a variety of vocal expressions while talking to the class.

Source: McCroskey, J., Sallinen, A., Fayer, J., Richmond, V., & Barraclough, R. (1996). Nonverbal immediacy and cognitive learning: A cross-cultural investigation. *Communication Education*, 45, 200–211.

from adapting to the audience during the speech, and from choosing words that might be appropriate at the moment. In other words, memorization removes spontaneity and increases the danger of forgetting. You have experienced this mode if you ever acted in a play and memorized your part. Politicians, athletes, and businesspeople who speak to the same kind of audience about the same subjects often end up memorizing their speeches. Even professors, when they teach a class for the third time in a week, may memorize the lesson for the day.

As a student in the communication classroom, you need to avoid overrehearsing your presentation to the point that you memorize the script. Most communication teachers and audiences respond negatively to speeches that sound memorized. As one person put it, “Any presentation that ‘sounds memorized’—and most memorized presentations do—never lets the audience get beyond the impression that the speaker’s words are not really his or her own, even if they are.”

The mode you choose should be appropriate for the message, the audience, and the occasion. Students use the extemporaneous mode most often in learning public

speaking because that mode teaches good preparation, adaptation to the audience, and focus on the message. Nonetheless, mode of delivery does not determine effectiveness. Comparing extemporaneous and memorized modes, two researchers concluded that the mode is not what makes the speaker effective. Instead, the speaker's ability is more important. Some speakers are more effective with extemporaneous speeches than with manuscripts, but some speakers use both modes with equal effectiveness (Hildebrandt & Stephens, 1963).

## What Are the Vocal and Bodily Aspects of Delivery?

As you have already observed, delivery is how your voice and body affect the meaning of your presentation. They are important parts of the message you communicate to your audience.

Effective speech delivery has many benefits. Research indicates that effective delivery—the appropriate use of voice and body in public speaking—contributes to the credibility of the speaker (Bettinghaus, 1961). Indeed, student audiences characterize the poorest speakers by their voices and the physical aspects of delivery (Henrikson, 1944). Poor speakers are judged to be fidgety, nervous, and monotonous. They also maintain little eye contact and show little animation or facial expression (Gilkinson & Knowler, 1941). Good delivery increases the audience's capacity to handle complex information (Vohs, 1964). Thus public speakers' credibility—the audience's evaluation of them as good or poor speakers—and their ability to convey complex information may be affected by the vocal and bodily aspects of delivery.

### The Vocal Aspects of Presentation

Studying the vocal aspects of presentation is like studying music. The words of a presentation are like musical notes. As people speak, they create music. Just as different musicians can make the same notes sound quite different, public speakers can say words in different ways to get the audience to respond in various ways. The seven vocal aspects of presentation are pitch, rate, pauses, volume, enunciation, fluency, and vocal variety.

#### *Pitch*

**Pitch** is the highness or lowness of a speaker's voice—the voice's upward and downward movement, the melody produced by the voice. Pitch is what makes the difference between the “ohhh” you utter when you earn a poor grade in a class and the “ohhh” you utter when you see something or someone really attractive. The “ohhh” looks the same in print, but when the notes turn to music, the difference between the two expressions is vast. The pitch of your voice can make you sound either lively or listless. As a speaker you learn to avoid the two extremes: You avoid the lack of change in pitch that results in a monotone, and you avoid repeated changes in pitch that result in a singsong delivery. The best public speakers use the full range of their normal pitch.

Control of pitch does more than make a presentation sound pleasing. Changes in pitch can actually help an audience remember information (Woolbert, 1920).

#### **pitch**

The highness or lowness of the speaker's voice.



Voices perceived as “good” are characterized by a greater range of pitch, more upward and downward inflections, and more pitch shifts (Black, 1942). Certainly, one of the important features of pitch control is that pitch can alter the way an audience responds to the words. Presenters produce many subtle changes in meaning by changes in pitch. The speaker’s pitch tells an audience whether the words are a statement or a question, whether the words mean what they say, and whether the speaker is expressing doubt, determination, irony, or surprise.

Presenters learn pitch control only through regular practice. An actor who is learning to deliver a line has to practice that line many times and in many ways before being sure that most people in the audience will understand the words as intended. The effective presenter rehearses a presentation before friends to discover whether the words are being understood as intended. You may sound angry when you do not intend to, adamant when you intend to sound doubtful, or frightened when you are only surprised. You are not always the best judge of how you sound to others, so you have to seek out and place some trust in other people’s evaluations.

### Rate

How fast should you speak when delivering a public presentation? Instructors often caution students to “slow down” because talking fast is a sign of anxiety or nervousness. Debaters speak very rapidly, but usually their opponents understand their message. What is the best way for you to deliver your speech?

**Rate** is the speed of delivery, or how fast you say your words. The normal rate for Americans is between 125 and 190 words per minute, but many variations occur. You need to remember that your rate of delivery depends on you—how fast you normally speak—and on the situation—few people talk fast at a funeral. Rate also depends on the audience and the subject matter. For example, children listening to a story understand better at slower rates, and complex materials may require more patient timing and more repetition. Most instructors like a presentation to sound conversational but not colloquial—not stilted and formal but not street talk either.

#### rate

The speed at which speech is delivered, normally between 125 and 190 words per minute.

### Pauses

A third vocal characteristic of speech delivery is the **pause**—an absence of vocal sound used for dramatic effect, transition, or emphasis. Presentations are often a steady stream of words without silences, yet pauses can be used for dramatic effect and to get an audience to consider content. The speaker may begin a speech with rhetorical questions: “Have you had a cigarette today? Have you had two or three? Ten or eleven? Do you know what your habit is costing you in a year? A decade? A lifetime?” After each rhetorical question a pause allows audience members to answer the question mentally.

On the other hand, **vocalized pauses** are breaks in fluency that negatively affect an audience’s perception of the speaker’s competence and dynamism. The “ahhhs” and “mmhhs” of the beginning speaker are disturbing and distracting. Unfortunately, even some experienced speakers have the habit of filling silences with vocalized pauses. One group teaches public speaking to laypersons by having members of the audience drop a marble into a can every time a speaker uses a vocalized pause. The resulting punishment—the clanging of the cans—breaks the habit. A more humane method might be to rehearse your presentation before a friend who signals you every time you vocalize a pause so that you vocalize less often when you deliver your speech to an audience. One speech instructor hit on the idea of rigging a light to

#### pause

The absence of vocal sound used for dramatic effect, transition, or emphasis.

#### vocalized pauses

Breaks in fluency that negatively affect an audience’s perception of the speaker’s competence and dynamism.

the lectern so that every time a student speaker used a vocalized pause, the light went on for a moment. Try not to fear silence when you give your speech. Many audiences would prefer a little silence to vocalized pauses.

### Volume

Volume is the relative loudness of your voice, but volume is more than just loudness. Variations in volume can convey emotion, importance, suspense, and changes in meaning. You can use a stage whisper in front of an audience, just as you would whisper a secret to a friend. You can speak loudly and strongly on important points, letting your voice carry your conviction. Volume can change with the situation. For example, a pep rally may be filled with loud, virtually shouted speeches teeming with enthusiasm, whereas a eulogy may be delivered at a lower, respectful volume. An orchestra never plays so quietly that patrons cannot hear, but the musicians vary their volume. Similarly, a presenter who considers the voice an instrument learns how to speak softly, loudly, and in between to convey meaning.



### Enunciation

**Enunciation**, the fifth vocal aspect of speech delivery, is the pronunciation and articulation of sounds and words. Because people's reading vocabulary is larger than their speaking vocabulary, they may use words in speeches they have rarely or never heard before. To deliver unfamiliar words is risky. One student in a communication class gave a speech about the human reproductive system. During the speech he managed to mispronounce nearly half the words used to describe the female anatomy. The speaker sounded incompetent to his audience. Rehearsing in front of friends, roommates, or family is a safer way to try out your vocabulary and pronunciation on an audience. Your objective should be to practice unfamiliar words until you are comfortable with them. Also be alert to the names of people you quote, introduce, or cite in your speech. Audiences are impressed when a student speaker correctly pronounces such names as Goethe, Monet, and de Chardin.

**Pronunciation** is the act of correctly articulating words. The best way to avoid pronunciation errors is to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Every dictionary has a pronunciation key. For instance, the entry for the word *belie* in the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* looks like this:

be-lie (bi lī'), v.t.,-lied, -ly-ing. 1. to show to be false; contradict: His trembling hands belied his calm voice . . .

The entry indicates that the word *belie* has two syllables. The pronunciation key states that the first *e* should be pronounced like the *i* in *if*, the *u* in *busy*, or the *ee* in *been*. The *i*, according to the pronunciation key, should be pronounced like the *ye* in *lye*, the *i* in *ice*, or the *ais* in *aisle*. The accent mark (') indicates which syllable should receive heavier emphasis. You should learn how to use the pronunciation key in a dictionary, but if you still have some misgivings about how to pronounce a word, you should ask your instructor for assistance.

**Articulation**—the production of sounds—is another important part of enunciation. Examples of articulation problems are when you order “dry toast” (without

#### enunciation

The pronunciation and articulation of sounds and words.

#### pronunciation

The act of correctly articulating words.

#### articulation

The production of sounds; a component of enunciation.

butter) and get “rye toast” or when you asked for a “missing statement” and get a “mission statement.” More dangerous articulation problems occur when your pharmacist hears your doctor say “Lunesta” (a sleeping pill) instead of “Neulasta” (a cancer therapy drug).

Poor articulation is a problem when it occurs in your own presentation. Problems occur because we often articulate carelessly. Among the common articulation problems are the dropping of final consonants and “-ing” sounds (“goin’,” “comin’,” and “leavin’”), the substitution of “fer” for “for,” and the substitution of “ta” for “to.” An important objective in public presentations, as in all communication, is to articulate accurately.

### Fluency

#### fluency

The smoothness of delivery, the flow of words, and the absence of vocalized pauses.

The sixth vocal characteristic of delivery is **fluency**—the smoothness of the delivery, the flow of the words, and the absence of vocalized pauses. Fluency cannot be achieved by looking up words in a dictionary or by any other simple solution. Fluency is not even very noticeable. Listeners are more likely to notice errors than to notice the seemingly effortless flow of words in a well-delivered speech. Also, you can be too fluent. A speaker who seems too glib is sometimes considered dishonest. One study showed the importance of fluency: The audiences tended to perceive the speaker’s fluency and smoothness of presentation as a main determinant of effectiveness (Hayworth, 1942).

To achieve fluency, public speakers must be confident about the content of their speeches. If speakers know what they are going to say and have practiced the words over and over, then they reduce disruptive repetition and vocalized pauses. If speakers master what they are going to say and focus on the overall rhythm of the speech, their fluency improves. Speakers must pace, build, and time the various parts of the speech so that they unite in a coherent whole.

## SKILL BUILDER

*In private with a roommate, spouse, or friend, deliver part of your speech. Have the other person hit a metal spoon on a glass every time you utter a vocalized pause (“umm,” “ahh”) or filler words (“you know,” “whatever”). The idea is to make you highly aware of nonfluencies and to encourage you to eliminate them from your speech.*

### Vocal Variety

#### vocal variety

Vocal quality, intonation patterns, inflections of pitch, and syllabic duration.

The seventh vocal aspect of speech delivery—one that summarizes many of the others—is **vocal variety**. This term refers to voice quality, intonation patterns, inflections of pitch, and syllabic duration. Public presentations encourage vocal variety because studies show that variety improves effectiveness. One of the founders of the National Communication Association, Charles Woolbert (1920), in a very early study of public reading, found that audiences retain more information when there are large variations in rate, force, pitch, and voice quality. More recently, George Glasgow (1952) studied an audience’s comprehension of prose and poetry and found that comprehension decreased 10% when the presenter delivered material in a monotone. Another study (Black, 1942) showed that audience members

Delivery is not something that you read about; delivery is something that you do. Here are some tips for how to improve your vocal delivery:

1. Choose one aspect of vocal delivery and work on that aspect until you are confident enough to move to another. Do you speak in monotone? Work on vocal variety until you are confident enough to move on to eliminating nonfluencies.
2. Practice these skills in everyday life. With communication skills the world is your laboratory: Practice improving your skills even when conversing with friends.
3. Be determined and focused about improvement. You took years to become what you are today, and you will not change unless you are determined to improve.
4. Recognize that your ability to express yourself has positive payoffs in interviews, job performance, and human relations. Learn how to become an articulate person, someone who not only knows something but knows how to communicate that knowledge to others.

**Figure 13.1** Tips for improving vocal delivery.

understand more when listening to skilled speakers than when listening to unskilled speakers. They also recall more information both immediately after the speech and at a later date. The skilled speakers are more effective, whether the material is organized or disorganized, easy or difficult. Good vocalization was also found to include fewer but longer pauses, greater ranges of pitch, and more upward and downward inflections (Beighley, 1952).

Kathleen Propp (2007), a communication professor at Western Michigan University, pointed out that many students lose their natural vocal variety when speaking because of the natural nervousness that they feel. To retrain yourself to maintain effective variety, Propp suggests that you (1) read aloud a children's story and take note of how you naturally use vocal variety, (2) practice transferring those same behaviors when reading more advanced material, and (3) synthesize those two steps to use vocal variety during your speeches.

Take a look at the tips for improving vocal delivery in Figure 13.1 before moving on to the next section on the bodily aspects of presentation. You may also find more structured ways to practice your delivery. One of the instructors who uses this text in class has an assignment where students talk in front of the class about their good and bad experiences with public speaking, ways they plan to use skills from the course in their life, their biggest concerns with public speaking, and something fun/interesting about their lives. In this activity, students can not only practice delivery skills, but can also get in the open some of their anxieties and concerns. The point is that you may have many different types of opportunities to practice delivery—take advantage of those and become aware of yourself as a speaker.

### The Bodily Aspects of Presentation

The importance of delivery has been recognized for thousands of years. In the *Rhetoric ad Herennium*, Cicero observed that,

#### TRY THIS

Try reading a few paragraphs from a story or poem to your spouse, roommate, or friend to test yourself on vocal aspects of delivery. Let your listener give you an opinion and advice about your oral reading skills. What are your strengths? Your weaknesses? What can you do to improve on the weaknesses and take advantage of the strengths?

Effective delivery will not make a poorly prepared speech good, but it can make a well-prepared speech great. Effective delivery encompasses a variety of behaviors, including variations in pitch and volume. Nonvocal aspects of effective delivery include gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and movement.

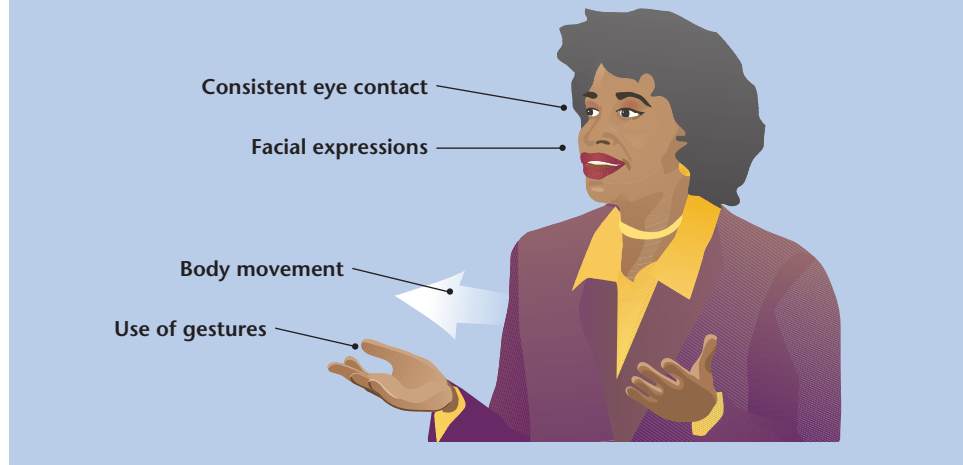


Figure 13.2 Effective delivery behaviors.

“Delivery is the graceful regulation of voice, countenance, and gesture.” Whereas the previous section talked in detail about the voice, this section focuses on how to use your body to convey meaning. Points in this section are summarized in Figure 13.2.

## Gestures

### gestures

Movements of the head, arms, and hands to illustrate, emphasize, or signal ideas in a presentation.

**Gestures** are movements of the head, arms, and hands used to illustrate, emphasize, or signal ideas in a speech. People rarely worry about gestures in conversation, but when they give a speech in front of an audience, arms and hands seem to be bothersome. Perhaps people feel unnatural because public speaking is an unfamiliar situation. Do you remember the first time you drove a car, the first time you tried to swim, or the first time you kissed? The first time you give a speech, you might not feel any more natural than you did then. Nonetheless, physically or artistically skilled people make their actions look easy. A skilled golfer, a talented painter, and a graceful dancer all perform with seeming ease. Beginners make a performance look difficult. Apparently, we have to work diligently to make physical or artistic feats look easy.

What can you do to help yourself gesture naturally when you deliver your presentation? The answer lies in connecting your feelings to your behavior. When speakers really care about a topic, you can see their passion in the way they deliver their message: they are more animated, their face shows a range of emotion, their voice is strong, and their eyes connect with yours. Students speaking on a variety of topics ranging from environmental awareness to business ethics have demonstrated that passion and conviction translates into effective delivery. In addition to focusing on finding a topic for which you are passionate, you should also concentrate on your message. Being self-conscious about your delivery, or trying to focus too much on “perfect” delivery can actually backfire and cause your delivery to seem unnatural. Some students trained in competitive speaking exhibit unnatural delivery behaviors



View an animation of this illustration on the *Online Learning Center*.

that actually cause audience members to become focused so much on delivery that they lose the message of the speech. You should concentrate on your message and do your best to present natural delivery behaviors in your speech.

Another way of learning to make appropriate gestures is to practice a speech in front of friends who are willing to make positive suggestions. Constructive criticism is also one of the benefits you can receive from your speech instructor and your classmates. Actors spend hours rehearsing lines and gestures so that they will look spontaneous and unrehearsed on stage. In time, and after many practice sessions, public speakers learn which arm, head, and hand movements seem to help and which seem to hinder their message. Through practice you too can learn to gesture naturally, in a way that reinforces, rather than detracts from, your message (see Figure 13.3).



### Facial Expressions

Another physical aspect of delivery is facial expression. Your face is the most expressive part of your body. **Facial expressions** consist of the nonverbal cues expressed by the speaker's face. Eyebrows rise and fall; eyes twinkle, glare, and cry; lips pout or smile; cheeks can dimple or harden; and a chin can jut out in anger or recede in yielding. Some people's faces are a barometer of their feelings; others' faces seem to maintain the same appearance whether they are happy or sad or in pain. Because you do not ordinarily see your own face when you are speaking, you may not be fully aware of how you appear when you give a speech. In general, speakers are trying to maintain a warm and positive relationship with the audience, and they signal that intent by smiling as they would in conversation with someone they like. However, the topic, the speaker's intent, the situation, and the audience all help determine the appropriate facial expressions in a public speech. You can discover the appropriateness of your facial expressions by having friends, relatives, or classmates tell you how you look when practicing your speech. You can also observe how your instructors use facial expressions to communicate.

#### facial expressions

Any nonverbal cues expressed by the speaker's face.

1. Keep your hands out of your pockets and at your sides when not gesturing.
2. Do not lean on the lectern.
3. Gesture with the hand not holding your notes.
4. Make your gestures deliberate—big and broad enough so that they do not look accidental or timid.
5. Keep your gestures meaningful by using them sparingly and only when they reinforce something you are saying.
6. Practice your gestures just as you do the rest of your speech so that you become comfortable with the words and gestures.
7. Make your gestures appear natural and spontaneous.



To see examples of effective delivery, watch "Using a Vivid Image" on the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

**Figure 13.3** Tips for gesturing effectively.

SOURCE: Gamble and Gamble, 2005

## Eye Contact

### eye contact

The extent to which a speaker looks directly at the audience.

Another physical aspect of delivery important to the public speaker is eye contact. **Eye contact** refers to the extent to which the speaker looks directly at the audience. Too much eye contact—“staring down the audience”—is too much of a good thing, but too much gazing at notes—lack of eye contact—is poor delivery.

Audiences prefer maintenance of good eye contact (Cobin, 1962), and good eye contact improves source credibility (Beebe, 1974). Such conclusions are particularly important since individuals in other cultures may view eye contact differently. A presenter from another country may be viewed less positively by an American audience than she would be in her native country. Similarly, Americans need to recognize and appreciate cultural differences in eye contact as well as other nonverbal cues.

Eye contact is one of the ways people indicate to others how they feel about them. People are wary of others who do not look them in the eye during a conversation. Similarly, in public speaking, eye contact conveys your relationship with your audience. The public speaker who rarely or never looks at audience members may appear disinterested in them, and the audience may resent being ignored. The public speaker who looks over the heads of audience members or scans them so quickly that eye contact is not established may appear to be afraid of the audience. The proper relationship between audience and speaker is one of purposeful communication. You signal that sense of purpose by treating audience members as individuals with whom you wish to communicate—by looking at them for responses to your message.

How can you learn to maintain eye contact with your audience? One way is to know your speech so well that you have to glance only occasionally at your notes. The speaker who does not know the speech well is manuscript-bound. Delivering an extemporaneous speech from key-words or an outline is a way of encouraging yourself to keep an eye on the audience. One of the purposes of extemporaneous delivery is to enable you to adapt to your audience. That adaptation is not possible unless you are continually observing the audience’s behavior to see if your listeners appear to understand your message.

Other ways of learning to use eye contact include scanning your entire audience and addressing various sections as you progress through your speech. Concentrating on the head noddors (not sleepers but affirmers) may also improve your eye contact. In almost every audience, some individuals overtly indicate whether your message is coming across. These individuals usually nod yes or no with their heads—thus the name *noddors*. Some speakers find that friendly faces and positive noddors improve their delivery.



## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Beginning speakers often assume that only one particular style of delivery is effective. Although we see many similarities in how political figures deliver speeches, most of us do not speak in front of audiences each day, nor do we have people helping us write our speeches. What counts as effective delivery changes from one audience to another and from one speaker to another. Effective speakers are aware of their own speaking style and understand the expectations of their audience so that they can adapt their delivery accordingly.*

## Movement

A fourth physical aspect of delivery is **bodily movement**—what the speaker does with his or her entire body during a presentation. Sometimes the situation limits movement. The presence of a fixed microphone, a lectern, a pulpit, or any other physical feature of the environment may limit your activity. The length of the speech can also make a difference. A short speech without movement is less difficult for both speaker and audience than is a very long speech.

Good movement is appropriate and purposeful. The “caged lion” who paces back and forth to work off anxiety is moving inappropriately and purposelessly in relation to the content of the presentation. You should move for a reason, such as walking a few steps when delivering a transition, thereby literally helping your audience to “follow you” to the next idea. Some speakers move forward on the points they regard as most important.

Because of the importance of eye contact, the speaker should always strive to face the audience, even when moving. Some other suggestions on movement relate to the use of visual aids. Speakers who write on the chalkboard during a speech have to turn their backs on the audience. Avoid turning your back by writing information on the board between classes, by preparing a poster, ahead of time, or by using an overhead projector.

You can learn through practice and observation. Watch your professors, teaching assistants, and fellow students when they deliver their speeches to determine what works for them. They may provide positive or negative examples. Similarly, you need to determine what works best for you when you practice your speech. The form in Table 13.1 can be used to evaluate nonverbal delivery.

### bodily movement

What the speaker does with his or her entire body during a presentation.

**TABLE 13.1** EVALUATION FORM FOR NONVERBAL ASPECTS OF DELIVERY

To summarize the material on vocal and bodily aspects of delivery, you should examine the sample evaluation form below. Use this scale to evaluate yourself and others on each of the following items: 1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = average, 4 = fair, 5 = weak.

#### VOCAL ASPECTS OF DELIVERY—THE VOICE

- \_\_\_\_\_ Pitch: upward and downward inflections
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rate: speed of delivery
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pause: appropriate use of silence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Volume: loudness of the voice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Enunciation: articulation and pronunciation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fluency: smoothness of delivery
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vocal variety: overall effect of all of the above

#### BODILY ASPECTS OF DELIVERY

- \_\_\_\_\_ Gestures: use of arms and hands
- \_\_\_\_\_ Facial expression: use of the face
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eye contact: use of eyes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Movement: use of legs and feet



## get INVOLVED!

One of the most effective strategies you can use to improve your delivery is to practice your speech in front of multiple audiences and get feedback. One way to do this is to contact local elementary schools and offer to present your speech to the class. Children are great practice audiences because they make it fairly obvious when your delivery is becoming a little too monotone or dry. Of course, you will need to take care to select appropriate topics to present!



For another practice speaking opportunity, many nursing home and care facilities are eager to have students speak to residents. Adults provide a very different type of audience than do children, and adults may even be willing to give you specific feedback on your delivery techniques and the substance of your speech.

These activities, speaking to elementary children and residents of care facilities, are meaningful ways for you to practice your speaking skills while also informing/persuading members of your community about important topics. Taking advantage of such opportunities will enable you to become a better speaker and will help you learn to adapt your speaking to audiences of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

### Delivery Tips for Non-Native Speakers



If you are a student who speaks English as a second language, you may be particularly concerned about your delivery. After all, you must simultaneously try to remember what you want to say and try to select the appropriate words and pronounce them correctly. These concerns will differ greatly from one person to another depending on how comfortable you are with your topic and spoken English. Here are some suggestions for how to work on delivery issues that may be of unique concern to you:

#### TRY THIS

Attend a speech, sermon, or other public presentation and take notes on vocal and bodily aspects of the presenter's delivery. Use your observations as a basis for developing your own style of delivery.

1. *Recognize that you are not alone.* For most speakers the actual delivery of the speech is what causes the most anxiety. Even native speakers worry that they will forget what they intend to say or that they will say something incorrectly. If you have anxiety about delivery, your classmates will certainly empathize with you.
2. *Give yourself time.* Most of the other suggestions on this list require that you have some extra time to devote to improving your delivery. This means that you may need to begin

working on your speeches much earlier in comparison to many of your classmates.

3. *Check pronunciation.* With several online pronunciation dictionaries, you can look up words and hear them pronounced. For new and unfamiliar words or words with many syllables, such resources can help you determine and practice correct pronunciation.
4. *Talk with your instructor about reasonable goals.* If you are still working on several pronunciation or grammar issues, you can use your public-speaking class as an opportunity to improve. With your instructor's help, identify a short list of items that you can work on over the course of the term. Your practice efforts will be more focused, and your instructor will have a clearer idea of what to concentrate on when giving feedback. If you do not set such objectives beforehand, both you and your instructor may have difficulty concentrating on specific and attainable areas for improvement.
5. *Understand that eye contact is important.* Especially if you come from a culture that does not emphasize eye contact, you should recognize that American audiences tend to weight this nonverbal delivery characteristic very heavily. To improve your eye contact, you should first get more comfortable maintaining eye contact during conversation. As your eye contact improves during one-on-one interactions, you can then work on better eye contact during speeches.
6. *Practice using audio or video recordings.* By listening to and/or watching yourself, you will be better able to isolate specific ways to improve your delivery. While observing a recording, make a list of two to four things you could do to improve your delivery, and then practice the speech, again focusing on those items.

## How Can You Reduce Your Fear of Presenting?

We consider fear of presenting at this point because fear results in delivery problems. Effective presenters do not exhibit signs of anxiety. They do not shake, sweat, look at the floor, or appear afraid. If a speaker does appear on the verge of a nervous breakdown, the audience feels so sorry for him or her that they entirely miss the message.

Nearly everyone experiences some fear when presenting in front of an audience. In fact, more people fear public speaking than fear death (Wallechinshy, Wallace, & Wallace, 1997). Comedian Jerry Seinfeld once quipped that because of the widespread fear of public speaking, more people at a funeral would choose to be the person in the casket than the person speaking beside the casket. Beginning speakers often feel fear before and during their early presentations. Even experienced speakers sometimes feel fear when they face a new audience or a new situation. With fear being such a common occurrence, we need to look at some ways to reduce and control any fear of presenting.

The person who has studied this subject the most, James McCroskey (1997), calls fear of presenting **communication apprehension (CA)**, defined as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (p. 78). Symptoms of CA include sleeplessness, worry, and reluctance before you present and “interfering, off-task thoughts” while you present (Greene, Rucker, Zauss, & Harris, 1988). Having “off-task thoughts” means losing focus on communicating your message to your audience, thinking instead about sweaty palms, shaking knees, and “cotton mouth,” the feeling that your tongue is swollen and your mouth is as dry as the Sahara. One wit

### communication apprehension

An individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.

noted that public speakers suffer so often from wet palms and dry mouth that they should stick their hands in their mouth.

What else do we know about CA? The individuals with the most extreme levels of anxiety “show the largest improvement in perceived competence” (MacIntyre & MacDonald, 1998) when they take a public-speaking course. This large measure of improvement is, of course, a key reason for the shy, uncommunicative person to take the course. On the other hand, the person with very high CA still is unlikely to emerge as the star of the public-speaking classroom because others in the class already see themselves as fairly high in competence. Individuals with high CA may even set themselves up for lower grades in public speaking. Daly, Vangelisti, and Weber (1995) found that students high in anxiety exhibited “less audience adaptation, less concern for equipment likely to be available when the speech was presented, less concern about the tools available to aid in preparing the speech, more difficulty in coming up with information for speeches, and greater self-doubts about their capability as a speaker” (p. 394). So, even though a person with high CA might show the greatest improvement in perceived competence, that person still may have more doubts about his or her capability than do others and may not prepare successful performances.

### Suggested Techniques for Reducing Your Fear

Fear of presenting is similar to other fears in life: You cannot overcome the fear unless you have a desire to do so. Fortunately, you can reduce fear in many ways, including the following:

#### skills approach

Reducing fear by systematically improving presenting skills.

- The **skills approach** reduces fear by systematically improving your presenting skills. In other words by taking a course in public speaking you can learn through the coaching by your teacher and your fellow students to reduce your anxiety. Rubin, Rubin, and Jordan (1997) demonstrated that taking a course in public speaking results in positive changes. You will find, too, that repeatedly exposing yourself to something you found threatening at first—like standing in front of an audience to give a speech—reduces your fear over time.

#### positive thinking approach

Using positive thoughts to bolster speaker confidence.

- The **positive thinking approach** boosts your confidence through the power of positive thinking (Motley, 1995). Through intrapersonal communication you can literally talk yourself into seeing your situation in a positive light (Robinson, 1997). Here are some examples of negative and positive thoughts:

#### Negative Thinking

I'm afraid of public speaking.  
I don't want to go up front.  
I don't want to see all those eyes.  
I'm afraid my voice won't work.  
They will see I'm afraid.

#### Positive Thinking

I see public speaking as a personal challenge.  
I have the courage to go up front.  
I appreciate the attention that I get.  
I plan to speak with confidence.  
I'll act confident until I feel confident.

By reframing your negative thoughts into positive ones you can overcome some of the anxiety produced by situations that could otherwise result in fright.

#### visualization approach

Picturing yourself succeeding.

- The **visualization approach** invites you to picture yourself succeeding, like the positive approach above except with the addition of imagery. If the positive approach tends to be text, the visualization approach tends to be video

and audio. You see yourself striding to the front of the room with confidence; you see yourself speaking loud enough for all to hear without a sign of fear; and you see yourself moving through the speech with an attentive audience eagerly receiving your message. As proof that such an approach can work with skills, some athletes who repeatedly visualize their success on the field can do as well as those who are actually on the field in action.

- The **relaxation approach** means combining deep relaxation with fear-inducing thoughts (Friedrich & Goss, 1984). Although you can do this by yourself, another person, such as a facilitator, usually provides the commands. The facilitator asks you to relax (actually lying down helps) and to think of a situation in which you are totally unstressed. The facilitator links your relaxed state to a word like “calm.” After repeating this process, you start relaxing when you hear the word (you have been conditioned). The facilitator then walks you through whatever frightens you (“You are now walking to the front of the room”) and says “calm” at the first signs of fright. This approach takes time, but the procedure does work for most people with high anxiety about presenting. See Figure 13.4 for an example of this relaxation technique.
- The **self-managed approach** means that you reduce your fear of presenting with self-diagnosis and a variety of therapies. In other words, you attempt to uncover your fears and then decide what approach might reduce them. Dwyer (2000) points out that many therapies can reduce your fears, but no one therapy works for all people. You might decide that group therapy with a psychologist at the health service center would work best for you. Or you might decide that just taking a public-speaking course will help you overcome your fear of presenting.

#### relaxation approach

Combining deep relaxation with fear-inducing thoughts.

#### self-managed approach

Reducing the fear of presenting with self-diagnosis and a variety of therapies.

To practice the relaxation techniques, do the following:

1. Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down in a comfortable place. As much as possible, rid the area of distracting noises. If possible, play relaxing music or a tape with the sounds of nature.
2. Begin with your face and neck, and tense the muscles. Then relax them. Tense again and hold the tensed position for 10 seconds. Relax again.
3. Tense your hands by clenching your fists. Relax. Tense again and hold for 10 seconds. Relax.
4. Tense your arms above your hands and to your shoulders. Relax. Tense again and hold for 10 seconds. Relax.
5. Tense your chest and stomach. Relax. Tense again and hold for 10 seconds. Relax.
6. Tense your feet by pulling the toes under. Relax. Tense again and hold for 10 seconds. Relax.
7. Tense your legs above the feet and up to the hips. Relax. Tense again and hold for 10 seconds. Relax.
8. Tense your entire body and hold for 10 seconds. Relax and breathe slowly.
9. Repeat the word *calm* to yourself. This will help you relate the word to the relaxed feeling you are now experiencing. In the future, when you feel anxious, the word *calm* should help you arrest the apprehension you experience.

**Figure 13.4** Calming normal communication apprehension.

SOURCE: Gamble and Gamble, 2005

## What Are Visual Resources?

Do you learn best when you read something, when you watch something, or when you do something? Certainly, some skills are best learned by doing. Reading about how to insert streaming video into a PowerPoint presentation or watching another person perform the task is no substitute for trying to perform the task yourself. However, not everything lends itself to doing. You cannot “do” economics in the same way you can change a tire. Because so much of public speaking deals with issues and topics that cannot be performed, you must know the most effective methods of communicating in a public presentation.

To determine if people remember best through telling alone, through showing alone, or through both showing and telling, researchers measured retention 3 hours and 3 days after a communication attempt (Zayas-Boya, 1977–1978). The results follow:

METHOD	RETENTION 3 HOURS LATER	RETENTION 3 DAYS LATER
TELLING ALONE	70%	10%
SHOWING ALONE	72	20
SHOWING AND TELLING	85	65

Apparently, people retain information longer when they receive the message both through their eyes *and* through their ears. Audiences that remember a message because the visual resources helped their comprehension are more persuaded by the presentation than are audiences that do not see visual resources.

Students sometimes think that public-speaking instructors like them to use visual resources, but they will not use visual resources for public speaking outside the classroom. In fact, the use of visual resources is big business. Can you imagine an architect trying to explain to a board of directors how the new building will look without using models, drawings, and computer graphics? Can you envision a business presentation without PowerPoint? Can you sell most products without showing them? Apparently, the skillful use of visual resources is an expectation in the world of business and industry. The place to learn how to use visual resources is in the classroom.

What are **visual resources**? They are any items that can be seen by an audience for the purpose of reinforcing a message, from the way you dress, to words on the chalkboard, to items brought in to show what you are talking about. A student who wears a police uniform when talking about careers in law enforcement, one who provides a handout with an outline of her speech for the class, and yet another who brings in chemistry equipment are all using visual resources.

### visual resources

Any items that can be seen by an audience for the purpose of reinforcing a message.

### TRY THIS

*Are you especially good at something that could enhance your presentation? Can you draw, sing, play an instrument, take photos, or create a PowerPoint presentation? Sometimes your own talents and abilities can greatly strengthen your presentation.*

### The Uses of Visual Resources

One of the main reasons for using visual resources has already been stated: People tend to learn and retain more when they both see and listen. The effective speaker knows when words alone will be insufficient to carry the message. Some messages are more effectively communicated through sight, touch, smell, and taste. Use visual resources when they reduce complexity for easier understanding (such as when you are explaining many or complex statistics or ideas) and when they support your message better than words (such as when you display a bar graph showing the increasing costs of

1. Do not talk to your visual resources. Keep your eyes on your audience.
2. Display visual resources only when you are using them. Before or after they are discussed, they usually become a needless distraction to the audience.
3. Make sure everyone in the room can see your visual resources. Check the visibility of your visual resources before your speech, during practice. If the classroom is 25 feet deep, have a friend or family member determine if the visual resources can be read from 25 feet away. Above all, make sure you are not standing in front of your visual resources.
4. Leave visual resources in front of the audience long enough for complete assimilation. Few things are more irritating to an audience than to have half-read visual resources whipped away by a speaker.
5. Use a pointer or your inside arm for pointing to visual resources. The pointer keeps you from masking the visual, and using your inside arm helps you to avoid closing off your body from the audience.

**Figure 13.5** Tips for using visual resources.

home ownership). The use of visual resources demands that you become sensitive to what an audience will be unable to understand only through your words.

Visual resources are not appropriate for all speeches at all times. In fact, because they take preparation and planning, they may be impossible to use in many impromptu situations. Also, visual resources should not be used for their own sake. Having visual resources is no virtue unless they help the audience understand your message or unless they contribute in another way to your purpose.

Visual resources should be visible to the audience only when needed and should be removed from sight during the rest of the presentation. Otherwise, visual resources can become a distraction that steals the focus from you. See Figure 13.5 for additional tips on the use of visual resources.

Visual resources, like the facts in your speech, may require documentation. You should either show on the visual resource itself or tell the audience directly where you got the visual resource or the information on it.

Last, when planning to use visual aids you need to be prepared to use them effectively. For instance, if you use a computer to display PowerPoint or a YouTube video, what will you do if the computer crashes? How should you best prepare visual aids so that they look professional and are not too cluttered? In addition to the tips in Figure 13.5, you should plan to carefully analyze your approach to using visual aids. If you are relying on technology, plan to have a backup in case the technology fails you. If you make your visual aids, find a friend who will be honest enough to act as a tough critic and comment on the professional look of your resource. Finally, if someone cannot look at your visual aid for a few seconds and be able to explain what they see, you may have too much information on the aid—in which case, you may want to create additional slides. Basically, you need to develop a visual-aid strategy that includes careful planning, evaluation, and backups. If you prepare such a strategy, you are far more likely to realize the benefits of visual aids mentioned in this chapter.

## Types of Visual Resources

An effective presenter chooses carefully the visual resources that will reinforce the message. Following are various ways that presenters can render their messages more effective.





▲ In a presentation on global warming, the speaker used this photo of a melting glacier from <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/12/>.

### PowerPoint Presentations

Just as Googling is one of the most common ways to find information, PowerPoint is one of the most common means of presenting information and images. The upside of this Microsoft software is that PowerPoint offers great advantages to anyone making a presentation by providing text, images, video, sound, and graphics. The downside is that too often the slide show, with its dazzling technological features, becomes the presentation while the speaker stays hidden in the shadows, with barely a voice-over to indicate his or her presence. While you are learning public-speaking skills, you should use PowerPoint as a resource, not *the* source of the presentation, which should be you. See Figure 13.6 for some tips for using PowerPoint.

### Computer Graphics

Some of the tips in Figure 13.6 can serve you well when you use computer-generated graphics. Google and other Internet providers can furnish you with images of almost anything. Go to Google and click on “Images,” for example, and then type in what kind of images you seek. Type in the word “food,” and you will get millions of possible images that can be downloaded for your presentation. These days any student who knows her way around her computer’s software can

locate and reproduce photos, drawings, and art. Furthermore, she can create graphs from numbers and convert data into pie, line, or bar graphs. The latter can be blown up into very large images on a photocopier. Figure 13.7 shows examples of a bar graph, a pie chart, and a line graph, the kinds of graphics you can find on the Internet.

Follow the suggestions below and watch “Using Internet Graphics” and “Presenting a PowerPoint Build” on the *Online Learning Center*.

1. Be very careful *not* to use too much text on each slide; lots of space with a simple background works best.
2. Leave slides in sight long enough for your audience to absorb their content (they will be visually and audibly upset if you pull a slide before they are ready).
3. Use the on-screen text as your notes instead of looking down and trying to read them in a semidarkened room (while mainly maintaining eye contact with your audience).
4. Use at least 36-point type for headings or titles and at least 24-point type for the remainder while avoiding all-caps because they are too bold.
5. Use the same colors throughout: light letters on dark background.
6. Use bullets, not numbers.
7. Vary your slides—some text, some images, some graphics—to keep your presentation lively and interesting.
8. Practice your presentation, preferably in the room in which you will present.
9. Have a backup plan in case of technological failure.

Figure 13.6 Tips for using PowerPoint.

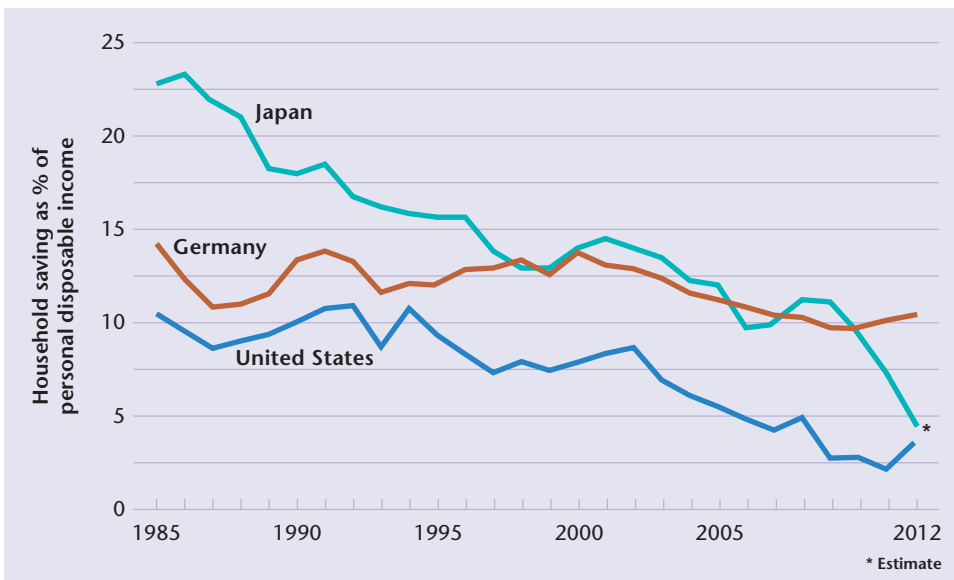
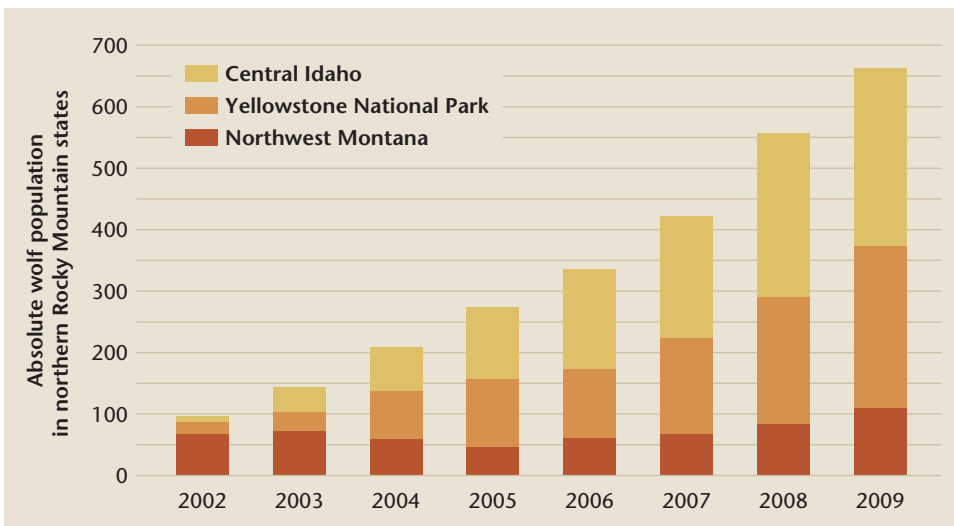
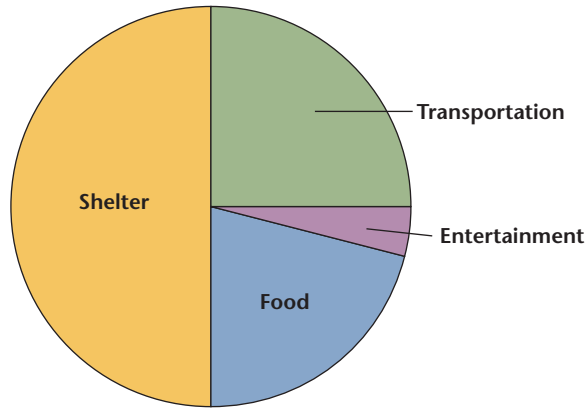


Figure 13.7 Pie charts, bar graphs, and line graphs can help your audience understand amounts, ratios, and proportions.



## Video

Today everyone is a photographer and a videographer because cameras are everywhere, including in your phone. Not only that but you have easy access to video clips on the Internet. You can find movie “trailers” that illustrate your point, as well as video bits of everything from giggling babies to obedient dogs.

Photos and videos will enhance your presentation as long as you use them to reinforce and to illustrate, not to replace you as the main attraction. A student spiced up his informative presentation on the high cost of automobile repair by using a brief video in his introduction that showed a “before” view of his wrecked car, another brief video in the body of his presentation showing how a repair shop replaces a windshield, and a final brief video in his conclusion showing his newly repaired vehicle—with the bill for services rendered. Even though he used video to reinforce the main points of his presentation, he maintained eye contact with his audience and made sure that he was not a sideshow to the slide show.

## Chalkboards and Dry-Erase Boards

### Advantages

- These can be used to convey any statistic, fact, or detail that is difficult to communicate orally.
- These can be used to show words with which the audience is unfamiliar.
- These can be used to cue you, as in a key-word outline.

### Disadvantages

- Writing on the board means your back is to the audience, so it’s best to have the writing on the board before you speak.
- Unless you practice, you may find that writing on the board is difficult because you need to write large and legibly.

### Cautions

- Bring your own dry-erase marker lest the ones at the board are dried out.
- Make sure that chalk is available lest you find none when you need it.
- Angle the chalk so it does not emit a cringe-inducing squeal on the board.

## Posters

### Advantages

- Posters can be prepared ahead of time to provide visual images or information.
- Posters can cue you about content without sacrificing eye contact.

### Disadvantages

- Few posters are big enough to be seen by all.
- Posters cannot and should not hold much text.

### Cautions

- Keep your eyes on your audience, not on your poster.
- Keep messages and images simple and easy to convey.

## Handouts

### Advantages

- An outline of your presentation provides notes for you and for the audience.
- An outline invites the audience to participate in your presentation.
- A handout can provide information too detailed to explain in a brief presentation.

### Disadvantages

- The audience may read the handout instead of listening to you.
- Unless you print something important in your handout, the listeners trash the room with them.

### Cautions

- Compose any handout carefully; spelling and grammar errors can reduce your credibility.

## Blackboard and Other Electronic Connections

### Advantages

- Your instructor can post your outline or handout for your audience to read or download.
- If your class has a chat room or discussion board, you can use those opportunities to analyze your audience or test for interest in your topic.

### Disadvantages

- Your instructor may be the only person authorized to place items.
- Your instructor may not want to act as broker for every person who wants to post something for the class.

### Cautions

- Be aware that some students ignore their electronic connections.
- Recognize that others may not have easy access to the system.

## People and Other Living Things

### Advantages

- A person or animal used as a visual resource can gain and maintain attention.
- A person or animal can provide an excellent example for your presentation.

### Disadvantages

- People as visual aids are not completely controllable, and animals, snakes, and spiders are even less controllable.
- Your visual resource may detract from your presentation.



▲ An oil worker could present wearing attire from his job to reinforce his credibility in an informative presentation on oil production.

### Cautions

- Be aware that universities and colleges may have rules about people (nonstudents) and animals on campus.

### You as a Visual Resource

#### Advantages

- You can dress in ways that reinforce your message, such as a uniform, a lab coat, or professional attire.
- You can wear pins, badges, T-shirts, hats, caps, and helmets that contribute to your message.

#### Disadvantages

- You might look great for your speech but ridiculous on campus.

#### Cautions

- Remember that your attire or lack thereof can detract from your purpose.

#### *Some Final Cautions*

- Recognize that many campuses have rules prohibiting alcohol, so using cans or bottles of beer or booze as a visual resource could be problematic.

### What to Avoid in Using Visual Resources

#### **Test your technology.**

Your carefully prepared PowerPoint presentation that you brought to class on a flash drive may or may not work on the classroom computer. Check ahead.

#### **Don't count on the classroom computer.**

You are planning to draw illustrations from a website but the wireless system for the classroom computer is not working that day.

#### **You, not the technology, need to be the center of attention.**

We do not need you if your entire message appears on your visual aids, so do not design your presentation to make yourself irrelevant and your PowerPoint dominant.

#### **Keep messages on visual aids brief.**

Don't pack your visuals with print because the audience will ignore a big block of print or they will read the screen and ignore you.

#### **Make visual resources look professional.**

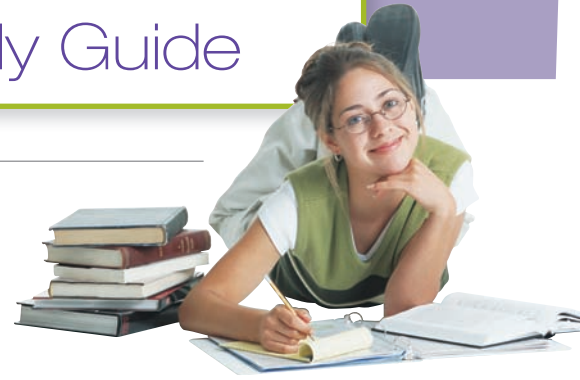
Grade-school posters that are difficult to see and to read, YouTube examples that go on and on, and video that is funny but irrelevant degrade your presentation.

Figure 13.8 What to avoid in using visual resources.

- Be aware that few campuses allow firearms, even disassembled ones, as a visual resource for a classroom presentation.
- Note that health and safety regulations prohibit chemicals and living things that can sting, bite, or poison human beings.
- When in doubt about using a particular visual resource, check with your instructor.

Figure 13.8 lists some tips for effective presentation.

# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Four modes of delivery are:
  - The extemporaneous mode, whereby the speech is carefully prepared but appears relatively spontaneous and conversational.
  - The impromptu mode, which actually is spontaneous and without specific preparation.
  - The manuscript mode, whereby the presenter uses a script throughout delivery.
  - The memorized mode, which employs a script committed to memory.
- ▶ Vocal aspects of delivery include:
  - Pitch—the highness or lowness of the presenter’s voice.
  - Rate—the speed of delivery.
  - Pauses—the purposeful silence to invite thought or response.
  - Volume—the loudness of the presenter’s voice.
  - Enunciation—the pronunciation and articulation of words.
  - Fluency—the smoothness of delivery.
  - Vocal variety—voice quality, intonation patterns, inflections, and syllabic duration.
- ▶ Bodily aspects of delivery include:
  - Gestures—movement of the head, arms, and hands.
  - Eye contact—sustained and meaningful attention to the eyes and faces of audience members.
  - Facial expressions—the variety of messages the face can convey.
  - Movement—the motion by the entire body but especially purposeful movement by the feet.
- ▶ A number of advantages, disadvantages, and cautions are associated with visual resources that reinforce the message, including:
  - PowerPoint.
  - Computer graphics.
  - Video.
  - Chalkboards.
  - Dry-erase boards.
  - Posters.
  - Handouts.
  - Blackboard and other electronic connections.
  - People and other living things.
  - Yourself.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Articulation	Gestures	Rate
Bodily movement	Impromptu mode	Relaxation approach
Communication apprehension	Manuscript mode	Self-managed approach
Delivery	Memorized mode	Skills approach
Enunciation	Pause	Visual resources
Extemporaneous mode	Pitch	Visualization approach
Eye contact	Positive thinking approach	Vocal variety
Facial expression	Pronunciation	Vocalized pauses
Fluency		

## Study Questions

1. Which mode of delivery encourages you to improvise and speak without previous research or preparation?
  - a. extemporaneous
  - b. impromptu
  - c. manuscript
  - d. memorized
2. A disadvantage of a presentation delivered in the memorized mode is
  - a. the need to create carefully prepared notes
  - b. a lack of practice
  - c. a lack of eye contact
  - d. the removal of spontaneity and the danger of forgetting

3. “Ummms” or “aahhhs” that disrupt a speaker’s fluency are termed
  - a. vocalized pauses
  - b. enunciation
  - c. articulation
  - d. pitch
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the highness or lowness of a speaker’s voice, and \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the smoothness of delivery and flow of words.
  - a. Volume; rate
  - b. Pitch; fluency
  - c. Rate; vocal variety
  - d. Pitch; enunciation
5. Gestures are movements of the head, arms, and hands
  - a. used to improve source credibility
  - b. that appear rehearsed and out-of rhythm
  - c. used to illustrate, emphasize, or signal ideas
  - d. that convey a relationship with the audience
6. With regard to movement, the speaker should
  - a. pace back and forth
  - b. move without purpose
  - c. move backwards when introducing an important point
  - d. avoid turning his or her back to the audience
7. If you are nervous or anxious about giving your presentation, you may be experiencing
  - a. gestures
  - b. communication apprehension
  - c. cognitive modification
  - d. audience adaptation
8. Why are visual resources used?
  - a. Speakers do not need to prepare as much because they can just read their PowerPoint.
  - b. They are appropriate for all types of speeches.
  - c. People tend to learn and retain more when they both see and listen.
  - d. They are fun to watch.
9. When using PowerPoint, you should
  - a. use a lot of text on each slide
  - b. move the slides quickly because the audience will get bored
  - c. vary your slides to keep the presentation interesting
  - d. utilize all color combinations
10. Which visual resource is most reliable?
  - a. YouTube video
  - b. PowerPoint presentation
  - c. Posters with text and images
  - d. Google images on flash drive

#### Answers:

1. (b); 2. (d); 3. (a); 4. (b); 5. (c); 6. (d); 7. (b); 8. (c); 9. (c); 10. (c)

## Critical Thinking

1. The next time you see your favorite late-night television host deliver the monologue, evaluate his or her delivery. Assess both vocal and bodily aspects of delivery.
2. In your classes, which types of visual resources do you benefit from the most? Which ones are not as useful?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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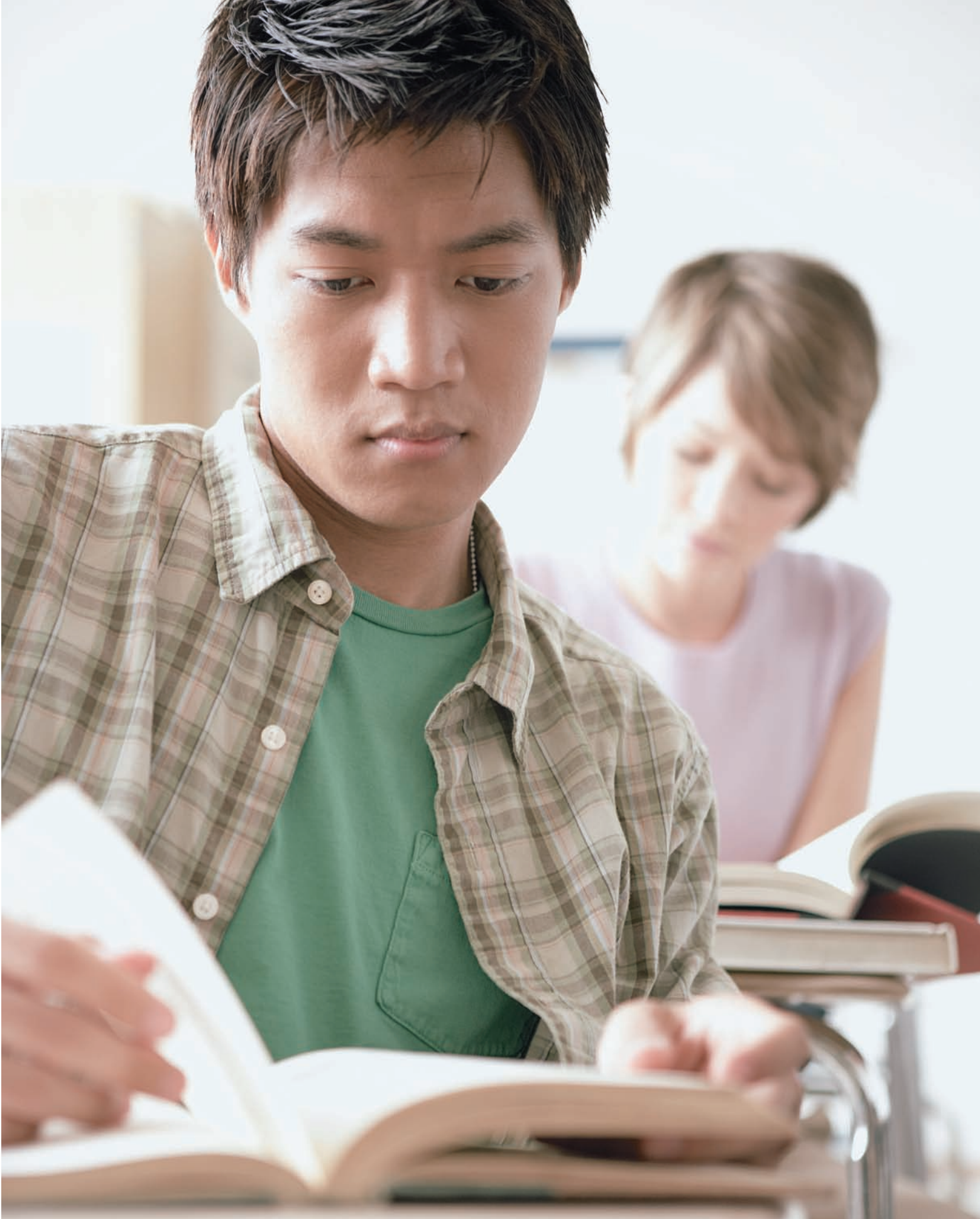
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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Recognize the goals of informative presentations.
2. Identify topics appropriate for informative speaking.
3. Provide examples of immediate behavioral purposes for an informative presentation.
4. Define concepts related to informative speaking, such as information hunger, information relevance, extrinsic motivation, informative content, and information overload.
5. Use the skills of defining, describing, explaining, narrating, and demonstrating in an informative presentation.



# INFORMATIVE



**The goal of informative presentations** is to enhance an audience's knowledge and understanding of a topic. In this chapter you will learn how to choose topics for an informative speech and how to develop behavioral purposes for them. The chapter discusses techniques that will help you effectively present an informational speech to an audience. Effective informative speakers demonstrate certain skills that contribute to their effectiveness, so the chapter covers the skills of defining, describing, explaining, narrating, and demonstrating. Finally, the chapter includes two examples of informative presentations.

# PRESENTATIONS

**TJ Leyden knows firsthand about hate crimes:** He spent fifteen years committing them.

Leyden is a former neo-Nazi skinhead and recruiter for the white supremacist movement. He admits to beating up people because of their race, harassing gays, and assaulting Latinos for fun. After 15 years in the movement, however, he experienced a change of heart. He broke all ties to white supremacist groups and went to work for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an organization that promotes tolerance. His role was as a teacher and speaker, informing people about the white supremacist movement and testifying against hate groups in court. He has trained FBI agents, spoken at the White House, and been the subject of several documentaries. Today he often presents a program, “Turning Away from Hate,” to college audiences.

As one of the few former skinheads who have left the movement and retained their own identity, Leyden is able to speak authoritatively about how the white supremacist movement operates. His presentation consists of straight talk—descriptions of brutal beatings and harassment, specific information about how hate groups recruit members, and unique visual aids, including the 29 tattoos of swastikas and other Nazi insignia that adorn his body.

*TJ Leyden’s experiences make him uniquely qualified to inform audiences about hate groups and hate crimes. As a speaker, his objective is to use information in such a way that the audience learns something new—such as exactly how hate groups appeal to new members. In this chapter you will learn specific techniques and skills you can use to craft an informative speech that will teach your audience something new or teach audience members to look at the world in a different way.*

Sources: (Leyden website) <http://www.strhatetalk.com/>; (CampusSpeak website) <http://www.campuspeak.com/speakers/leyden/>.

## How Do You Prepare an Informative Presentation?

To prepare an informative speech, you should ask yourself the following:

1. Why deliver the speech? That is, what is the intent, purpose, and goal of informative speaking?
2. What kinds of topics best lend themselves to informative speaking?
3. What are the immediate behavioral purposes of informative speaking, and how can you tell if you have fulfilled them?

### What Is Your Goal?

The end product of informative speaking is to increase what your listeners know about a topic, to help them learn information that will be useful to them, to clarify complex issues, to demonstrate something useful, to show how things relate in space,

or to arouse interest in topics that might initially seem boring or uninteresting but that really are important.

*To increase what your listeners know about a topic* is one kind of informative speaking that is very much what you experience in higher education every day. Informative speaking to increase knowledge is like most teaching. Your professors are trying to increase what you know. The good news is that you can use strategies in your informative presentation that you learn from watching professionals in nearly every class. Some examples of topics for such a presentation would be:

- Basic differences between germs and viruses
- The newest trends in green design for houses
- New clothing designers emerge with spring fashions
- What is nanotechnology?

These and countless other topics like them simply add to what your audience knows about a topic.

*To help your audience learn information that will be useful to them* is another common goal of informative presentations. You take courses that provide useful information, courses like food and nutrition, exercise physiology, wellness, and intercultural communication. In this kind of informative speaking you can also imitate or adapt strategies that you have seen in the classroom, in your workplace, in workshops, or seminars in which you have participated. Some examples of topics for such a presentation would be:

- Easy steps for avoiding the flu
- A fitness program for the lazy
- Chinese customs for greeting and leaving
- Travel tips for visitors to Mexico

These and many other topics like them increase what the audience knows and provide a path for those who wish to take it. Unlike the persuasive presentation that presses the audience to act, the informative speech provides useful information that the listener can choose to use or not. Think of the difference between commercial and public broadcasting. Commercial stations carry advertisements that end with an action step suggesting or often insisting on a sale, but public broadcasters are allowed only to name a sponsor without pushing for an action. Similarly, informative presentations can give you information on which you could act, but the primary purpose is to give you the ammunition, not to insist that you shoot.

*To clarify complex issues* is another goal of informative presentations. The recent financial meltdown is an excellent topic for this kind of presentation. Many complex issues and terms emerged from the financial crisis: subprime loans, toxic assets, stock bonuses, corporate bailouts, Chapter 7 bankruptcy, derivatives, foreclosures, and Ponzi schemes. Do all of us know what these terms mean even though they were in the news for many months? Probably not, but an informative speech of this type tackles such complex issues and terms and clarifies them. Here are some examples of questions one might answer in this type of presentation:

- What made Bernie Madoff famous?
- How does identity theft work?
- Does Obama's stimulus plan help students?
- Who was Ponzi?

These topics and many more are spawned by the news as it unfolds daily, weekly, and monthly. All you have to do is select a topic that leaves people scratching their heads and explain to your listeners what the issue can mean to them.

*To demonstrate something useful* is still another possible goal of an informative presentation. You already know that listeners remember better if they not only hear but do what you say. So, a demonstration presentation often has more impact on an audience than one that relies on words and images only. Some possible topics for a demonstration presentation are:

- Save a life with the Heimlich maneuver
- The correct way to lift weights
- How to dress for success
- Do-it-yourself wiring

These and other topics lend themselves nicely to showing an audience how something looks or works. In some cases—like the Heimlich maneuver—you can even have audience members show that they understood your message.

*To show how things relate in space* is still another possible kind of informative presentation. Much of what engineers, architects, electricians, plumbers, and fashion designers do is to demonstrate how to relate items in space. Here are some examples of this type of informative presentation:

- A landscape design for the new president's home
- How to make a man's sport coat
- Using electronics in a green residence
- Locating the islands of the Caribbean

Finding one's way around a foreign city, showing the best restaurants on an urban map, and locating the main features of a national park all require that you inform your listeners about spatial relations. Even if they never go to the Caribbean, your presentation will show its relative location in the vast expanse of the ocean.

▼ The informative speaker must arouse the interest of the audience and show the significance of the topic. In this case, it's how to dress for success.

Finally, *to arouse interest in topics that might at first seem uninteresting or boring* is a legitimate goal of an informative presentation. Teachers often have to try to arouse your interest in subjects that you might find uninteresting or boring, but effective teachers use strategies that you can also use. Some examples of topics that might at first blush appear uninteresting would be:

- The economics of recession
- The function of the catalytic converter
- Which vacuum is best for you?
- Details of the funeral business

Remember, the idea is to render possibly unexciting topics more interesting to your listeners. The idea is not to select some totally insignificant topic or unimportant topic so you can put lipstick on it because even after your presentation the topic will remain unimportant. Examples of such unimportant topics include the difference between a bolt and a screw, the presidential record of President William



**TRY THIS** 

Many soft drink cans carry a warning to phenylketonurics, but very few people know what this warning means. Can you think of other words, concepts, or ideas that seem mysterious? Think of three for possible presentation topics.

Henry Harrison who died in office 31 days after delivering one of the longest inaugural addresses in history (perhaps a lesson here), or the history of paper clips. You can render an overlooked or unexciting topic more interesting to an audience, but you should not strive to revive dead topics that deserve to remain buried.

**What Is Your Purpose?**

Two important questions for the informative speaker are these:

1. What do you want your audience to know or do as a result of your presentation?
2. How will you know if you are successful?

**What Is a Behavioral Purpose?**

Students learn better if they know exactly what the instructor expects them to learn. Similarly, an audience learns more from an informative presentation if the speaker states exactly what they are expected to know or do. The effects of an informative presentation, however, are unknown unless you make the effects behavioral; that is, your presentation should result in change you can observe. An instructor discovers whether students learned from a lecture by giving a quiz or having the students answer questions in class. In the same way, the informative speaker seeks to discover whether a message was effectively communicated by seeking overt feedback from the audience. The overt feedback you seek concerns the **immediate behavioral purposes** of your presentation—the actions expected from an audience during and immediately after a presentation.

The most common immediate behavioral purposes in an informative presentation encourage listeners to do the following:

1. *Define words, objects, or concepts.* For example, after hearing my presentation my audience members can define the term *foreclosure*, tell what anthropologists mean by an *artifact*, and provide a meaningful definition for the concept of *eminent domain*.

A statement of purpose for a presentation to define would look like this:

My purpose is to have my listeners tell me upon asking that the law allows government to acquire private or commercial property as long as the government pays market rates in a concept called “eminent domain.”

2. *Describe objects, person, or issues.* For example, after hearing my presentation my listeners can describe sedimentary rock formations, reveal the appearance of *contact dermatitis* (a common skin ailment in adults), or describe in a way we can all understand the issue surrounding the bond issue for a new school.

A statement of purpose for a presentation to describe would look like this:

My purpose is to have my listeners correctly explain back to me the main parts of the controversy surrounding the new athletic stadium.

**immediate behavioral purposes**

The actions expected from an audience during and immediately after a presentation.

3. *Distinguish between different things.* For example, after hearing my presentation the audience should be able to distinguish between a counterfeit dollar and a real dollar, between a conservative position and a liberal position, or between an ordinary automobile and a luxury automobile.

A statement of purpose for a presentation to distinguish between different things would look like this:

My purpose is to have my audience show me that they can tell the difference between a socialist position on state ownership and a democratic position on state ownership.

4. *Compare and/or contrast items.* For example, after hearing my speech my audience should be able to contrast a real diamond with a cubic zirconia, the similarities between a faux fur and actual animal fur, and the difference between Democrats and Republicans on the issue of taxes.

A statement of purpose for a presentation to compare and/or contrast would look like this:

Upon completion of my presentation members of the audience will be able to accurately reveal the major differences between Pentecostal churches and the so-called “main line” protestant churches.

In each of these behavioral purposes of an informative speech the audience can be asked to prove that they know and understand the speaker’s purpose by stating, writing, or demonstrating that they have learned. The speaker can call on a few individuals after the presentation to see if they can recall what the speech sought to teach; the speaker can ask some listeners to write down what they understood the speech topic to be; and the speaker can ask the audience to “prove” that they understood by inviting them to do what the speech taught: correctly lift heavy objects, use electric paddles to re-start the heart, or use a defensive maneuver during an attack. You can see an illustration of the behavioral purposes of informative presentations in Figure 14.1.

## How Do You Effectively Present Information to an Audience?

Audience analysis can help you determine how much audience members already know and how much you will have to tell them. Then you have to decide how to generate information hunger, achieve information relevance, use extrinsic motivation, select content, and avoid information overload in your presentation.

### Creating Information Hunger

An informative presentation is more effective if the presenter can generate **information hunger** in the audience—that is, if the presenter can create a need for information in the audience. Effective audience analysis reveals how you can create information hunger. Arousal of interest during the speech is related to how much the audience will comprehend. You could use the following **rhetorical questions**—questions asked for effect, with no answer expected—to introduce an informative speech and to arouse audience interest: “Are you aware of the number of abused children in your hometown?” “Can you identify five warning signs of cancer?” or “Do you know how to get the best college education for your money?” Depending on the audience, these rhetorical questions could arouse interest.

#### information hunger

The audience’s need for the information contained in the presentation.

#### rhetorical questions

Questions asked for effect, with no answer expected.

Giving an informative presentation is much like teaching a class. Your goal is to teach the audience about some fact, concept, process, or object. To determine whether you have met your goal as a presenter (or teacher), you must follow steps to assess whether your presentation achieved the desired behavioral outcome for your audience.

### Step 1: Plan Objectives

The first step in planning your presentation should be to determine what objectives you want your audience to meet.



### Step 2: Preassessment

The second step is to conduct a preassessment of your audience. Preassessment could take the form of asking a few classmates questions a few days before your presentation or even passing out a short quiz.

### Step 3: Deliver Presentation

The third step is to actually teach or inform your audience. You plan your presentation so that it provides the best opportunity for your audience to meet the objectives you have set for them.



### Step 4: Postassessment

The final step is postassessment. Like the preassessment, the postassessment could be informal—asking a few people questions after your presentation is completed—or more formal—handing out a quiz or survey.

Figure 14.1 Behavioral purposes for informative presentations.

Another method is to arouse the audience's curiosity. For example, you might state, "I have discovered a way to add 10 years to my life," "The adoption of the following plan will ensure lower taxes," or "I have a secret for achieving marital success." In addition, a brief quiz on your topic early in the speech arouses interest in finding the answers. Unusual clothing is likely to arouse interest in why you are so attired, and an object you created will likely inspire the audience to wonder how you made the object. Rhetorical questions and arousing curiosity are just a few of the many ways the presenter can generate information hunger.

## Demonstrating Information Relevance

A second factor relating an informative presentation to an audience is **information relevance**—*the importance, novelty, and usefulness of the information to the audience*. When selecting a topic for an informative presentation, the presenter should

### information relevance

The importance, novelty, and usefulness of the information to the audience.



carefully consider the relevance of the topic to the particular audience. Skin cancer might be a better topic in the summer when students are sunbathing, than in the winter when they are studying for finals. A presentation on taxes could be awfully dull. A speech on how present tax laws cost audience members more than they cost the rich might be more relevant, and a speech on three ways to reduce personal taxes might be even more relevant. However, if your audience happens to be composed of young people who have never paid taxes, none of the three topics might be relevant. Similarly, a speech on raising racehorses, writing a textbook, or living on a pension might be informative but not relevant because of the financial status, occupation, or age of the listeners. The informative presenter, then, should exercise some care in selecting a topic that interests the audience.

People expose themselves first to information that is supportive or that fits in with what they already believe or know. Thus your intended listeners' position on a topic can determine whether they will hear your speech and then whether they will listen (Wheless, 1974).

### Revealing Extrinsic Motivation

#### extrinsic motivation

A method of making information relevant by providing the audience with reasons outside the presentation itself for listening to the content of the presentation.

A third factor in relating an informative presentation to an audience is **extrinsic motivation**—reasons outside the presentation itself for listening to the content of the presentation. *An audience is more likely to listen to and comprehend a presentation if reasons exist outside the speech itself for concentrating on the content of the speech* (Petrie & Carrel, 1976). A teacher who tells students to listen carefully because they will be tested at the end of the hour is using extrinsic motivation. A student can use extrinsic motivation at the beginning of a presentation by telling an audience, “Attention to this speech will alert you to ways you can increase energy and creativity,” or “After hearing this speech, you will never purchase a poor-quality used car again.”

Extrinsic motivation is related to the concept of information relevance. The audience member who would ordinarily lack interest in the topic of fashion might find that topic relevant when it is linked to learning the latest fashion trends. The audience member's interest in being cool is an extrinsic motivation for listening carefully to the presentation.

Any external reasons for listening need to be mentioned early in the presentation, before the message you want the audience to remember. A statement such as “You will need this background material for the report due at the end of this week” provides extrinsic motivation for the managers who hear this message from their employer. Similarly, in an informative presentation, you may be able to command more attention, comprehension, and action from audience members if they know some reasons outside the presentation itself for attending to your message.



To see how informative topics can be related to the interests of your audience, watch “Relating a Speech to the Listeners’ Self-Interest” on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

### SKILL BUILDER

Either by yourself or with a partner, think or talk about how you would answer each of the following questions about your presentation:

1. What can you do in your presentation to generate information hunger, to make your audience famished for more?
2. What can you do to make sure the audience knows the importance and usefulness of your topic?
3. What reasons outside the presentation itself (extrinsic motivation) does the audience have for listening to you?

## Designing Informative Content

A fourth factor in relating an informative presentation to an audience is the selection of **informative content**—the main points and subpoints, illustrations, and examples used to clarify and inform. The following principles can guide you in selecting your speech content:

- *Audiences tend to remember and comprehend generalizations and main ideas better than details and specific facts.* The usual advice to speakers—that content should be limited to a relatively small number of main points and generalizations—is well grounded. Specifically, public speakers are well advised to limit themselves to two to five main points. Audiences are unlikely to remember a larger number of main points.
- *Relatively simple words and concrete ideas are significantly easier to retain than are more complex materials.* Long or unusual words may dazzle an audience into thinking you are intellectually gifted or verbally skilled, but they may also reduce audience understanding of the content. Keep the ideas and the words used to express those ideas at an appropriate level.
- *Humor can make a dull presentation more interesting to an audience, but humor does not seem to increase information retention.* The use of humor also improves the audience's perception of the character of the speaker and can increase a speaker's authoritative when a presentation is dull.
- *Early remarks about how the presentation will meet the audience's needs can create anticipation and increase the chances that the audience will listen and understand.* Whatever topic you select, you should tell audience members early in your presentation how the topic is related to them. Unless you relate the topic to their needs, they may choose not to listen.
- *Calling for overt audience response, or actual behavior, increases comprehension more than repetition does.* An informative presenter can ask for overt responses from audience members by having them perform the task being demonstrated (for example, two people dance after you explain the technique of the waltz); by having them stand, raise hands, or move chairs to indicate affirmative understanding of the speaker's statements (for example, "Raise your hand if you are familiar with local building codes"); or by having them write answers that will indicate understanding of the informative speech (for example, "List three ways to lower your blood pressure"). Having an audience go through an overt motion provides feedback to the speaker and can be rewarding and reinforcing for both presenter and listener.



▲ Having the audience practice what you preach greatly increases their comprehension.

### informative content

The main points and subpoints, illustrations, and examples used to clarify and inform.

**information overload**

Providing much more information than the audience can absorb in amount, complexity, or both.

## Avoiding Information Overload

The informative speaker needs to be wary about the amount of information included in a presentation. The danger is **information overload**—providing much more information than the audience can absorb in amount, complexity, or both.

Information overload comes in two forms. One is *quantity*: The speaker tells more than audience members ever wanted to know about a subject, even when they are interested. The speaker tries to cram as much information as possible into the time allowed. Unfortunately, this cramming of information decreases understanding.

A second form of information overload is *complexity*: The speaker uses language or ideas that are beyond the capacity of the audience to understand. An engineer or a mathematician who unloads detailed formulas on the audience or a philosopher who soars into the ethereal heights of abstract ideas may leave the audience feeling frustrated and more confused than before the speech.

The solution to information overload is to speak on a limited number of main points with only the best supporting materials and to keep the message at a level the audience can understand.

## Organizing Content

In an informative presentation, you can help the audience learn content by following these recommendations on how to organize your presentation:

1. Tell an audience what you are going to tell them (forecast), tell them, and tell them what you told them.
2. Use transitions and signposts to increase understanding.
3. Tell your audience which points are most important.
4. Repeat important points for better understanding.

Audiences can more easily grasp information when they are invited to anticipate and to review the organization and content of your speech. That is why the body of your presentation is bracketed by a preview of what you are going to say and a summary/review of what you said.

When you have completed this section on how to effectively present your material, check your presentation against the checklist in Table 14.1.



To compare effective and less effective elements of informative presentation, watch both versions of the “Cell Phone” speech on the *Online Learning Center*.

**TABLE 14.1 AN INFORMATIVE PRESENTATION CHECKLIST**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Does your audience have some generalizations to remember from your details and specific facts?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have you used simple words and concrete ideas to help your audience remember?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Can you comfortably use humor or wit in your presentation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Have you told your listeners early in your presentation how your message will meet their needs?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Have you determined some way to involve the audience actively in your presentation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Have you avoided information overload?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Have you used transitions, highlighted the most important points, included some repetition, and provided advance organizers?

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Using Language Effectively

Much of our communication with others involves the use of language to express meaning. Not surprisingly, one source of miscommunication is when we use language that others do not understand. During informative speeches, the use of language is essential for presenting clear ideas to your audience. Using concepts from chapter 3, take a moment to assess your use of various approaches to improving the clarity of your language. The following statements are things that you might say to help others understand you more clearly. Read each question carefully and respond using the following scale:

- 1 = Never say that
  - 2 = Sometimes say that
  - 3 = Regularly say that
  - 4 = Frequently say that
1. Use descriptive statements to check your perception.
  2. Restate another person's message by repeating back what you thought they meant.
  3. Describe exactly how you think something works, how it happens, or what it consists of.
  4. Explain the meaning of important words that you use.
  5. Specify when you made an observation.
  6. Identify the uniqueness of objects, events, or people that you encounter.
  7. Use words that others sometimes do not understand.
  8. Talk about things in more abstract ways.
  9. Base your messages only on your own perceptions.
  10. Make statements that do not depend on the situation or timing of your observation.
  11. Talk about people, places, and things from a more general viewpoint.
  12. Go with your instinct about what you think the other person means.

## Skills for an Informative Presentation

Public presenters who are highly effective at informative speaking demonstrate certain skills that contribute to their effectiveness. One of these skills is *defining*. Much of what an informative speaker does is reveal to an audience what certain terms, words, and concepts mean. Another skill is *describing*; the informative speaker often tells an audience how something appears: what it looks, sounds, feels, and even smells like. A third skill is *explaining*, or trying to say what something is in words the audience can understand. A fourth skill is *narrating*—an oral interpretation of a story, an event, or a description. A fifth skill is *demonstrating*, or showing an audience how to do something.

### Defining

Definitions are not dull. In fact, they are often the issues we fight about in our society. For example, when does a collection of cells become a fetus? When does

a fetus become a premature child? Or is a soul produced with the meeting of sperm and egg? Can marriage be between same-sex partners? If a baby boomer is someone born between 1946 and 1964, then what is someone who was born in 1985 called? Yes, we have serious battles over defining who is of retirement age (keeps getting older), who can go to war (fairly young), who can drink alcohol (often older than going to war), and what is a family (a gay couple with a child?).

We can define by using comparison and contrast, synonyms and antonyms, and even operational definition. A **comparison** shows the similarity between something well known and something less known. So, a student explained that tying a bow tie (unfamiliar to most) is the same as tying your shoelace (familiar to all), but since we are unaccustomed to tying a shoelace around our neck, the bow tie is challenging. A **contrast** clarifies by showing differences: “he was taller than you, fatter than you, and dumber than you.”

A **synonym** defines by using a word close or similar in meaning to the one you are trying to define. A student speaking about depression used synonyms to help the listeners understand: “A depressed person feels demoralized, purposeless, isolated, and distanced from others.” An **antonym** defines an idea by opposition. Hence, a student defined “a good used car” by what it is not: “Not full of dents, not high mileage, not worn on the seats, not using lots of oil, and not involved in a serious accident.”

An **operational definition** defines by explaining a process. So, an operational definition of a cake is the sequence of actions depicted in a recipe. An operational definition of concrete is the formula-driven sequence of ingredients that correctly added over the correct time period results in concrete.

## Describing

You already know from chapter 3 on language that speakers are better off being concrete than abstract, being specific instead of general, and accurate instead of ambiguous. You also know about paraphrasing, indexing, and dating. But effective descriptions have other qualities that have not yet been considered, qualities such as **imagery**, a figure of speech that hits at the senses and stimulates your synapses to see, hear, and feel what the words are saying.

Look first at this description of Reggie Watts who started his career as a singer with bands but ended up being a stand-up comedian. Here is how one writer characterized him:

He arrives on stage with enormous amber rings dripping like tree sap from his fingers, his Afro a Miracle-Gro spider plant. Sometimes he’s painted a pinkie nail pink. He might be wearing a ridiculous sweater. (Tourtelot, 2008)

That’s how he looks. Here is how he sounds:

Then he lays down a track. He starts with the sound of a kick drum, from deep in his throat, recorded into a loop sampler—a small machine often used by guitarists to layer melodies. He adds a snare with a few controlled exhales. A couple of high notes with his tongue against his teeth. And then he starts to sing, in French or gibberish German. Morphing imperceptibly into a cockney slang, he seems to be talking about something from a human-resources manual or a dating disaster. . . . (Tourtelot, 2008)

### comparison

Shows the similarity between something well known and something less known.

### contrast

Clarifies by showing differences.

### synonym

Defines by using a word close or similar in meaning to the one you are trying to define.

### antonym

Defines an idea by opposition.

### operational definition

Defines by explaining a process.

### imagery

Use of words that appeal to the senses, that create pictures in the mind.

## TRY THIS

*Think of something that you have explained to others many times at work or at home. Does your explanation get increasingly efficient with practice? Can you practice some of your explanations from your presentation on others before you address an audience so that your explanation will be easy to understand?*

Do these words help you picture in your mind what Reggie Watts looks and sounds like? In two sentences the words tell you that he wears large amber rings, wears his hair in an uncontrolled Afro, colors his pinkie nail pink, and does not care much about his clothing. The actual imagery occurs with words such as “enormous amber rings dripping like tree sap” and “his Afro a Miracle-Gro spider plant.” Words can paint pictures in the mind that appeal to the senses.

Another figure of speech appears in the description of Watts’ voice. **Metaphor** likens one thing to another by treating it as if it were that thing. The paragraph on how Watts sounds is metaphorical in that the writer describes his voice as if it were an entire band: “sound of a kick drum,” “recorded into a loop sampler,” “he adds a snare”—all done with voice and throat. You can perform similar magic with your own words if you recognize the potential of speaking with imagery and metaphor.



## Explaining

A third skill for the informative presenter is explaining an idea in words the audience can understand. An **explanation** is a means of idea development that simplifies or clarifies an idea while arousing audience interest.

An important step in explaining is analyzing, deconstructing, or dissecting something to enhance audience understanding. Unless you become skilled at dissecting a concept, your explanation may leave audience members more confused than they were before your presentation. You have to determine what you can do to make the concept more palatable to the audience. For example, a biology professor in an article about global warming (Harden & Eilperin, 2006) expressed the problem by explaining how animals and plants are migrating north or climbing higher—if they can—to survive:

Wild species don’t care who is in the White House. It is very obvious they are desperately trying to move to respond to the changing climate. Some are succeeding. But for the ones that are already at the mountain top or the poles, there is no place for them to go. They are the ones that are going extinct. (p. 19)

### metaphor

A figure of speech that likens one thing to another by treating it as if it were that thing.

### explanation

A means of idea development that simplifies or clarifies an idea while arousing audience interest.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Students often see speakers as “conduits” of information, disseminating facts to an audience. Alternatively, you could think about speakers as “narrators” of public-speaking events. Audience members could be considered co-constructors of meaning about stories told. The introduction of the presentation could set the scene, including historical context. The organization of main points could be considered an unfolding plotline with heroes and villains, problems and solutions. In general, how does a narrative metaphor change, if at all, the way you would prepare for and deliver a public presentation?*

**narrating**

The oral presentation and interpretation of a story, a description, or an event; includes dramatic reading of prose or poetry.



To see how video can be used to enhance an informative presentation, watch “Playing Drums” on the *Online Learning Center*.

**demonstrating**

Showing the audience what you are explaining.

## Narrating

A fourth skill for informative speakers is **narrating**—the oral presentation and interpretation of a story, a description, or an event. In a presentation, narration includes the dramatic reading of some lines from a play, a poem, or another piece of literature; the voice-over on a series of slides or a silent film to illustrate a point in a speech; and even the reading of such information as a letter, a quotation, or a selection from a newspaper or magazine. The person who does the play-by-play account of a ball game is narrating, and so is the presenter who explains what a weaver is doing in an informative presentation on home crafts.

The person who uses narration in a presentation moves just a little closer to oral interpretation of literature, or even acting, because the narration is highlighted by being more dramatic than the surrounding words. Sections of your presentation that require this kind of special reading also require special practice. If you want a few lines of poetry in your presentation to have the desired impact, you will need to rehearse them.

## Demonstrating

A fifth skill for informative speakers is **demonstrating**—showing the audience what you are explaining. Some topics are communicated best through words; other topics are best communicated by demonstrating. You can talk about CPR, the Heimlich maneuver, fashion trends, and weight lifting, and you can even read about these subjects. But nothing aids in the understanding of these topics better than seeing and doing CPR, practicing the Heimlich maneuver, seeing the latest fashion trends, or actually lifting some weights while learning about them.

## Two Examples of Informative Presentations

So far in this chapter, you have learned how to select a topic for your informative presentation; how to determine behavioral purposes and goals for the informative presentation; how to present information to an audience; how to organize the informative presentation; and how to define, describe, explain, narrate, and demonstrate the concepts in your presentation. Now let’s look at the manuscript of an actual informative presentation delivered by a student.

Notice how the presenter gains and maintains the audience’s attention, relates the topic to himself and to the audience, and forecasts the organization and development of the topic. Notice also how the presenter attempts to clarify the topic with examples high in audience interest; translates the ideas into language the audience can understand; and defines, describes, and explains. The marginal notes will help identify how the presenter is fulfilling the important functions of the introduction, body, and conclusion of an informative presentation.

### The AK-47 by Alexei Victorovich

I am not a member of the National Rifle Association, not a member of the National Guard, and not even a veteran of any war, but I am a person who is interested in how weapons have shaped cultures and civilizations through the ages. I am a history major who likes to learn what shaped our past and influences our future. The book that aroused my interest was Jared Diamond’s book titled *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. In that

**Source credibility:**  
Relates topic to presenter.

**Announces topic.**

book he shows among other things the role of weapons in human history. I read that book, and then decided to look more closely at a weapon often mentioned but rarely explained, a weapon that has had a profound influence on recent and current history—the AK-47. What I want you to know and understand today is what this weapon is, where it came from, and why we should know and care about its existence. When I have completed this presentation, I think you will be as impressed as I was about the destructive power of one weapon developed by one man who was just trying to protect his homeland from a powerful enemy.

First, what is an AK-47? *Wikipedia* describes the AK-47 as a Russian-made assault rifle that was compact, light weight, and capable of selective firing. Unlike the auto-load rifles of the time, the AK-47 could be aimed, stopped, and started with multiple shells firing every time the trigger was depressed. Often called the *Kalashnikov AK-47* after its creator, the Russian website dedicated to this weapon correctly calls it “the most widespread weapon in the world. More than 50 armies of the world have in their arsenals firearms created by Kalashnikov. . . .” The inventor was Mikhail Kalashnikov, a Russian inventor who developed and standardized the assault rifle in 1947. That is why the weapon is called the AK-47, after the year of its invention. Now that you know who invented this weapon and where he is from, you should know why he invented this assault weapon.

Second, you should know why this Russian inventor, Mikhail Kalashnikov, invented the AK-47. Larry Kahaner, author of *AK-47: The Weapon That Changed the Face of War*, tells the story. In World War I, soldiers shot at each other for months from trenches with guns that shot a bullet with each pull of the trigger with frequent reloading necessary. In World War II, the Germans devised the *blitzkrieg* or “lightning war” in which they attacked one point in the enemy defenses, broke through, and invaded with waves of soldiers who thrust deep into the invaded territory.

One of the places the Germans invaded was the town in Russia in which Mikhail Kalashnikov lived in September 1941. The Nazi soldiers killed 80% of the Russians who lived in Mikhail’s home city of 80,000 people. Twenty-one-year-old Mikhail, wounded by enemy fire, took two days to reach medical help to mend his injured left shoulder. After that harrowing experience he had nightmares about his slaughtered comrades and, according to author Kahaner, “he became obsessed with creating a submachine gun that would drive the Germans from his homeland.”

He sketched a prototype while recovering in the hospital, later developed that prototype in a metal shop, and then went to a technical school where he created a carbine. In 1947 he finally created the *Avtomat Kalashnikova* or automatic Kalashnikov or AK, a light-weight, durable submachine gun. He had created a weapon that would protect his country for decades, that would become the weapon of choice for many anti-Western armies, and that would arm terrorists around the world.

My third point is “Why should we care about this weapon?” Well, we worry about weapons of mass destruction, but nuclear weapons have not really destroyed humans yet. Atomic weapons twice fell on Japan with enough destructiveness to stop a war, but nuclear weapons have so far been used mainly to threaten destruction. The AK-47 and its relatives, on the other hand, have killed millions.

A December 2006 article in *The Washington Post Weekly Edition* revealed the following facts.

- In 1956 the Russians crushed the Hungarian revolt by using the AK-47 as the main armament to kill 50,000 Hungarians.
- In Vietnam American soldiers took AKs from enemy dead because the American-made M-16s jammed in combat.
- In the 1980s our CIA funneled \$2 billion worth of Chinese-made AKs to Afghanistan to help the Afghans defeat the Russian occupiers.

Relates topic to audience.

States purpose, forecasts content and organization.

Reveals intended audience response.

Uses signpost.

Defines term.

Cites sources of information.

Uses direct quotation for support in the form of facts.

Uses transition.

Describes.

Explains.

Uses narrative to reveal historical background.

Cites source and uses direct quote.

Defines term.

Forecasts in transition.

Uses signpost.

Uses contrast to clarify.

Cites source.  
Reveals facts.

Gives specific examples to support claim.



- Uses direct quote from authoritative source.
- When America invaded Afghanistan after the World Trade Center was destroyed our soldiers found an enemy heavily armed with AKs.
  - In Iraq Americans tried to arm the newly formed Iraqi army with American-made M-16s and M-4s only to find that the Iraqis insisted on AKs.
  - The article quotes a senior advisor to the Coalitional Provisional Authority in Iraq as saying: “For better or worse, the AK-47 is the weapon of choice in that part of the world. It turns out that every Iraqi male above the age of 12 can take them apart and put them together blindfolded and is a pretty good shot.”

Signals ending.

For sixty years the AK-47 has reigned supreme on the battlefield, in urban warfare, and among terrorists around the world. Our fear of nuclear weapons is greater, but the AK-47 has been the unheralded weapon that has actually killed more people.

Summarizes and reviews.

I began this presentation by pointing out that I am a history major who was inspired by a book on how weapons shape cultures. I went from that large worldview to examine a specific weapon—the AK-47. While the world was trembling in fear of nuclear holocaust, a Russian man, wounded in battle, was only trying to protect his homeland. In so doing, he unleashed a weapon so efficient, effective, and powerful that it has wiped out more lives than any single weapon known to humankind. Most amazing is the fact that Mikhail Kalashnikov still lives. Eighty-five years old, author Kahaner describes him as “tiny, feeble, near deaf, his right hand losing control because of tremors.” And what did this old man tell *The Guardian* in 2002? “I wish I had invented a lawnmower,” he said. Mikhail’s invention sixty years ago may be the most dramatic case of unintended consequences in world history.

Cites source.

Provides quote.

### Annotated References

Annotated references tells what each source revealed.

- Diamond, J. (1999). *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. The idea for the presentation came from this source. <http://Kalshnikov.guns.ru> The home page for a Russian website dedicated to history and details of Mikhail Kalashnikov and his invention, the AK-47. Retrieved December 9, 2006. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AK-47>. Retrieved December 9, 2006. The definitions came from this free web encyclopedia.
- Kahaner, L. (2006, December 4–10). The weapon of mass destruction: Who needs nukes when there are so many AK-47s to go around? *The Washington Post Weekly Edition*, pp. 22–23. Much of the information for the presentation came from this source.

The second example of an informative presentation comes in the form of a complete and formal sentence outline in which every entry is a complete sentence. Notice how the outline includes the functions of an introduction, a body with arguments and evidence, and a conclusion that fulfills the functions of a conclusion. The side notes indicate what the presenter is doing in each part of the presentation.

### The Death Penalty: Should It Be Legal? by Aaron Skjerseth

#### Introduction

Relates speaker to topic: source credibility.

- I. A senior majoring in criminal justice and journalism, I have taken several courses on the death penalty and have written a research paper on the topic, so I have a position on the issue that I am eager to share.

States position on issue.

- A. I am against the death penalty.

Relates topic to audience.

- B. I think all people in the USA should be concerned about our incarceration and killing record: the most people in prison and a well-used death penalty.

Uses facts as support.

- C. The position I am eager to share is that the death penalty is unjustified as a legitimate form of law enforcement, positions I plan to support with three main arguments, followed by the cost of the death penalty.

*Reveals bold position that gains audience attention. Shows organization and development.*

### Body

- II. I will look first at a website called [prodeathpenalty.com](http://prodeathpenalty.com) to find the arguments used by those who favor the death penalty.
- A. The first argument is that the death penalty is a deterrence because possible perpetrators avoid crime to avoid the punishment.
- B. The second argument is that the death penalty incapacitates criminals because they cannot be committing crime if they are behind bars.
- C. The third argument is that the death penalty serves as retribution, as pay-back time for society against criminals.
- III. With information from [deathpenaltyinfo.org/](http://deathpenaltyinfo.org/), I find evidence that disputes all three of these arguments for the death penalty.
- A. Eighty percent of the experts in the American Society of Criminology do not believe that the death penalty serves as a deterrent.
- B. Thirty-five states allow life without parole that deters lawbreakers from committing crimes.
- C. Retribution or revenge is a motive that is not embraced by the victims of crime: In 2007 a group called Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights issued a statement saying "The death penalty does not serve victims' families."
- IV. The biggest argument against the death penalty is that the decision to kill is irreversible even though a surprising number of death-row inmates have later been proven innocent.
- A. Linder on the University of Missouri–Kansas City Law School website notes that one of the most famous death-penalty mistakes occurred long ago when the state executed Sacco and Vanzetti for a crime they did not commit.
- B. By 2009 according to the website for [deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://deathpenaltyinfo.org), over 130 prisoners have been released after courts overturned their convictions and at least eight are believed to have been executed for crimes they did not commit.
- C. Governor George Ryan of Illinois suspended the death penalty in his state when 13 condemned prisoners were freed for wrongful convictions (Hastings, 2009).
- V. Retired "Hanging Judge" Donald McCartin, a self-proclaimed right-wing Republican from California, changed his mind about an eye for an eye after experiencing the time and cost of the death penalty according to an AP article entitled "Life in Prison Cheaper than Chair" (Hastings, 2009).
- A. McCartin, now a death penalty opponent, says "It's ten times more expensive to kill them than to keep them alive" (Hastings, 2009).
1. California's system with 667 on death row takes an average of 20 years from conviction to legal injection.
  2. New Jersey spent \$4.2 million in legal costs for each death sentence without successfully killing anyone since 1963 so Governor Corzine commuted the execution of 10 men to life in prison to save money.

*Uses oral footnote.*

*States argument one: deterrence.*

*States argument two: incapacitation.*

*States argument three: retribution.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Offers three rebuttals.*

*Provides supporting evidence: expert opinion.*

*Provides supporting evidence: life without parole.*

*Provides supporting evidence: victims deny value of revenge.*

*States another main argument.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Provides supporting evidence: a death penalty mistake.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Provides supporting evidence: statistics.*

*Provides supporting evidence: factual example.*

*Provides testimonial evidence.*

*States last argument.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Provides testimonial evidence.*

*Provides supporting statistics.*

*Provides supporting statistics.*

### Conclusion

- VI. I have shown that the arguments favoring the death penalty are questionable; that reasonable people agree that deterrence, incapacitation, and retribution are not good reasons to kill someone; courts have made plenty of mistakes, and costs are prohibitive.
- A. Armed with this information about the death penalty, you can think critically about our use of this method in the USA.
- B. The symbol of justice is blindfolded, perhaps so she will not see the injustice that has occurred in our country with the death penalty.

*Concludes with summary/review.*

*Challenges audience: critical thinking.*

*Fulfills purpose.*

*Finishes with an image of blind justice.*

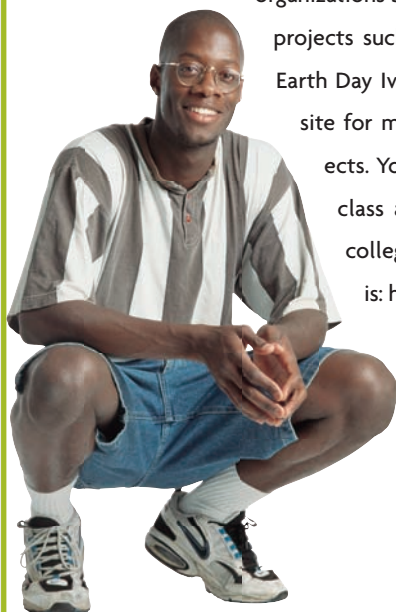
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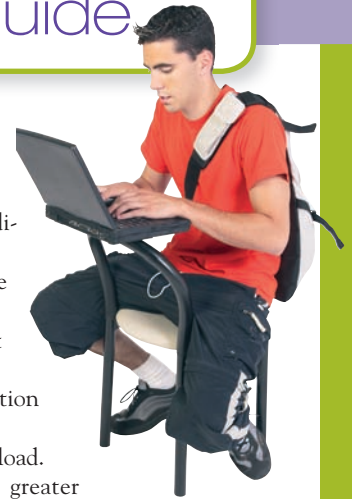
This sentence outline for an informative presentation was written by Aaron Skjerseth, a double major in criminal justice and journalism who is also an editor for the student newspaper.

## get INVOLVED!

How did students at Clark College in the state of Washington get involved in serious service-learning projects in their community? They developed partnerships with over 90 organizations by developing class-specific projects and college-wide projects such as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service, the Earth Day Ivy Pull, and the Clark Clothing Closet. See their website for more of their events that invite service-learning projects. You can give an informative speech to students in your class about opportunities for service learning that other colleges have tried with success. The Clark College website is: [http://www.clark.edu/student\\_services/employment/service\\_learning/volunteer\\_programs.php](http://www.clark.edu/student_services/employment/service_learning/volunteer_programs.php).



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Preliminary information that you need to know in informing others includes:
  - The intent and goal of informative presentations.
  - The kinds of topics that are most appropriate.
  - The kinds of immediate behavioral purposes of informative presentations and how to determine if you have fulfilled them.
- ▶ Strategies for informing others include:
  - Generating information hunger, an audience need for the information.
  - Achieving information relevance by relating information to the audience.
  - Using extrinsic motivation, reasons outside the presentation itself for understanding the presentation's content.
- ▶ Shaping the informative content requires:
  - Limiting the number of main points.
  - Limiting the number of generalizations.
- Selecting language the audience can understand.
- Using specifics to illustrate an abstract idea.
- Including humor or wit when appropriate.
- Revealing how the information meets audience needs.
- Avoiding information overload.
- Organizing content for greater understanding.
- ▶ Skills for informative presentations include:
  - Defining meanings for an audience.
  - Describing by using specific, concrete language.
  - Explaining by clarifying and simplifying complex ideas.
  - Narrating by using stories to illustrate your ideas.
  - Demonstrating by showing a process or procedure to your audience.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Antonym

Comparison

Contrast

Demonstrating

Explanation

Extrinsic motivation

Imagery

Immediate behavioral purposes

Information hunger

Information overload

Information relevance

Informative content

Metaphor

Narrating

Operational definition

Rhetorical questions

Synonym

## Study Questions

1. The goal of informative presentations is to
  - a. induce change in the audience
  - b. discourage the audience from taking action
  - c. increase an audience's knowledge or understanding of a topic
  - d. identify a problem and determine a solution
2. How do you make an informational topic interesting to the audience?
  - a. Relate your own experiences with the subject.
  - b. Avoid telling stories of your own experiences with the subject.
  - c. Maintain the gaps in your listeners' knowledge of your subject.
  - d. Arousing interest is not important.
3. Which is *not* an appropriate topic for an informative presentation?
  - a. CPR techniques
  - b. animals and their positive effects on the elderly
  - c. wedding traditions
  - d. everyone should donate blood

4. If audiences are able to describe information or define words related to your topic during and after a presentation, you have successfully accomplished your
  - a. demonstration
  - b. immediate behavioral purposes
  - c. imagery
  - d. information overload
5. The first step in planning your presentation should be
  - a. asking a few people questions after the presentation is complete
  - b. teaching or informing your audience
  - c. determining what objectives you want your audience to meet
  - d. conducting a preassessment of the audience
6. Asking rhetorical questions and arousing curiosity are two ways a speaker can create
  - a. behavioral purposes
  - b. topics for informative speeches
  - c. preassessments
  - d. information hunger
7. When presenting information to an audience, a topic's importance, novelty, and usefulness is a key factor known as
  - a. information relevance
  - b. information hunger
  - c. informative content
  - d. information overload
8. Which of the following is *not* a guideline to follow when choosing the content of your presentation?
  - a. Use relatively simple words because they are easier to understand.
  - b. Tell the audience early in your presentation how the topic is related to them, so they will choose to listen.
  - c. Develop as many main ideas and use as many details as possible to make the presentation interesting.
  - d. Ask for overt responses from audience members to increase comprehension.
9. When organizing the content of your presentation, you should
  - a. keep the topic a mystery until the body of the speech
  - b. use transitions to increase understanding
  - c. let the audience decide which points are the most important
  - d. avoid repeating important points so the audience isn't bored
10. \_\_\_\_\_ simplify or clarify ideas while stimulating audience attention, and \_\_\_\_\_ is when you show the audience what you are explaining.
  - a. Explanations; demonstrating
  - b. Definitions; narrating
  - c. Descriptions; demonstrating
  - d. Narrations; defining

#### Answers:

1. (c); 2. (a); 3. (d); 4. (b); 5. (c); 6. (d); 7. (a); 8. (c); 9. (b); 10. (a)

## Critical Thinking

1. Think of stories you and your friends tell each other. How do they or you effectively create information hunger at the beginning of the story? Why are these methods successful?
2. Find a manuscript of an important speech (such as Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" or Ronald Reagan's "Challenger" speech). On the manuscript, identify the important presentation functions being fulfilled. Did the speaker use transitions? Gain attention? Describe, explain, or define?

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Identify four action goals of persuasive speaking.
2. Distinguish between immediate behavioral purposes and ultimate goals.
3. Describe and utilize persuasive-speaking strategies.
4. Recall four ethical guidelines for persuasive speaking.
5. State and utilize some persuasive-speaking skills.
6. Use some strategies for resisting persuasive appeals.





# PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS

**Few students think they will ever give a persuasive speech,** but they admit that they are likely to be asked to introduce new products, convince others to use new methods, and talk with fellow workers about complying with policies and procedures. All of these efforts are simply variations of a persuasive presentation. In this chapter you will first learn what persuasion is. Then you will learn how to prepare a persuasive presentation, when to use some strategies of persuasion, and how persuasion can be perceived differently in various cultures and co-cultures. Because persuasion is perceived with suspicion in our culture, you will explore some ethical problems related to persuasion. Finally, you will learn some ways to protect yourself from unwanted persuasive efforts; in other words, you will learn some strategies for resisting persuasive appeals.



**First Lady Michelle Obama chose to make** her first commencement speech at the University of California-Merced. The date was May 16, 2009, and the occasion was a special one. In addition to celebrating the first class that had spent four years at this brand-new campus, Mrs. Obama was kicking off a campaign to promote public service. Therefore in addition to celebrating the graduates' achievement, the normal goal of a commencement speech, the main objective of the speech was to persuade her audience to undertake a career in public service.

The First Lady began her speech by explaining why she was making it—because the entire Merced community had undertaken a letter-writing campaign to persuade her to come. After praising the way the community came together to bring her there, she described the nature of this hard-working community in which everyone came together for the common good. This allowed her to transition into her main point—that her audience of college graduates should pay back the community by undertaking a life of service. She ended with this stirring plea:

As advocate and activist Marian Wright Edelman says, “Service is the rent we pay for living . . . it is the true measure, the only measure of our success.” So, graduates, when times get tough and fear sets in, think of those people who paved the way for you and those who are counting on you to pave the way for them. Never let setbacks or fear dictate the course of your life. Hold on to the possibility and push beyond the fear. Hold on to the hope that brought you here today, the hope of laborers and immigrants, settlers and slaves, whose blood and sweat built this community and made it possible for you to sit in these seats. . . . You are the hope of Merced and of this nation. And you will be the realization of our dreams and the hope for the next generation.

*Michelle Obama's speech to the graduates of University of California-Merced illustrates one of the approaches to persuasion you will learn about in this chapter: shaping your purpose to your listeners' hopes, needs, and desires. In this chapter you will learn how to use argument, evidence, and different forms of proof to craft effective and ethical persuasive presentations.*

Sources: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/05/16/MN9Q17M1M0.DTL>; (text of speech)  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/16/michelle-obama-commenceme\\_n\\_204302.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/16/michelle-obama-commenceme_n_204302.html).

## What Is a Persuasive Presentation?

You will be expected to deliver at least one persuasive presentation in your class and, perhaps, many in your lifetime. A **persuasive presentation** is a message designed strategically to induce change in the audience. Your intention is to change the listeners in some way consistent with your purpose. Here are some examples of persuasive topics:

- New Rules Needed for Drug Use Among Athletes
- How to Succeed as a Single Mom
- Managing Difficult People in the Workplace
- Why Our Legislature Must Lower Tuition

### persuasive presentation

A message designed to strategically induce change in an audience.

You can generate possible topics by using brainstorming or concept mapping as described in chapter 10. Then make sure your topic relates to you (source credibility) and your audience (audience analysis), as well as being a topic of importance.

### What Is Your Immediate Purpose and Ultimate Goal?

Your presentation should have an **immediate purpose**—a statement of what you intend to accomplish in this particular presentation. Given that a single presentation to a captive audience is unlikely to produce dramatic results, you need to be realistic about anticipated results. So, you might state: “My immediate purpose is to have my listeners write down the e-mail addresses of legislators so they can communicate with them about lowering our tuition.”

You may also have an **ultimate goal**—a statement of purposes that could be achieved with continuing efforts to persuade. You know, for instance, that your one-shot persuasive effort to alert your listeners to steroids and designer drugs used by athletes is not going to produce a lot of action. But you also know that the more your audience hears about this issue from many sources, the more likely something will be done about it. You may be just one drop in a pond, but if enough raindrops fall the pond itself will change. Your ultimate goal could be stated like this: “My ultimate goal is to encourage my listeners to learn more about this issue over time so eventually new rules will keep performance-enhancing drugs out of the sports arena.”

#### immediate purpose

A statement of what you intend to accomplish in this particular presentation.

#### ultimate goal

A statement of purposes that could be achieved with continuing attempts to persuade.

### MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Most people misunderstand how persuasion works. For instance, some people think persuasion is the skillful manipulation of images to get people to do something they would not otherwise do. To them, persuasion is “seduction,” getting their way with people by influencing them against their will. Actually, forcing people to think or behave as you wish is not persuasion but coercion. A related phenomenon involves tricking people or using fraudulent means to gain compliance; this is not persuasion but manipulation. Neither coercion nor manipulation is close to persuasion as portrayed in this text. Why? Because both coercion and manipulation bypass a person’s ability to choose, to make a decision based on sound information and ideas.*

## Introducing Your Persuasive Presentation

The introduction for your persuasive presentation has many similarities to other introductions with one exception. The introduction seeks to gain and maintain attention (see chapter 12), relating the topic to the speaker (see chapter 11), and to forecast the organization and development of the presentation. Where the introduction differs from others is in relating the topic to the audience and in revealing the purpose of the presentation.

### Shaping the Persuasive Purpose to the Listeners

In an informative presentation you state clearly at the outset what you want to accomplish. You tell the audience what you want them to learn from the very beginning. In a persuasive presentation you need to analyze your audience to determine

when and how you are going to reveal your purpose. The reason for waiting to reveal your purpose is that the audience is likely to reject your message from the beginning unless you prepare the way. If you state in your first few words that you intend to change the audience's religion, political party, or position on abortion, you are likely to have them hostile from the beginning. To avoid rejection or hostility, you instead determine how much change you can ask for and decide what strategies you can use to gain the desired result.

## Analyzing the Listeners

In chapter 10 you learned how to analyze an audience using everything from demographic analysis to surveys. Analyzing your audience is very important in persuasive presentations because you have to decide when you are going to reveal your purpose and how you are going to achieve that purpose.

You do not want to ask for too much change in your listeners because you are likely to get a **boomerang effect**—that is, the audience likes you and your message less after the presentation than they did before. To avoid that undesirable result, you must analyze your audience to decide when you should reveal your purpose. If you are not asking for much of a change, you may reveal your purpose in the introduction of the speech, or your introducer may even reveal the purpose for you. But if what you are asking the audience to think or do will take some preparation before they are likely to accept your purpose, then you should provide the reasons first and then reveal your action step toward the end of the presentation. Audience analysis is the key to when you reveal your purpose.

### boomerang effect

The audience likes you and your message less after your presentation than they did before.

## What Purposes Are Persuasive?

Two purposes of persuasive presentations are difficult to evaluate and measure; two others are challenging to present. You will need to consult with your instructor about which persuasive purposes are favored in your class.

The two persuasive purposes that are difficult to evaluate and measure are **continuance** and **deterrence** (Fotheringham, 1966). **Continuance** is encouraging the audience to keep doing what they are doing. Religious leaders often deliver messages encouraging their followers to keep the faith, to behave as their holy texts say. Managers often find themselves trying to motivate the people they manage to keep working to a high standard. Communication teachers sometimes are less convinced that this continuance purpose is a good thing because effectiveness is difficult to prove: The audience behaves the same way after the presentation as they did before, but is their continuing behavior related to the presentation?

Similarly, the persuasive purpose of **deterrence**—discouraging listeners from taking some action—is difficult to demonstrate. For instance, you deliver a presentation against some unhealthy habit—smoking, drinking, or using illegal drugs—to a group that does not smoke, drink, or use illegal drugs. How can anyone tell whether your presentation kept the listeners from those unhealthy habits? Again, some communication teachers invite this persuasive purpose; others do not.

On the other hand, very few communication teachers have difficulty with the two persuasive purposes of adoption and discontinuance. **Adoption** means that the listeners start a new behavior as a result of the persuasive presentation—for example, they start exercising, start eating healthy foods, and go on a diet. The persuader has some proof of effectiveness if people in the audience state on a postpresentation questionnaire that they are going to take up some new behavior. Suppose a regional sales manager presents new and higher goals for the local sales representatives, and

### continuance

Encouraging the audience to keep doing what they are doing.

### deterrence

Discouraging listeners from taking some action.

### adoption

The listeners start a new behavior as a result of the persuasive presentation.

sales increase by 25% over the next 3 months. This increase is proof that the persuasive effort by the regional sales manager had the desired effect.

**Discontinuance** is a persuasive purpose rooted in convincing listeners to stop some current behavior—for example, to quit your gang, stop taking so much sick leave, or desist from drinking so much caffeine. Despite decades of discouraging them from eating too much, from exercising too little, and from smoking at all, Americans are the fattest people on earth, exercise way too little, and continue to die in large numbers from smoking cigarettes. Discontinuance and adoption are challenging persuasive purposes well worth your efforts in a presentation.

#### discontinuance

A persuasive purpose rooted in convincing listeners to stop some current behavior.

## Why Should You Try to Persuade?

After reading that years of public service campaigns have failed to change Americans' eating, exercise, and smoking habits, you might wonder why anyone should expect you to be successful in a classroom presentation. The key factor is that face-to-face persuasive efforts are more effective than public service campaigns for at least two reasons.

One reason is that face-to-face communication is one of the most effective modes of communication. Consider the difference between a public service announcement on TV discouraging bulimia and a classroom presentation on the same subject by a classmate who confesses to bulimia and reveals to the class the awful, life-threatening effects of the disease. Which mode—a TV spot or the person herself—would have the most influence on you? Although you can see almost any entertainer on video, thousands of people show up for concerts because they want to see the entertainer in the flesh. The live concert has more soul than a video can provide. The same is true of classroom speeches: Actually experiencing someone's message in the flesh and in real time is a more powerful persuader than is a mediated message.

A second reason the classroom presentation is more effective is that the classroom has a captive audience. In other words, your classmates are not a voluntary audience that came to hear you in particular talk about your topic. Rather, many in the classroom audience have to listen to a speaker and message not of their choosing. The class ends up hearing from gang members, newly divorced individuals, persons on parole, successful business managers, top salespeople, single moms, and functional fathers. Credible presenters on many topics face an audience that often does not know what is going to be said until they hear the message. The unexpectedness of the experience increases the chances that you are going to be persuading at least some individuals in your audience.

## How Do You Persuade?

To persuade others in school, at home, or at work, you must employ strategies chosen to work best on your listeners. The strategies described below will work only if you have correctly determined that your audience will respond positively to them. Here again, audience analysis is the key to effectiveness.

### Using Argument to Persuade: Fact, Policy, and Value

Listeners who know or like logic respond positively to arguments with evidence that constitutes proof. Lawyers and debaters are well versed in logical argument, and many educated people respond positively to this approach. An **argument** consists of a proposition that asserts some course of action. Ordinarily, the proposition concerns a question of fact, policy, or value. An example of a **proposition of fact**—an assertion that

#### argument

A proposition that asserts some course of action.

#### proposition of fact

An assertion that can be proved or disproved as consistent with reality.



can be proved or disproved as consistent with reality—would be “The World Trade Center was destroyed by organized terrorists.” To demonstrate the truth of this proposition, you would not have to prove that the World Trade Center was completely destroyed, but you would have to provide evidence that the destroyers were organized and that their goal was terrorism.

An example of a **proposition of policy**—a proposal of a new rule—would be “The USA should allow prescription drug trade with Canada.” To demonstrate the merit of this proposition, you would provide evidence that such drug trade would reduce costs, increase efficiency, and satisfy the needs of customers. In other words, you would provide evidence that the policy should be adopted.

An example of a **proposition of value**—a statement of what we should embrace as more important to our culture—would be “Americans must put security over First Amendment freedoms.” To demonstrate the merit of this proposition, you would provide evidence that airline searches, wiretapping, and profiling are more important than our right to protection against unreasonable searches, our expectation of privacy, and our right not to be singled out for negative treatment because of race or ethnicity. Why? Because those violations of rights keep us safe, and we want security more than we want freedoms.

#### proposition of policy

A proposal of a new rule.

#### proposition of value

A statement of what we should embrace as more important to our culture.

#### proof

Evidence that the receiver believes.

## What Is the Difference Between Evidence and Proof?

As anyone knows who watches *Law and Order* or any of the *CSI* spinoffs, evidence is what forensic scientists produce to convict felons. They bring out DNA, fingerprints, weapons, fiber samples, rape kits, and bloodstains as evidence that some perp committed a specific crime against a particular individual. In argumentation you are more likely to use other kinds of evidence like examples, surveys, testimonials, and numbers and statistics, as explained in chapter 11. The question is: Is your evidence proof to your listeners?

**Proof** is evidence that the receiver believes. In other words, you can listen to evidence without believing it, and if you do not believe the evidence, you are not going to accept the presenter’s argument. Suppose a presenter is arguing that the listener should accept her policy proposition that “the USA should never use the death penalty.” Her evidence is that the Bible says, “Thou shalt not kill,” an idea that is elevated in importance because it happens to be a commandment that Moses brought down from the mountaintop on a tablet of stone. A person who believes that the Bible is without error and that we should obey every word will accept the commandment as proof. A person who does not accept the Bible as an authority or sees contradictions like the stoning of individuals to death for various offenses might not accept the commandment as proof. In other words, many things can constitute evidence, but only those items that the audience accepts constitute proof.

## How Can You Test Evidence?

Your evidence must meet the **tests of evidence**—questions you can use to test the validity of the evidence in your presentations or in those of others:

1. *Is the evidence consistent with other known facts?* For instance, did the speaker look at a relatively large number of student co-ops to determine that student co-ops are successful? Have any student co-op bookstores failed?
2. *Would another observer draw the same conclusions?* Has anyone other than the speaker determined that other student co-ops are successful? What does the speaker mean by “success”?
3. *Does the evidence come from unbiased sources?* Does the vice-president for student affairs have anything to gain by favoring student co-op bookstores? Who made the claim that students will get better value for their used books? Who said other schools have established successful student co-ops?
4. *Is the source of the information qualified by education and/or experience to make a statement about the issue?* The vice-president may be well educated, but what does she know about co-op bookstores? What about the qualifications of the sources of the information on used books or successful co-ops?
5. *If the evidence is based on personal experience, how typical is that personal experience?* Personal experience that is typical, generalizable, realistic, and relevant can be good evidence.
6. *If statistics are used as evidence, are they from a reliable source; comparable with other known information; and current, applicable, and interpreted so that the audience can understand them?*
7. *If studies and surveys are used, are they authoritative, valid, reliable, objective, and generalizable?* A study done by persons who favor student co-op bookstores, for instance, would be questionable because the source of the study is biased.
8. *Are the speaker’s inferences appropriate according to the data presented?* Does the presenter go too far beyond the evidence in concluding that students should establish their own co-op bookstore?
9. *Is important counterevidence overlooked?* Often, in our haste to make a positive case, we ignore or omit counterevidence. What evidence against student co-ops is left out?
10. *What is the presenter’s credibility on the topic?* Has the speaker earned the right to speak on the topic through research, interviews, and a thorough examination of the issue? Does the speaker have experience related to the issue?

The answers to these 10 questions are important. Evidence that meets these tests has met the requirements of good evidence.



How we prepare and react to persuasive messages can vary from one culture to the next. For example, if you are from a high-context culture, you may prefer to be less direct when communicating. Alternatively, if you are from a highly individualistic culture, you may prefer to advance your own opinion without taking other viewpoints into consideration. When preparing your persuasive speech, you will likely need to blend some of the persuasive norms of your culture with the persuasive norms of American culture.

This chapter explains many of those Anglo-American norms. If you opt to use norms from your culture, you may need to provide some explanation for what you are doing. For example, African cultures tend to rely on stories to teach lessons or

### tests of evidence

Questions that can be used to test the validity of evidence.



Watch the “Sharks,” “Stem Cell Research,” and “Cow over Chemicals” video clips on the *Online Learning Center* to see examples of persuasive presentations.

principles. If you use an extended story during your speech, you may need to be somewhat direct and tell audience members what they should learn from the story. While you should not abandon the norms for persuasion that you are familiar with, your persuasive messages may need additional explanation to be adapted to the expectations of your classmates.

## Three Forms of Proof

From classical rhetoric you can derive three forms of proof. The first is called logical proof, or *logos* as the ancients called it: the use of argument and evidence to persuade (Reinhard, 1998). The second will be personal proof, or *ethos* concept. The third is emotional argument, or *pathos*. We will spend the most time on logical argument, the mode that is used most often and is, perhaps, the least understood.

### The First Form of Proof: *Logos*, or Logical Proof

#### What Is the Structure of Argument?

##### inductive argument

A logical structure that provides enough specific instances for the listener to make an inferential leap to a generalization that summarizes the individual instances.

**Inductive argument** provides enough specific instances for the listener to make an inferential leap to a generalization that summarizes the individual instances. For example, you might try to demonstrate that “low taxes are bad for our economy.” Your specific instances might include the following:

- Schools that are underfunded
- Federal programs that are underfunded
- Roads and highways that are neither repaired nor maintained
- Social programs for the poor that are unfunded
- Tuition that goes up because government support goes down

This series of individual instances can lead to an “inferential leap” to a generalization that low taxes are bad for our economy.

##### deductive argument

A logical structure that uses a general proposition applied to a specific instance to draw a conclusion.

Another logical structure is **deductive argument**, which uses a general proposition applied to a specific instance to draw a conclusion. For example, from the major premise (generalization) “All drunk drivers are dangerous,” you can move to a minor premise “Joann drives while drunk” to conclude that “Joann is dangerous.” This particular logical structure is called a **syllogism** because it contains a major premise (a generalization) applied to a particular instance (a minor premise) that leads to a conclusion.

##### syllogism

A logical structure that contains a major premise (a generalization) applied to a particular instance (a minor premise) that leads to a conclusion.

#### How Can You Rebut Arguments?

In class, at home, and in the workplace, others may rebut your arguments. **Rebuttal** involves arguing against someone else’s position on an issue. If someone in your class gives a presentation with which you profoundly disagree, you may deliver a passionate persuasive presentation opposing that person’s position on the issue. Here you will learn several ways to rebut arguments.

##### rebuttal

Arguing against someone else’s position on an issue.

The weak points in any inductive argument are the clarity of the proposition, the quality of the individual instances, and the place where the inferential leap occurs. In the argument about local taxes, you could argue that it needs to state more clearly to what taxes the proposition refers. Does it refer to all taxes? To local or state taxes? To federal taxes only? The proposition is unclear. On the quality of the individual instances, does the presenter have any evidence that tuition goes up

because taxes go down? Finally, how many instances do you have to have before you make the inferential leap?

In trying to persuade you that violent crime is on the rise, how many individual instances might be needed before you are convinced? The answer is that nobody really knows. All we know is that at some point you can quit providing individual instances because most of the audience agrees and the remainder never will. That is why you can always question the point at which the inferential leap occurred.

Likewise, deductive arguments are subject to rebuttal by questioning the major premise, the application of the minor premise, and the meaning of the conclusion. Are all drunk drivers dangerous? Perhaps the answer depends on how the state defines “drunk.” Some states say a blood alcohol level of .08, some say .10, and others have some other limit. Apparently we cannot even agree on what percentage constitutes “drunkenness.” Also, do we know what percentage Joann is carrying? She may or may not be drunk depending on the standard.

The point is that you can critically analyze both inductive and deductive arguments.

### The Second Form of Proof: *Ethos*, or Source Credibility

Chapter 11 focused on source credibility, so our discussion here will be brief. The fact is that you can persuade some listeners because you have earned the right to speak. You have competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism, or you share common ground. Your personal power or expertise, or your charisma or personality, can gain

#### TRY THIS

*What motivational appeals tend to work on you? Do you tend to do what others wish for you, or do the wishes of others cause you to rebel? Think carefully about what moves you to action. Do you think the same motivations that influence you also influence your audience?*

compliance. Popular preachers build megachurches with thousands of worshipers who thrive on the minister’s message. They are persuaded not just by proofs from the Bible but by the personal authority of the preacher. They believe him because of who he is. The pope and some politicians, entertainers, and community leaders have such credibility. In jury trials the lawyer who is most liked by the jury often wins regardless of the evidence because the jury believes the lawyer they like. But even in the classroom some presenters have more source credibility than others.

For example, third-year students have more credibility than first-year students. The lesson here is that who and what you are can help you persuade others.

### The Third Form of Proof: *Pathos*, or Emotional Proof

You may not be dazzled by a string of statistics that show how many people slide into bankruptcy each year, but you might get tears in your eyes about a local person—very much like yourself—who was so consumed by credit card debt that she and her family had to declare publicly that they would never be able to pay their debts.

Narrative—the telling of a story—is a powerful persuader. The world’s holy books, such as the Koran and the Bible, and the teachings of Buddha are practically devoid of statistics but are full of stories and parables. We tell our children stories that teach them life lessons. In jury trials the person who wins often has the best story that accounts for all of the known facts in the case. You too can harness the power of the narrative by telling stories that support your proposition. A student



## cultural/co-cultural note

### People Think Differently

The use of argument, evidence, and logic can be seen as a European-derived manner of thinking unendorsed either by non-European cultures or by North America's own co-cultures. Yook and Albert (1998), for example, found that Korean students as a group were significantly less likely to negotiate with a teacher over matters of grading and learning than were a group of American students. Foss and Griffin (1995) explain a feminist alternative to traditional persuasion in which the goal is not to attack and vanquish the opponent but to achieve understanding through "invitational rhetoric." Remember, different cultures and co-cultures may adopt quite different approaches to negotiating, arguing, and persuading.

whose persuasive purpose was to get Harley drivers to wear protective helmets had a simple strategy: He told three stories about motorcycle operators who wore helmets and lived. At the beginning of each story, he showed a single slide of that person's badly dented helmet. The visual image of the banged-up helmets and the stories of the three survivors made an indelible impression.

Although logical and emotional appeals are often seen as diametrically opposed concepts, most of our behavior and beliefs are based on a mixture of emotional and rational "reasons." A speaker may persuade an audience to accept his or her immediate behavioral purposes for emotional, rather than logical, reasons. A story about one person's bad experience with the campus bookstore may inspire many audience members to take their business to another store. The experience may have been a one-in-a-thousand situation, the episode may have been as much the customer's fault as the manager's, or such a bad experience may never have happened before. Such is the power of our emotions that they can persuade us to defy the law, fight another nation, or ignore evidence.

The **fear appeal** is one of the most common appeals to emotion. Political ads remind us of the fear we felt in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, predict that an opponent will tax us to oblivion, and suggest that only one political party can protect us from our enemies. Financial gurus use fear to guide investments (bonds are losers, stocks are winners); businesses use fear to invite sales (prices go up this Wednesday); auto dealers use fear to close a sale (this one is the last of this model for this year). Fear appeals get us to brush our teeth, use deodorant, buy certain clothing, and wear certain perfumes and colognes.

Clearly, fear appeals work in advertising and in everyday life. As a speaker you can use fear appeals in an ethical manner if you do not exaggerate the threat and if you offer means of avoiding the fear. In other words, a presenter who arouses fear in an audience has an ethical obligation to provide reassurance as well. This sentence illustrates fear appeals and reassurances in a single thesis statement: "Not brushing your teeth can lead to gum disease and tooth loss, so listen to my tips on dental hygiene." A presentation that combines fear with reassurance results in greater shifts of opinion, and the audience holds the presenter in higher regard (Cope & Richardson, 1972).

Fear appeals are just one kind of emotional appeal commonly found in persuasive presentations. Other examples of possible emotional appeals are testimonials at funerals about the virtues of the deceased, appeals to loyalty and dedication at retirement ceremonies, appeals to patriotism in times of crisis, and appeals to justice in times of legal strife.

#### fear appeal

Eliciting fear to change behavior.

## Organizing Your Persuasive Message

You already know some micro-organizational features of a persuasive presentation: You may not want to announce your purpose at the outset because you have to build toward acceptance by the end of the presentation. Here we consider some of the macro-organizational features: how you build, construct, or design your presentation to achieve your persuasive purpose.

In chapter 12 you learned that some organizational patterns are used more often in persuasive presentations: cause/effect, problem/solution, and topical-sequence. The topical-sequence pattern is especially useful in arguing advantages and disadvantages of some course of action.

### The Monroe Motivated Sequence

To add to your repertoire of organizational patterns, let us consider a pattern of organization that presenters have used successfully for four decades (Ehninger, 1970): the **Monroe Motivated Sequence**. Developed by a University of Iowa professor, Alan Monroe, this pattern of organization is popular for having five easy-to-follow steps:

- *Step 1: Attention.* You gain and maintain audience attention, and you determine a way to focus audience attention on the content of your presentation.
- *Step 2: Need.* Once you have the audience's attention, you show audience members how the speech is relevant to them. You arouse a need for the change you suggest in your persuasive presentation.
- *Step 3: Satisfaction.* Your speech either presents the information the audience needs or suggests a solution to their needs. You satisfy the audience by meeting their needs with your plan.
- *Step 4: Visualization.* You reinforce your idea in the audience's minds by getting audience members to *see* how your information or ideas will help them.
- *Step 5: Action.* Once the audience has visualized your idea, you plead for action. The audience might remember your main points in an informative presentation and state them to others, or the audience may go out and do what you ask in a persuasive presentation.

The Monroe Motivated Sequence is an appropriate organizational pattern for persuasive presentations, especially when the audience is reluctant to change or to accept a proposed action. See an illustration of the sequence in Figure 15.1.

### Ethical Considerations

**Ethics** are a set of principles of right conduct. Many of our standards for ethical behavior are codified into law. We do not slander or libel someone who is an ordinary citizen. We do not start a panic that can endanger the lives of others. And we do not advocate the overthrow of our government.

Many principles of ethics are not matters of law, but violations of these unwritten rules do have consequences. No law exists against pointing out acne sufferers in the audience during your speech on dermatology or having your audience unknowingly eat cooked hamster meat, but audience members may find your methods so distasteful that they reject you and your persuasive message.

#### Monroe Motivated Sequence

A problem-solving format that encourages an audience to become concerned about an issue; especially appropriate for a persuasive presentation.

#### ethics

A set of principles of right conduct.



View an animation of this illustration on the *Online Learning Center*.

**One technique for planning and organizing a persuasive speech is to use *Monroe's Motivated Sequence*.**

### **Step 1: Gain Attention**

Your goal at this step is to get audience members to “perk up” and give sustained attention to what you have to say.

### **Step 2: Establish Need**

The need step of a persuasive presentation is where you identify a problem and explain how that problem affects or is relevant to the audience.

### **Step 3: Satisfaction**

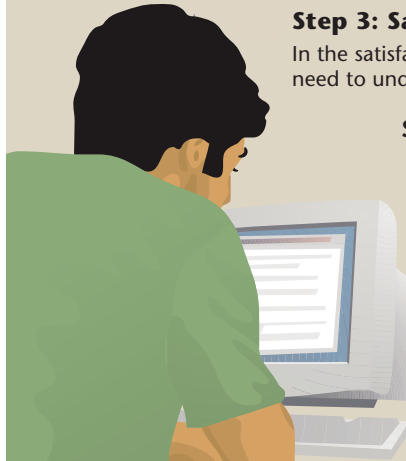
In the satisfaction step you present information audience members need to understand in order to solve the problem.

### **Step 4: Visualization**

Your goal is to reinforce the solution in the audience’s mind by getting audience members to see how they can take part in a solution that will benefit them and others.

### **Step 5: Call to Action**

Often found in the conclusion, the call to action asks the audience members to take specific, concrete steps.



**Figure 15.1** Monroe’s Motivated Sequence.

The following are some of the generally accepted ethical standards that govern the preparation and delivery of a persuasive presenter.

1. *Accurately cite sources.* When you are preparing and delivering your speech, you should be very careful to gather and state your information accurately. Specifically, you should reveal from whom you received information. Making up quotations, attributing an idea to someone who never made the statement, omitting important qualifiers, quoting out of context, and distorting information are all examples of ethical violations.
2. *Respect sources of information.* Internet sources are sometimes the best available information and sometimes the worst. Show respect for your sources by revealing as completely as possible the credibility of your sources. This rule extends to respect for persons you interview. These people are willing to share information with you, so it behooves you to treat them and their information with respect, in person and in your presentation.
3. *Respect your audience.* Persuasion is a process that works most effectively with mutual respect between presenter and receiver. Attempts to trick the audience into believing something, lying to the audience, distorting the views of your opposition, or exaggerating claims for your own position are all ethically questionable acts. A presenter should speak truthfully and accurately; the best persuasive presenters can accurately portray the opposing arguments and still win with their own arguments and evidence. Audiences can be very hostile toward a person who has tricked them or who has lied, distorted, or exaggerated

information simply to meet an immediate behavioral purpose or an ultimate goal.

4. *Respect your opponent.* Persuasive presentations invite rebuttal. Nearly always someone inside or outside your audience thinks your ideas or positions are wrong. A good rule of thumb is to respect your opponent, not only because he or she may be right but also because an effective persuasive presenter can take the best the opposition has to offer and still convince the audience he or she should be believed. The idea that you should respect your opponent means you should not indulge in name-calling or in bringing up past behaviors that are irrelevant to the issue. You should attack the other person's evidence, sources, or logic—not the person. Practical reasons for observing this rule of ethics include the following: Few of the issues about which people persuade are ever settled, you may find in time that your opponent's position is better in many respects than your own, and you will have to live with many issues not resolved in the manner you most desire.

You may get the impression from these four ethical guidelines that every persuasive speaker must be part angel. Not quite. The ethical rules for persuasive speaking allow for critical analysis of arguments and ideas, for profound differences of opinion, for the weighing of evidence and supporting materials, and for the swaying of the audience to your point of view. All of these strategies work best if you obey the ethical guidelines that call for the accurate citation of sources, respect for sources of information, respect for your audience, and respect for your opponent.

Figure 15.2 gives additional tips for organizing your arguments.



▲ Professional persuaders tempt you to part with your money for their product.

Below is some final advice on what kind of arguments are most persuasive and where you should consider placing them for maximum effectiveness.

1. Place your best argument first or last but not in the middle (Janis & Feshbach, 1953).
2. Present one side of an issue if the audience is friendly, your position is the only one the audience is likely to hear, and you are seeking immediate change of opinion (Powell, 1965).
3. Present both sides of an issue to be perceived as open-minded and to reduce the effects of views the audience might hold opposing your point of view.
4. If your audience already knows an opposing point of view, refute those arguments before proceeding to your own view (Karlins & Abelson, 1970).
5. Be aware that novel arguments have more effect than familiar arguments (Sears & Freedman, 1965).

Figure 15.2 Tips for organizing your arguments.

## SIZING *things* UP!

### Need for Cognition

How we construct and respond to persuasive messages depends, in part, on our personality characteristics related to how we process information. One of those personality characteristics is our “need for cognition,” or our tendency to put significant effort into thinking about things like arguments and ideas. Below are 10 statements that describe how you like to process information. Read each question carefully and respond using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
  - 2 = Disagree
  - 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
  - 4 = Agree
  - 5 = Strongly agree
1. I prefer complex to simple problems.
  2. Thinking is not my idea of fun.
  3. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.
  4. I find satisfaction in thinking hard for a long time.
  5. I only think as hard as I have to.
  6. I try to avoid situations where there is a good chance that I will have to think hard about something.
  7. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.
  8. I enjoy thinking abstractly.
  9. I prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.
  10. I enjoy solving puzzles.

Source: Perse, E. (1992, Winter). Predicting attention to local television news: Need for cognition and motives for viewing. *Communication Reports*, 5, 40–49.

## An Example of a Persuasive Presentation

Having discussed persuasion and ways to influence others, we turn now to an outline for an annotated persuasive presentation that illustrates many of the concepts introduced in the chapter. You should read the outline carefully for its strengths and its weaknesses. What methods does the presenter use to influence listeners? Do the arguments and evidence meet the tests discussed in this chapter? What could the presenter have done differently that would have made the message more appealing to you? The marginal notes should help you answer these questions.

### Organs: To Donate or Not to Donate by Lacie Cunningham

Immediate purpose: To persuade listeners to understand the benefits of being an organ donor.  
Ultimate goal: To have my listeners choose to become an organ donor.

**Introduction**

- I. I have never donated an organ, but after learning about the benefits of donation and the growing need for organs I recently agreed to donate my organs.
  - A. The worldwide need for organs is growing exponentially.
  - B. Many of you or your friends or relatives may someday need a donated organ.
  - C. I will show you today why choosing to be an organ donor is critically important.

**Body**

- II. Organ donation, an individual choice, can be the “gift of life” to a person in need.
  - A. Organ donations transplant healthy organs from the deceased to a person in need, according to MedlinePlus online (2008).
  - B. MedlinePlus estimates that organ transplants from one donor can benefit as many as 50 people (2008).
  - C. The National Kidney Foundation (2009) online notes that most religions view organ donation as meeting the highest humanitarian ideals and the ultimate charitable act.
- III. The need for organ donations grows dramatically every month in the USA.
  - A. According to the 2009 National Kidney Foundation website over 95,000 U.S. patients need transplants.
  - B. The same source reports that physicians add nearly 4,000 new patients to the wait list each month.
  - C. Daily 17 people die waiting for bone marrow or for a vital organ like a heart, liver, kidney, pancreas, or lung (National Kidney Foundation, 2009).
- IV. Potential donors resist donating because of misinformation.
  - A. According to the Donatelifelife website, organ transplants do not mean a closed-casket funeral.
  - B. The same source notes that organ donation costs nothing for the donor or his/her family.
  - C. Website OrganDonor.gov (2009) reveals that anyone can be a potential donor, regardless of age, race, or medical history.

**Conclusion**

- V. Although the decision to donate requires careful thought, the positive choice is “Yes, I will donate my organs to others.”
  - A. Anyone can be a donor without cost and with respect and dignity.
  - B. The decision to donate will provide you with the opportunity to save someone’s life.
  - C. With the need for organ donation growing at an alarming rate, you can be an organ donor and give the greatest gift someone can give: the gift of life.

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(Lacie Cunningham, the author of this outline, came to the university as a Presidential Scholar, an honor granted to the best high school students with top scores on a standardized test. She was a writer for the student newspaper on campus.)

*States source credibility.*

*Gains attention.*

*Establishes need.*

*Relates topic to audience.*

*Reveals purpose and forecasts.*

*States first main argument.*

*Defines term.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Provides support for argument.*

*Provides support for argument.*

*States second main argument.*

*Provides oral footnote.*

*Supports argument with statistics.*

*Provides specific, concrete details.*

*States third main argument.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Provides support for argument.*

*Uses oral footnote.*

*Provides braketlight function.*

*States action step.*

*Concludes with summary/review.*

*Gives reward for compliance.*

*Ends by recommending action.*

**TRY THIS**

How do you avoid telemarketers? What method of avoiding telemarketers do you find most satisfying? Do you feel guilty about any of your methods of avoidance?

## How to Resist Persuasion

Listed below are some measures you can take to resist persuasion, not only in public presentations but also on the telephone, from salespeople, and in advertising:

1. *Remember: The best resistance is avoidance.* You do not have to watch or read advertising, go into stores where you do not intend to buy, listen to telemarketers, or watch half-hour television “infomercials.”
2. *Be skeptical about all messages.* Persuaders who are seeking easy prey look for the uneducated, the desperate, the angry, the very young, the very old, and the unsuspecting. They avoid people who are educated, articulate, cautious, and careful. You should use your knowledge of argumentation, evidence, and proof to analyze claims.
3. *Check claims with other, unbiased sources.* A good rule is to verify any persuasive claims with at least two other sources of information. A politician tells you that lower taxes will be good for you. What do the editorials, the political commentators, and the opposition say about that plan? Consumer magazines, especially those that take no advertising, are less likely to be biased, as are news sources that embrace objectivity.
4. *Check out the credibility of the source.* Be suspicious if a salesperson will not reveal the phone numbers of satisfied customers, if a business is new or changes location often, and if a speaker has a questionable reputation for truth or reliability. Credible sources have people, institutions, and satisfied audiences who can vouch for them.
5. *Be cautious about accepting a persuasive appeal.* Most states have laws that allow even a signed contract to be rejected by the customer in the first 24 to 48 hours—in case you have second thoughts. Accepting claims on impulse is a dangerous practice that you can avoid by never making an important decision in the context of a sales pitch. Have you ever heard of a businessperson who refused to take the money the next day?
6. *Question the ethical basis of proposed actions.* Angry people are easy to turn to violence, desperate people willingly consider desperate measures, and frustrated people can easily become an unruly mob. You need to ask if the proposed action is self-serving, if the proposal pits one group against another, and if it will be good for you when viewed in retrospect.
7. *Use your knowledge and experience to analyze persuasive claims.* A claim that sounds too good to be true probably is. If you have a “gut feeling” that a claim seems wrong, you should find out why. You should use all you know about logic, evidence, and proof to see if the persuader is drawing a sound conclusion or making an inferential leap that is justified by the evidence. Finally, all evidence should be open to scrutiny.

▼ Learn to be wary about good deals. Use your brain to protect yourself.



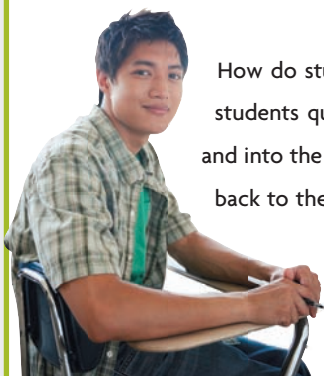
8. *Use your own values as a check against fraudulent claims.* If someone is trying to get you to do something that runs counter to what you learned in your religion, in your home, about the law, or from your friends, you should be wary. Sales always enrich the seller but not always the

buyer. You can choose to sacrifice, but you should not sacrifice unwittingly. Your values are good protection against those who would cheat you. You should ask yourself, “What would my parents, my friends, my neighbors, my professor, or my religion think of this decision?”

9. *Check what persuaders say against what they do.* You might add: Judge them more by what they do than by what they say. Talk may not be cheap, but words cost less than deeds, and the proof of what a person says is in his or her behavior. Many an “education governor” has cut the budget for education. You learn to trust people who do what they say; you learn to distrust those who say one thing and do another.
10. *Use your freedom of expression and freedom of choice as protection against unethical persuaders.* In the United States you can hear competing ideas, and the choice is yours. You can educate yourself about issues and ideas by reading, watching, and listening. Education and learning are powerful protection against persuaders who would take advantage of you. Use your freedoms to help defend yourself.

Now that you know 10 suggestions for resisting persuasion, you can practice the strategies for keeping others from manipulating your mind and picking your pockets.

## get INVOLVED



How do students at Washington College in Maryland get involved in service learning? First-year students quickly get involved with their community through a program called “Into the Streets and into the Community.” As part of their orientation the students almost immediately start giving back to the community by linking with local organizations to clean beaches, build wildlife boxes, restore trails and shorelines, preserve wetlands, and serve lunch at the nursing center.

Can you in a persuasive speech get your classmates interested in a service-learning project that gives back to your community?



# Chapter Review & Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ A persuasive presentation is a message designed strategically to induce change in the audience.
- ▶ A persuasive presentation has both immediate and ultimate goals.
- ▶ A persuasive presentation may have different features than other presentations:
  - The introduction may withhold the purpose.
  - The purpose may be revealed late.
  - The audience analysis indicates when to reveal the purpose.
- ▶ A persuasive presentation can have four different purposes:
  - Continuance and deterrence are action goals that are difficult to demonstrate because the audience exhibits no overt change.
  - Adoption and discontinuance are favored in persuasive presentations because the presenter expects overt change from the listeners.
- ▶ Face-to-face persuasive presentations are an effective means of changing a captive audience's mind.
- ▶ A persuasive presentation has the following characteristics:
  - It distinguishes among questions of fact, policy, and value.
  - It differentiates between evidence and proof.
  - It applies the tests of evidence.
  - It recognizes the difference between inductive and deductive arguments.
  - It uses logical argument, personal proof, and emotional argument appropriately.
  - It organizes and places best arguments to advantage.
  - It recognizes the five steps in the Monroe Motivated Sequence.
- ▶ A persuasive presentation should apply high ethical standards, the principles of right conduct.
- ▶ A number of strategies can be used to resist persuasion.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Adoption	Ethics	Proposition of fact
Argument	Fear appeal	Proposition of policy
Boomerang effect	Immediate purpose	Proposition of value
Continuance	Inductive argument	Rebuttal
Deductive argument	Monroe Motivated Sequence	Syllogism
Deterrence	Persuasive presentation	Tests of evidence
Discontinuance	Proof	Ultimate goal

## Study Questions

1. The intention of a persuasive presentation is to
  - a. inform listeners of a certain topic
  - b. change listeners in a way consistent with your purpose
  - c. explain a concept
  - d. describe an important issue
2. If an audience likes you and your message less after the presentation than they did before, what has taken place?
  - a. logos
  - b. believability
  - c. boomerang effect
  - d. continuance

3. When a presenter attempts to convince listeners to terminate a current behavior, what has taken place?
  - a. discontinuance
  - b. adoption
  - c. continuance
  - d. deterrence
4. If your evidence meets the tests of evidence, it will not
  - a. come from unbiased sources
  - b. be consistent with other well-known facts
  - c. overlook counterevidence
  - d. consist of authoritative, valid, and reliable surveys
5. When resisting persuasion from salespeople and advertisers, you should
  - a. avoid using your own values as a check against fraudulent claims
  - b. listen to all messages with an open mind
  - c. accept the credibility of all sources
  - d. question the ethical basis of proposed actions
6. Which type of argument uses a series of individual instances that lead to a generalization?
  - a. deductive
  - b. inductive
  - c. rebuttal
  - d. syllogism
7. A deductive argument can be rebutted by questioning the
  - a. major premise
  - b. clarity of the proposition
  - c. quality of individual instances
  - d. place where the inferential leap occurs
8. Which of the following statements regarding argument organization is true?
  - a. Place your best argument in the middle.
  - b. Present one side of an issue to reduce the effects of contrary arguments.
  - c. Present one side of an issue when you are seeking immediate, temporary change of opinion.
  - d. Familiar arguments have more effect than novel arguments.
9. In the Monroe Motivated Sequence, the visualization step involves
  - a. gaining and maintaining audience attention
  - b. presenting information or a solution to audience needs
  - c. asking the audience to take specific steps
  - d. reinforcing the solution by demonstrating how the solution will benefit the audience
10. Which is *not* an ethical standard to follow when preparing and delivering a persuasive presentation?
  - a. Accurately cite sources.
  - b. Respect sources of information by revealing their credibility.
  - c. Respect your audience by speaking truthfully and accurately.
  - d. Respect your opponent by attacking the other person's character instead of his or her evidence, sources, or logic.

#### Answers:

1. (b); 2. (c); 3. (a); 4. (c); 5. (d); 6. (b); 7. (a); 8. (c); 9. (d); 10. (d)

## Critical Thinking

1. When watching commercials, viewing print advertisements, or listening to a persuasive speaker, determine if the information presented meets the tests of evidence. Explain how this either strengthens or weakens the argument presented.
2. Which ethical standards of persuasive presentations do you think are most often violated? Provide examples.

[www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e)

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of studying mediated communication.
2. Define mediated communication and explain the differences between mass communication and computer-mediated communication.
3. Identify types of mass communication.
4. Discuss ways in which the mass media affect our culture and us.
5. Identify types of computer-mediated communication.
6. Explain the difference between synchronous and asynchronous communication.
7. Discuss how computer-mediated communication affects the communication process.
8. Understand strategies for becoming a critical consumer of mediated messages.

# MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA LITERACY

**We all participate in mediated communication**, which is any communication interaction using technology as the primary channel. The two predominant types of mediated communication—mass communication and computer-mediated communication—inform, entertain, persuade, and provide a means for connecting people. In this chapter you will learn the importance of mediated communication, how mediated communication affects us through the communication process, and how to be a more critical consumer of mediated messages.

**Several events in recent history—Desert Storm**, the attacks on September 11, 2001, the counting of ballots in Florida during the Bush-Gore presidential election, and the second Gulf War—taught both the media and the public that news happens around the clock. Thus, the 24-hour news cycle has quickly emerged as the norm, especially with the rapid rise of CNN, Fox News, CNBC, and other cable-based news organizations. Gone are the days of news programming “interrupting” entertainment-oriented programming; with cable news the *de facto* norm became nonstop news.

The Obama-McCain election of 2008 marked yet another turning point in mediated news. As pointed out by *Time* correspondent James Poniewozik in the October 31, 2008, edition of that magazine, the 24-hour news cycle has quickly transitioned to the “24-minute” news cycle. Today, viewers do not simply watch news channels, they also watch dynamic, multimedia content on web-based news outlets, they read up-to-the-minute analysis from bloggers, and they participate in online discussion boards. The 24-minute news cycle has become so dominant that CNN and other news outlets are getting viewers involved in reporting through projects like iReport so that news can come in even before a news crew is on the scene.

*The Internet, it seems, has dramatically changed the way that all of us consume news. In essence, Internet-based technology has caused a convergence where the difference between print, broadcast, and civic journalism has become blurred, if not irrelevant. In fact, this trend in news production (and consumption) provides only a small illustration of how modern communication technology has changed our lives. This chapter introduces you to key aspects of mediated communication, ranging from more traditional “mass media” to more dynamic forms of mediated communication on the Internet.*

## Why Should You Study Mediated Communication?

Many of the reasons for studying interpersonal forms of communication are also relevant to the study of mediated communication. Perhaps the most important reason is that by understanding the process of mediated communication, you will learn to think critically about the messages the media send us. You will become a more thoughtful media consumer. As a consumer of the media and as a citizen of a world in which technology seems to be bringing people closer together, your responsibility is to understand how the media function and to develop the skills to interpret their significance. By understanding the nature and function of mediated communication, you can begin to recognize the significance of the media and the role they play in shaping your understanding of the world.

Beyond becoming a critical consumer of mediated messages, we also produce mediated communication. Sending an e-mail message, creating a web page, and posting to an online chat room or discussion board are all examples of mediated communication.

### TRY THIS

Using your cell phone, your computer, or any web-enabled device, go to a website for one of the popular news services (such as CNN). How does the layout and structure of the website influence how the new stories are perceived by viewers? This is the type of thinking that will help you become a more critical consumer of the media.

For decades textbooks used in introductory communication courses have treated mediated communication as something we listen to, watch, or read—all messages produced by other people. The Internet has forced all of us to change our assumptions about mediated communication. Today all of us have the potential simultaneously to be consumers and producers of mediated messages. Thus a second reason to study mediated communication is to become a more thoughtful producer of mediated messages.

## What Is Mediated Communication?

As mentioned in the previous section, mediated communication is more than just radio, television, and newspapers. **Mediated communication** is the use of electronic messages to create meaning. Within mediated communication we make the distinction between mass communication and computer-mediated communication.

**Mass communication** is a process in which professional communicators use technology to share messages over great distances to influence large audiences (Dominick, 2005). In mass communication a professional communicator is the source—someone who shares information, ideas, or attitudes with someone else. The source might be a television or newspaper reporter, an author, or an announcer. The technological devices are the channels, or the means by which a message is sent. For example, radio and television messages are transmitted via cable and satellite systems, and printed messages are transmitted via printing presses, computers, and, increasingly, satellite. Also, many of the traditional mass media outlets like the broadcast networks, radio stations, and cable channels, are using the Internet to disseminate content. If you miss an episode of “The Office” on Thursday evening, you can wait a few hours to view the show, commercials and all, on the network website; if you loved a song on “American Idol,” you can download the song from iTunes to play on your MP3 player or phone.

In mass communication the large audience comprises the receivers, the people who are the intended recipients of the message. Occasionally, a receiver of the message will send feedback to the source, that is, a response that allows the source to determine if the message was correctly understood. In mass communication feedback can be conveyed through a letter to the editor, an e-mail to your cable provider, or a telephone call to a television station.

Whereas traditional forms of mass communication (e.g., watching TV from a broadcast network like NBC, CBS, ABC, or PBS) were very linear—messages flowed from the producer of the show to the consumer with little or no feedback—modern technology is changing that. When watching reality shows, viewers often have the opportunity to vote for favorite characters by calling a toll-free number, text messaging, or clicking away on the Internet. Many shows have online viewer forums where people can make comments about characters, storylines, and future shows. In essence, what used to be a linear, one-way medium of communication is now becoming two-way, dynamic, and very fluid.

**Computer-mediated communication**, often referred to as **CMC**, is human-to-human interaction using networked computer environments (Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004). When you e-mail another person, that person can respond to your message; when you engage in an online chat, other people can interact with you by asking questions or responding to your statements; more advanced programs like Skype can even be used to facilitate face-to-face discussions over the Internet. In each of these situations, the communication is interactive: You are both a sender and receiver of communication.

### mediated communication

The use of electronic messages to create meaning.

### mass communication

A process in which professional communicators use technology to share messages over great distances to influence large audiences.

### computer-mediated communication (CMC)

Human-to-human interaction using networked computer environments.

**TRY THIS** 

List all of the ways that you use electronic forms of communication. How frequently do you use e-mail, chat rooms, or instant messaging? How do you use these electronic tools? Do you use them to keep in touch with friends and relatives? Do you use them for business purposes?

Although we view mass communication and CMC as different forms of mediated communication, they share the common element of using electronic channels to facilitate communication. Mediated communication, prevalent in our lives already, will only increase in the future. For that reason we must become effective consumers and producers of mediated messages.

## The Mass Media

The mass media permeate our lives, often without our realization. Instead of listing all of the ways that you are exposed to the media, try to think of a place you can go to *escape* mediated messages. Such places exist, to be sure. You can turn off your car radio and go for a drive in the country (be careful to avoid billboards). You could lock yourself in your room (be sure to cover those posters and stay off the Internet). Of course, you can also try to find a nice cave in which to spend time (but if the cave has hieroglyphics, you will have to find a new one since hieroglyphics were perhaps the first form of mass communication). As you can see, escaping the influence of the mass media is possible, but it takes some forethought and planning.

### What Are the Mass Media?

The mass media serve a variety of purposes in our lives. We are informed, persuaded, and entertained by the mass media; sometimes all three happen at the same time. In this section we pay particular attention to how we use the mass media as sources of information. For each medium we address its major advantages and disadvantages as a source of information. Critical listeners and consumers keep these advantages and disadvantages in mind as they review information from mediated sources. The suggestions we provide in this section will also be relevant when you conduct research for speeches and papers in this class or other classes (for a summary see Table 1).

**TABLE 1** A COMPARISON OF MASS MEDIA FORMS

TYPE OF MASS MEDIA	PRIMARY ADVANTAGE(S)	PRIMARY PROBLEM(S)
Newspapers	Considered a time-tested and reliable source of information. Often present both objective and editorialized coverage of issues.	Some more credible than others. Not as fast as other media in terms of getting the word out.
Television (and radio)	Because of technology, perhaps the "fastest" source of information.	Rapid release of information can result in fragmented or inaccurate stories.
News magazines	Provide in-depth coverage of important national interest.	Slower sources of information because they are published less frequently.
The Internet	Fast and readily accessible. Large variety of outlets.	Lack of editorial control and accountability. Questionable sources may be employed.

**TRY THIS** 

Compare the front page of a daily newspaper like *The New York Times* or your local newspaper with the website for that newspaper. How are they similar and different? Do you think the newspaper is trying to reach a different audience with its website? What does the website have that the actual newspaper does not?

- *Newspapers*. Freedom of the press has long been America's chief defense against government abuses of its citizens. Our oldest mass medium, newspapers are one of our most reliable sources of information. But even highly credible newspapers make mistakes, so do not consider everything you read in the paper 100% reliable. Among the most reliable newspapers are national publications such as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. Good regional papers include *The Atlanta*

*Constitution*, *The Miami Herald*, and *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Make sure you know which newspapers in your area are considered the most reliable and trustworthy.

- *Television*. Television news is currently the most widely used source of information about current events. When you are watching broadcast news, you should recognize that the immediacy of the news is much more a factor with television than with newspapers and magazines, so skepticism regarding breaking news is particularly important. Broadcast news stations will often go immediately on the air with a breaking news story to “beat” competing stations. Often, however, initial statements and inferences regarding events are unclear or even incorrect.
- *News magazines*. News magazines are better for in-depth treatment of recent events than are newspapers and television. Information in news magazines is not as immediate as in newspapers or television. National news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* are regarded as reliable sources. Other sources tend to be more liberal—or conservative—and are not as objective.
- *The Internet*. The Internet is quickly becoming the primary source for information on a variety of topics ranging from current events, to health, and specialized interests and hobbies. As the Internet has evolved, consumers have learned that being cautious of Internet sources is important.

Even on sites like CNN, where “iReporters” can upload “stories,” you should take care to verify information.

- *Professional journals*. Every academic discipline has professional journals, as do professions such as law and medicine. Generally, professional journals are good sources of information because editorial boards carefully review articles prior to publication. For example, most journals use what is called **blind peer review**, which means that an article submitted for publication is anonymously reviewed by other professionals in the discipline

**TRY THIS** 

The Internet is a valuable tool for finding information on any number of topics. Select your favorite hobby. Go to [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) and search for websites about your hobby. Which sites were most interesting? Were some sites geared to sell you something? Were those sites as useful as other sites for learning information about your hobby?

**blind peer review**

Anonymous review of articles submitted for publication in professional journals by other professionals in the discipline.



## cultural note

### The Internet Culture

Later in the chapter we discuss how the mass media affect our culture through gatekeeping, agenda setting, and other processes. For now, think about how the Internet has affected our culture. Dubin (2001) notes that the Internet is now influencing the language we speak. Terms like *mouse* and *virus* have taken on new meanings; new terms like *firewall* and *RAM* now enter our vocabulary when talking about topics other than computers. Noted cultural critic Neil Postman goes so far as to argue that the digital culture perpetuated through the Internet and television has caused our society to emphasize glitz and entertainment rather than rational thought. Such an effect, according to Postman, influences everything from the way we learn to political elections.

Beyond the influence of the Internet in our own culture, other societies must adapt to the rapid worldwide rise in Internet usage. Iran, once a very closed society, is seeing a rapid growth in Internet use among its youth (Moore, 2001). Because the Internet is so “foreign” to the Iranian culture, religious and political leaders are now scrambling to deal with the issue. Religious leaders, called clerics, are creating web pages at the same time that government officials are shutting down Internet cafés in Tehran. How do you think access to the Internet could potentially change a culture like that of Iran? Does the Internet have the potential to bring the world together, or will it be just another medium of communication like television?

before being accepted for publication. The downside of professional journals is that they are written for specialized audiences and often use jargon that is difficult for an ordinary person to understand.

## What Are the Effects of the Mass Media?

The term “couch potato” has become common in our culture. At one time or another we have all curled up on the couch (or in the lounger) with a bag of chips, big soda, and candy in preparation for our favorite program or the big game. Besides these self-indulging behaviors, the media affect us in numerous other ways. In this section we discuss how the mass media influence our behaviors and shape the culture in which we live.

### *Influencing Behavior*

No issue better illustrates the influence of mass media on our actions than the issue of violence. Most people agree that violence is more prevalent in the United States than in most other countries, and many experts think they have proof that mass media are implicated in the burgeoning violence. A look at the research tells part of the story.

The Surgeon General of the United States released a report in 2001 addressing the link between media violence and youth violence (*Youth Violence*, 2001). The overall conclusion of the Surgeon General’s report was that hundreds of research studies, spanning several decades, demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between exposure to mediated violence and violent behavior. Violence in the media occurs on television; in movies, music videos, and video games; and potentially on the Internet. The data summarized by the Surgeon General were collected largely by communication researchers at UCLA and published in the National Television

Violence Study Report (Federman, 1998). Consider the following statistics highlighted in the UCLA study:

- 61% of television programs contain some violence; only 4% feature “non-violence” themes.
- 44% of violent episodes on television involve characters with some qualities worthy of emulation.
- Nearly 75% of violent episodes on television feature no immediate punishment or negative reaction to the violent behavior.
- Only 16% of violent programs feature long-term, realistic consequences of violence.

Other studies suggest that violence is not limited to television programming. Over half of all MTV and BET music videos typically depict violence or aggression (Smith, 2005).

What is the result of such mediated violence? Statistics reviewed by the American Academy of Pediatrics suggest that as much as 10–20% of real-life violence may be attributed to mediated violence (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001). Real-life examples illustrate these statistics. The 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, underscored the violence contained in “first-person shooter” video games (Cimons, 2000); listening to “death metal” music was implicated as a possible reason for two boys in San Luis Obispo, California, killing a female classmate as part of a satanic ritual (Waxman, 2001); after several young men died imitating the action, Touchstone Films removed a video scene in which football players demonstrated their “courage” by lying in the middle of a highway at night (Wilson & Wilson, 1998).

Why does viewing violent imagery lead to violent behavior? Researchers in the field of communication claim that violent programming can desensitize us to violence. In one study, groups of people were shown either violent programming or exciting but nonviolent programming. After watching the programs for 2 hours, the participants then watched an additional 90-second clip of violent programming. Participants who had previously viewed 2 hours of violent programming showed very little reaction in terms of heart rate, feelings of anxiety, or changes in mood. Participants who viewed 2 hours of nonviolent programming had the opposite reaction: They had higher heart rates and experienced increased anxiety, hostility, and depression (Linz, Donnerstein, & Adams, 1989). The implication of this study is that violent programming psychologically affects us. Watching violence desensitizes us to additional violence.

The influence of television is not entirely negative. Viewers around the world have never known so much about political candidates, accidents, crime, crises, and weather as they do today. With the advent of 24-hour news and weather programs, you can find out the latest news, weather, and road reports whenever you wish.

### ***Shaping Culture***

Because people depend on the mass media to inform them, the media play a major role in shaping our culture. Consider the influence of football on the American culture. The sense of “maleness” and competition that surrounds football supports the belief that men are supposed to be tough and macho. The game subtly reinforces the notion that people can be anything they want to be if only they try hard enough, a distinct belief in American culture. Indeed, as early as the nineteenth century, cheap

paperback novels promoted the virtues of hard work, education, and rugged individualism. Such values have been repeated in radio programs, magazine stories, and television situation comedies so often that they have become a part of our social fabric.

Once you start to think this way, the significance of the mass media as “culture industries” becomes apparent. This viewpoint assumes two important concepts. First, the media are an arena for working out competing definitions of reality. Thus the media become a debating ground for our system of values and beliefs. Second, the effects of the media are not simple, direct results but complex consequences interwoven in the cultural fabric. When you see the media as contributing to the culture, you can ask how they affect that culture on a societal level. In this section we tackle that issue by discussing four cultural functions of the media: gatekeeping, agenda setting, perpetuating stereotypes, and cultivating perceptions.

### gatekeeping

The process of determining what news, information, or entertainment will reach a mass audience.

**Gatekeeping** Gatekeeping is the process of determining what news, information, or entertainment will reach a mass audience. The term *gatekeeping*, coined by Kurt Lewin in 1947, describes news traveling through a series of checkpoints before reaching the public (Wilson & Wilson, 1998). To see how gatekeeping works, consider what happens with a freeway accident involving a large truck and two cars. Gatekeeping first occurs when newspapers, for example, determine if the accident is serious enough to justify sending reporters to the scene. If editors send reporters to the scene, they will act as gatekeepers when they decide if a story should be published. If written, the story goes to a copy editor, who edits the story on the way to the city editor, who judges its importance and placement. A news director at a television station, an acquisitions editor at a book publishing company, and other gatekeepers make such decisions every day. Thus each day a number of people control what you will see.

### agenda setting

The determination of the topics discussed by individuals and society on the basis of the media attention.

**Agenda Setting** Agenda setting simply means that when the media pay attention to certain topics, they determine, or set the agenda for, what topics are discussed by individuals and society (Lim, 2006). Although journalists attempt to serve as watchdogs of the political process, other forces also shape such agendas. Political and social agendas are both challenged and validated through the information and entertainment media. If the media deem a story or issue important, the story will get media attention; if they perceive the story as unimportant, the story will receive very little attention. Issues deemed important by the media become significant issues in the minds of the public.

To illustrate the agenda-setting function of the media, we return to the topic of teen violence. In the wake of the Columbine High School shootings, the topic of youth violence became a significant issue for the media. As media coverage of the topic increased, the nation’s attention to the topic also increased. Are people’s perceptions of youth violence accurate? According to a study comparing national statistics with the public’s views on crime, those perceptions are not accurate. As explained by Dorfman and Schiraldi (2001):

- Although most people believe youth crime is increasing, homicides by juveniles dropped 68% between 1993 and 1999.
- In a 1998 poll, nearly two-thirds of the respondents indicated they believed juvenile crime was increasing. In 1998 juvenile crime reached a 25-year low.
- On network television, news about homicides increased by 473% between 1990 and 1998; the national homicide arrests dropped by 33% over that same period.

## SKILL BUILDER

Watch the evening and nightly news on two of your local or regional TV stations. What issues or stories did the broadcasters emphasize? For instance, what was the lead story? Which story did the news broadcast spend the most time on? How do you think emphasizing these stories could shape or even distort the perceptions of viewers? When you come to class the next day, be prepared to discuss your observations and conclusions with your classmates.

As explained by Dorfman, one of the authors of the report and a researcher with the Berkeley Media Studies Institute, “The majority of Americans who get their information on which to base decisions—whether its voting decisions or what policies to support or what to be afraid of in the world—get that information from the news. . . . When the news limits the information that people get, that leads to distortion” (quoted in Teixeira, 2001). Thus the agenda set by the media not only shapes what we talk about but also potentially distorts our perceptions of issues.

**Perpetuating Stereotypes** Julia Wood (1994), a communication professor at the University of North Carolina, provides an interesting picture of the world as depicted by the media: It is a world in which white males make up two-thirds of the population. The women are fewer in number, perhaps because fewer than 10% live beyond 35. Those who do, like their male counterparts and the younger females, are nearly all white and heterosexual. In addition to being young, the majority of women are beautiful, thin, passive, and primarily concerned with relationships and getting rings out of collars and commodes. There are a few bad, bitchy women, and they are not as blandly pretty, not as subordinate, and not as caring as the “good” women. Most of the bad ones work outside the home, which is why they are hardened and undesirable. The more powerful, ambitious men occupy themselves with important business deals, exciting adventures, and rescues of dependent females, whom they often assault sexually.

What Wood is talking about is the stereotypes that mass media perpetuate. Stereotypes often depict people who are not from the dominant culture, which, as you learned in chapter 7, is white, middle-class men. When the media portray women, the women tend to fit cultural views of gender. Wood (1994) says women are depicted “as sex objects who are usually young, thin, beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb. Female characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care of homes and people” (p. 233). The good women, like Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, tend to be soft, tender, pretty, and passive. The bad women, like the wicked witch in *The Wizard of Oz* and Alex in the movie *Fatal Attraction*, are hard, cold, and aggressive. In films and in TV movies, a man who is tender and cooks for the family or a woman who is a CEO is rarely seen. Instead, people are regularly portrayed in gender roles that are traditional, limiting, and unrealistic. The point is that media portrayals do not necessarily reflect reality. Like the gatekeepers of the news, movie moguls have an unwritten rule about how women and men must behave. Wood says, “The rule seems to be that a woman may be strong and successful if and only if she also exemplifies traditional stereotypes of femininity—subservience, passivity, beauty, and an identity linked to one or more men” (p. 241).

Unfortunately, the media create numerous other stereotypes. For example, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, news coverage typically described hurricane victims from a certain perspective—poor, uneducated, and, more often than not, nonwhite (Lehrman, 2005). And, more generally, journalists tend to describe people in news stories from somewhat stereotypic vantage points. To combat such stereotyping, Lehrman suggests that journalists should counterbalance descriptions and imagery so that inaccurate perceptions are not created. Moreover, entertainment programs can take greater care to depict individuals in less stereotypic roles. For example, individuals with disabilities could be depicted in leadership positions, such as with the character Carrie Weaver in *ER* (Prime Time’s Disabled Images, 2001).

#### cultivation effect

Heavy television and media use leads people to perceive reality as consistent with the portrayals they see on television.

**Cultivating Perceptions** A final issue illustrating the effects of the mass media is the cultivation of perceptions. The **cultivation effect** suggests that heavy television and media use leads people to perceive reality as consistent with the portrayals they see on television (Bilandzic, 2006). Gerbner (1998), the person credited with framing cultivation theory, notes that widely seen images promote attitudes and values on the part of viewers. Take the issue of violence. Other theories discussed in this chapter suggest that mediated violence leads to real violence. Gerbner and his colleagues take a less direct route and suggest that heavy television viewing causes one to feel that the world is a dangerous place. Consider the following findings:

- Frequent television viewers perceive their risk of being a victim of violence as much greater than do less frequent viewers.
- Heavy television viewers fear walking alone at night more than do low television viewers.
- Heavy television viewers are more skeptical and predict the worst from other people. Low television viewers are more optimistic.

In addition to explaining how the media affect our perceptions, Gerbner and his colleagues claim that the media normalize violence. That is, repeated exposure to violence leads viewers to believe that violent actions are normal responses to stressful situations. Such normalization of violence has the potential to make a person more predisposed to act violently toward others.

Cultivation theory provides a potentially powerful analysis of how the media affect us. Although a link between mediated violence and real violence is difficult to prove, Gerbner’s theory has intuitive appeal. Viewing continual violence and seeing minorities misrepresented are bound to have some long-term effects on our perceptions of the world.

## Computer-Mediated Communication

During the 1990s computer-mediated communication became a common communication tool at most universities and in many businesses. A former graduate school colleague, now a human resources director for a technology firm in Phoenix, told us that her company moved entirely to e-mail as a form of communication. The company actually encourages e-mail rather than face-to-face interactions for internal communication because e-mail is more efficient: People spend less time talking about sports and gossiping. We are not ready to advocate the “only e-mail” approach

**TRY THIS** 

List examples of both synchronous and asynchronous communication that you use to keep in touch with friends, relatives, or co-workers. What are some examples of situations in which synchronous communication is most effective for you? What are some examples of situations in which asynchronous communication is most effective?

to improving productivity; however, our friend's company illustrates the importance of CMC in twenty-first-century communication practices.

Computer-mediated communication is more than simply using e-mail. In fact, CMC comes in numerous forms. In this section we identify several examples of CMC and discuss research exploring communication processes within a CMC environment.

### Types of CMC

Nearly every form of CMC utilizes the Internet or networked computers to facilitate

human-to-human interaction. E-mail, for example, can travel around the world using the Internet or across the building using a company's network. Although all CMC shares the concept of networking, the similarities in types of CMC end there. Just as mass media have several varieties, several varieties of CMC exist. And, like mass media, each variety of CMC has certain advantages and disadvantages.

One way to classify types of CMC is based on whether the communication is synchronous or asynchronous. **Synchronous communication** occurs when members of the communication interaction are able to interact in real time and each participant is simultaneously a sender and receiver. For example, a face-to-face conversation or telephone call is synchronous communication. **Asynchronous communication** occurs when the communication interaction has delays and each participant must take turns being the sender and receiver. If you have ever had a pen pal or kept in touch with a friend or family member by mail, you have engaged in asynchronous communication.

As you might guess, the ways in which people use the Internet to communicate changes frequently. When we first wrote this chapter in the early 2000s, e-mail was the dominant form of CMC. Do you think that has changed? The answer might surprise you. Table 2 shows the five most common uses of the Internet by American adult Internet users. As noted in the table, e-mail is still the dominant use people have for the Internet, followed by specific types of information searches.

#### synchronous communication

Members of the communication interaction are able to interact in real time, and each participant is simultaneously a sender and receiver.

#### asynchronous communication

Delays occur in the communication interaction and each participant must take turns being the sender and receiver.

**TABLE 2** AMERICAN ADULTS' TOP FIVE INTERNET ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	INTERNET USERS WHO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITY
Send or receive e-mail	90%
Use a search engine to find information	88%
Search for a map or driving directions	86%
Look for health or medical information	83%
Look for information on a hobby or interest	83%

Source: Pew Internet (2009, July 15). Pew Internet and American life project tracking survey. Retrieved September 24, 2009, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Online-Activities-Total.aspx>.

In this section, we highlight seven of the most common communication tools available on the Internet: e-mail, bulletin boards, instant messaging and chat, audio-video conferencing, blogs, virtual worlds, and social networking sites.

- *Electronic mail.* Electronic mail uses the Internet or a computer network to send addressable messages to another person connected to the Internet or network. E-mail is a popular method of communication for both organizations and individuals. As shown by the statistics reported in Table 2, Americans still rely on e-mail as their primary communication tool on the Internet, with 90% of adult Internet users sending and receiving e-mail when they go online. In fact, e-mail has quickly become a site of convergence for many of our Internet activities. We receive invitations to shop, alerts about comments or “tags” about us on social networking sites, and even voice-mail messages, all through our e-mail inbox. You may even use your e-mail as a portable file storage system by e-mailing yourself files that you can access in a classroom, at the library, or at your office. In essence, e-mail has become a key portal for how we use and experience the Internet while at the same time serving as a key tool for communicating with others.
- *Bulletin board systems.* **Bulletin board systems (BBS)** are text-based asynchronous communication tools that allow users to disseminate information to a large number of people. BBS discussions housed on websites are focused on a particular topic of interest. BBS-like discussions can also take place using a **listserv**, which is an e-mail-based discussion. Both web-based and e-mail-based discussions allow one person to asynchronously post a message to any number of people who have access to the discussion.
- *Instant messaging and chat.* **Instant messaging (IM)** is a text-based form of synchronous communication that allows users to connect two computers over the Internet and have a “conversation” through their computers. Instant messaging requires specialized software, often free, that allows you to contact other people instantly. **Internet relay chat (IRC)** is a text-based synchronous communication system that allows multiple users to interact in real time via the Internet. Various websites host chat rooms that allow multiple users to log on, often with anonymous nicknames, and interact with other users.
- *Audio-video conferencing.* Audio-video conferencing uses the Internet or a network to connect two or more multimedia-capable computers for live, interactive conversations using visual and auditory channels of communication. By using computer microphones and inexpensive cameras, it is possible to conduct inexpensive conversations with video over the Internet.
- *Blogs.* Blogs are online journals where entries about topics are displayed in reverse chronological order. You can easily find blogs about your favorite television show or musical group or even your university—blogs are even becoming important sources of news that can influence elections. Most blogs allow viewers to leave comments for and/or post questions to the author of the blog. Look for blogs using Google’s blog search engine ([www.blogsearch.google.com](http://www.blogsearch.google.com)). Blogs are becoming one of the most popular

#### bulletin board system (BBS)

Text-based asynchronous communication tool that allows users to disseminate information to a large number of people.

#### listserv

E-mail-based discussion groups.

#### Instant messaging (IM)

A text-based form of synchronous communication that allows users to connect two computers over the Internet and have a “conversation” through their computers.

#### Internet relay chat (IRC)

A text-based synchronous communication system that allows multiple users to interact in real time via the Internet.

## e-note

## Observing a Chat Room

Go to **yahoo.com** and search for the phrase “chat rooms.” The returned results will list several different chat rooms. All chat rooms may require some sort of free registration where you select a user name. Enter one of the rooms and observe the discussion. What issues did participants discuss? How would you characterize chat discussions as similar to and/or different from face-to-face conversations?

forms of asynchronous communication because nearly anyone can find (or create) a blog on something of interest to them.

- *Virtual worlds.* One of the newest and most interesting forms of asynchronous communication is virtual worlds like Second Life ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)). These virtual worlds are web-based virtual realities where participants create characters (called “avatars”) that they use to meet and interact with other participants in the virtual worlds. Some participants even purchase virtual real estate where they can sell goods and services to others in the virtual world (that is, to make money in the “real” world). These virtual worlds are populated with digital representations of real people—they just chose to be part of a virtual online community part of the time.
- *Social networking sites.* As recently as late 2009, the Pew Internet site, where information in Table 2 was obtained, showed that social networking sites did not even make the top 10 list of common Internet activities. Using an online social networking site like MySpace or Facebook came in at number 32, with only 35% of Internet users reporting that they engaged in this activity. Why such a low showing? Our hunch is that if the study included adolescents and young adults the percentage of social network site users would be much higher. In fact, one of our universities conducts a similar poll with new freshmen during orientation; results of that poll for the 2009 incoming class suggested that Facebook was used far more frequently for online communication than even e-mail. Social networking sites are different than e-mail because they integrate more of our identity. We post pictures, provide status updates, send virtual gifts, play games, display our art, and even organize online parties using various social networking options. The robust tools on social networking sites like Facebook even allow us to reconnect with friends we have not seen for years and even decades. Although e-mail may remain the online tool of choice for formal communication, social networking sites will begin to rival e-mail as more and more people use the Internet as a way to establish and maintain personal connections rather than simply using it to find information, store and transfer documents, or serve as a functional alternative to telephone calls and document transfer.

In summary, CMC has become a primary form of communication for many people. As telephone, videoconferencing and Internet technology continues to converge, time spent engaging in CMC will only increase. In fact, a recent study conducted by the University of Southern California Annenberg School for



Communication found that 25% of adults surveyed thought that children in their household spend too much time on the Internet (see [www.digitalcenter.org](http://www.digitalcenter.org)). Thus, expecting a steady increase in CMC is a safe assumption.

### CMC and the Communication Process

Unlike mass media, CMC allows individuals to communicate on a personal level. Because of the personalized nature of CMC, the Internet is quickly becoming a tool for creating, enacting, and maintaining personal relationships not feasible through “snail mail” or long-distance phone calls. Now, romantic partners in “long-distance relationships” can easily remain in contact; members of the U.S. armed forces stationed overseas can easily communicate with family and friends; you can even create and sustain relationships entirely online. But can the Internet truly support the warmth of personal interaction that we all seek? Communication scholars have explored the processes and effects of CMC to address this question.

The UCLA Internet Report (2000) provides evidence that CMC is quickly becoming a viable tool for sustaining communication in interpersonal relationships. Participants in the UCLA survey indicated that the Internet increased their contact with family and friends, professional colleagues, and people sharing their hobbies or recreational activities. Furthermore, 26.2% of the participants indicated that they had “online friends” whom they had not met in person, and 12.4% indicated that they had met someone first online and then in person.

In this section we highlight research related to three general areas of CMC research: the nature of CMC interactions, the role of CMC in community formation, and the notion of gender in CMC.

#### *The Nature of CMC Interactions*

Based on your knowledge of communication, fundamental differences between CMC and face-to-face communication should be obvious. Primarily, CMC does not allow a full array of nonverbal behaviors to be utilized. Moreover, CMC is more dependent on interpretation of the written word, which has the potential to reduce both the depth and breadth of communication. Thus the question addressed by communication scholars is not so much “How is CMC different from face-to-face communication?” Rather, they ask, “How do users of CMC adapt to make CMC more similar to face-to-face communication?”

In chapter 6 you learned about the uncertainty reduction theory—when we meet someone new or encounter new or ambiguous situations, we seek to reduce our uncertainty. Does the process of uncertainty reduction in CMC relationships correspond to uncertainty reduction behaviors in face-to-face relationships? Pratt, Weisman, Cody, and Wendt (1999) addressed this question by analyzing the content of asynchronous CMC interactions between youngsters and senior citizens who became e-mail “pen pals.” A natural strategy for reducing uncertainty, in both CMC and face-to-face communication, is to ask questions. Pratt and colleagues found that, compared to participants in face-to-face relationships, CMC participants asked roughly the same number and same types of questions during their interactions even though the CMC interactions were asynchronous and took longer to develop. One difference between CMC and face-to-face interaction was that CMC participants asked more questions aimed at getting at the “inner self” of the other person. The researchers speculate that this difference could be because

CMC participants were not distracted by superficial characteristics like ethnicity or attractiveness.

In addition to uncertainty reduction, researchers have explored similarities and differences in impression formation between face-to-face communication and CMC. Impression formation involves making inferences about another person's personality, values, and traits. Hancock and Dunham (2001) wanted to determine if impression formations were the same for both types of communication. Results of their study indicated that impressions formed in the CMC environments were less detailed but stronger than those formed as a result of face-to-face interactions. We might say that we develop stronger reactions to others during CMC interactions; however, those reactions may be based on a relatively small amount of information.

Although we may not view it as such, cyberspace has created a new culture. People from a variety of backgrounds and cultures merge into a new world in cyberspace. What are the common rules of cyberspace? Virginia Shea (1995) systematized *Internet etiquette* in her book **Netiquette**. Shea identified 10 rules for the Net:

#### netiquette

Internet etiquette.

1. *Remember the human.* Treat other people the same way you wish to be treated.
2. *Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.* Ethical behavior is in order, and breaking the law is as problematic on the Net as it is in other aspects of our lives.
3. *Know where you are in cyberspace.* Netiquette varies from one domain to another just as etiquette varies from one co-culture to another. Be cognizant of the rules of the domain.
4. *Respect other people's time and bandwidth.* Shea notes, "You are not the center of cyberspace."
5. *Make yourself look good online.* Know that you are judged on the quality of your message, not on your sex, race, height, weight, and so on. Pay attention to the content of your messages, and strive for clarity and logic. Do not post messages that may encourage "flaming" responses.
6. *Share expert knowledge.* Offer information and answer questions that are asked.
7. *Help keep flame wars under control.* When others express strongly held negative and emotional opinions, do not fan the flames.
8. *Respect other people's privacy.* Do not read others' e-mail, just as you would not read their snail mail.
9. *Do not abuse your power.* If you have access to others' computers, lists, and so on, do not take advantage of this access.
10. *Forgive other people's errors.* Be kind in responding to violations of netiquette, and say nothing about minor errors. (These rules are also available at <http://www.albion.com/netiquette>.)

How do you respond to these commandments? Do they seem realistic? Can you identify times when the rules were "broken," creating conflict with another person? Although you may have been using technological communication for some time, others are discovering it each day. Be patient with those who are new to this emerging culture. Whenever we move into another culture, we need time to assimilate and to learn the rules and customs.

### *The Role of CMC in Community Formation*

Take a moment to think about the communities to which you have belonged. While growing up, you lived in a neighborhood that was part of a larger community. We typically think of communities as physical entities: A map defines the outward boundaries of our towns; towns are made up of discernible neighborhoods; neighborhoods are made up of people's dwellings. Each member of a community has a personal stake in the collaborative success of people in the community. If you and your neighbor engage in constant battles, the entire neighborhood feels the tension; if your city has tensions between different groups of people, the entire community is on edge. Thus real communities force us to work together to solve problems and promote a civic commitment to success. Can virtual communities, such as those found on BBS sites or in multiuser domains, achieve the same sense of community as the ones in which we physically live?

A key difference between virtual and physical communities is how they are formed (Byam, 1998). **Physical communities** are the actual communities we live in—our neighborhoods and cities; they form out of geographic pragmatism. Many towns were established because they were situated on a river or transportation route. People who are part of physical communities are tied together because of geography—they live near each other. **Virtual communities**, however, are collections of people who populate discussion boards and/or multiuser environments on the Internet. They are formed out of mutual interest among members—the connection is psychological similarity rather than geographic proximity. On a basic level people who live in physical communities often do so because they have to, whereas people who interact in virtual communities do so because they want to. Communication scholars hypothesize that differences between physical and virtual communities potentially have profound implications.

Virtual communities hold a great deal of promise. Because of CMC, people can come together and discuss issues of great personal relevance. For example, Wright (1999) explains that CMC can be used to facilitate support groups. In fact, one of our fathers has a rare form of cancer and belongs to a listserv “community” where he shares advice with others. Without CMC this support network would not be possible. Virtual communities can also serve as a safety valve of sorts. People who feel voiceless and disenfranchised in their own communities may be able to find a secure “home” in a virtual community.

Experts raise several criticisms of virtual communities. As noted by Byam (1998), because virtual communities are not “real” in the traditional sense of the word, members can choose to come and go without developing the civic commitment necessary for real communities to function. Moreover, the use of virtual communities as a safety valve allows us to ignore our moral responsibility to those in our physical world. In other words, we risk ignoring real-world problems because a simple click of the mouse can place us in a virtual world that is problem-free. The issue of virtual communities makes salient the point that culture, communication, and ethics are intertwined.

### *The Relationship Among CMC, Gender, and Culture*

The final area of research involves the ways in which gender and culture are related to computer-mediated communication. We specifically address research related to two questions. First, are differences in CMC attitudes or behaviors based on gender or ethnicity? Second, can CMC be used as a tool for social change in the areas of gender and ethnicity?

#### **physical communities**

The actual communities we live in—our neighborhoods and cities.

#### **virtual communities**

Collections of people who populate discussion boards and/or multiuser environments on the Internet.

In theory the virtual world of the Internet conceals both gender and ethnicity; the medium is both gender-neutral and color-blind. Of course, this “theory” rests on two assumptions, neither of which are necessarily true. The first is that CMC filters out all markers of gender and ethnicity. As noted throughout this book, we learn our own personal gender norms and cultural history throughout our lives. To assume that we could “turn off” our gender and cultural background when we turn on the computer would be incorrect. The second assumption is that the virtual world is an egalitarian place where equality and nondiscrimination can reign. This may be somewhat true, but only with equal access to the medium. Unfortunately, equal access may not be the norm.

Research reveals two fundamental points about gender and culture in CMC. First, some differences do appear between men and women in terms of how they are able to adapt to the CMC medium. For example, Adrianson (2001) found that women are able to produce more messages, greater opinion change, more opinions, and higher agreement in face-to-face communication compared to CMC. Thus men may adapt more quickly to the CMC environment. Kramarae (1998) suggests that any gender differences could be attributed to the fact that males dominate the technology arena.

### NCA Ethics Credo



*We believe access to communication resources and opportunities is necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.*

The second general point made by researchers is that not everyone has access to CMC. The **digital divide** is a growing gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not. Or, as explained on the U.S. Commerce Department (2001) web page titled “Falling Through the Net,”

In just about every country, a certain percentage of people has the best information technology that society has to offer. These people have the most powerful computers, the best telephone service and fastest Internet service, as well as a wealth of content and training relevant to their lives.

There is another group of people. They are the people who for one reason or another don’t have access to the newest or best computers, the most reliable telephone service or the fastest or most convenient Internet services. The difference between these two groups of people is what has been called the “Digital Divide.”

Statistics reported on the Department of Commerce website indicate that although the number of “connected” individuals has greatly increased, a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities and rural Americans still lack full access to the Internet. Until access is equal, can we claim that the Internet is a color-blind world?

The second general question addressed by CMC researchers on gender and culture issues is whether CMC can be used as an agent of social change. One benefit of CMC is that the connection allows users to come together and discuss important social issues. Although many people may not go to city council meetings or participate in state and national politics, online bulletin boards and other forms of virtual communities provide an outlet for discussion and deliberation. Additionally, Danet (1998) suggests that the CMC environment allows users to “experiment and

#### digital divide

A growing gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not.

## get INVOLVED!

The rise of digital culture through the Internet makes it more possible than ever for peoples' stories to be heard. In California, the Center for Multicultural Cooperation, a nonprofit organization that creates educational programs focusing on social and civic responsibility ([www.cmweb.org](http://www.cmweb.org)), has created a program called Young Voices. The Young Voices initiative encourages young people to use participatory media (e.g., the Internet, public-access cable, etc.) to observe, analyze, and document issues facing their community. For example, after eight Hmong children in Fresno committed suicide, the Young Voices program was initiated to guide members of the community to interview Hmong elders so that younger generations could better understand and feel connected to their culture. Since that project in 2004, the same approach has been used in other communities around the state.



Your experience as a consumer and perhaps creator of CMC has prepared you to enact your own “digital storytelling” project. Identify an issue in your community and make a multimedia story about that issue. Using even a simple cell-phone camera and PowerPoint, you can create a movie combining visual imagery, text, and narration to highlight an issue of interest. You can even post your movie on YouTube, Facebook, or your personal website. If you enjoy the project, you can even start your own blog. The point is this: The Internet opens valuable opportunities for peoples' voices to be heard—think creatively about how you can take advantage of that opportunity.

play” with different personas. She explains, “Some people are leading double or multiple lives in cyberspace, even with different gender identities. Others are trying out what it might mean to be gender-free, neither male nor female” (p. 130). Through such behaviors, Danet argues, individual users can raise their awareness by being someone other than who they actually are. The long-term consequences of Internet discussions and playful experimentation with different personas could raise social awareness.

## How Can You Become a Literate Consumer of Mediated Communication?

Throughout this chapter we have stressed the advantages and disadvantages of various media as we discussed several theories explaining how the media affect us. Attaining an understanding of these issues is the first step to becoming a more literate consumer of mediated information. In this final section we present additional strategies you can use to critically assess information obtained through mass media or CMC.

## Media Literacy

The mass media blur the distinction between news and entertainment. As viewers watch the television show *The West Wing*, the all-star cast not only entertains but also provides a lesson on national politics. Likewise, the nightly news must present information on current events in a way that attracts and captivates viewers. Because the mass media both entertain and inform, viewers must understand how to interpret mediated messages critically.

Gerbner (2000), the media critic credited with developing cultivation theory, suggests the following:

1. *Develop an understanding of how mediated messages are created.* Be aware of how different camera angles, lighting designs, editing techniques, and camera movements are used to create certain impressions. Knowledge and awareness of the technical steps involved in producing a mediated message are the first steps in understanding how mediated messages can manipulate us.
2. *Recognize the motives behind what the media do.* The media and entertainment business is just that—a business. All decisions occur within the context of a money-making environment. Even news programs are affected by this reality. During the early stages of the war on terrorism, a prominent reporter “on the ground” in Afghanistan had his contract expire with a prominent news organization. Rather than working on blind faith that his contract would be rewritten, the reporter changed networks and increased his salary. In this situation the ability of two different networks to report important news was dramatically altered because of an economic decision. Literate consumers of mediated messages are aware of this economic reality and interpret meanings accordingly.
3. *Understand that images found in the media contain values and ideologies.* Literate consumers of the media question the foundation of those ideologies and also understand that such implicit messages have a potentially significant impact on viewers.

## MYTHS, METAPHORS, & MISUNDERSTANDINGS

*Most of us believe that prime-time TV dramas are “just entertainment.” But communication scholars encourage us to be aware of how mass-mediated messages shape our knowledge of health and disease (Harter & Japp, 2001). For example, a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine highlighted how shows like ER and Rescue 911 often portray cardiac arrest as occurring in young populations and due largely to trauma, with CPR being highly successful. In reality the survival rate of individuals receiving CPR is low, and if they live they often have grave heart problems. The authors fear that such mythic portrayals potentially lead to misunderstandings among the general public. What political and social messages do you see embedded in other mediated “entertainment” programming?*

*For further discussion, see:*

*Diem, S. J., Lantos, J. D., & Tulskey, J. A. (1996). Cardiopulmonary resuscitation on television: Miracles and misinformation, The New England Journal of Medicine, 334, 1578–1582.*

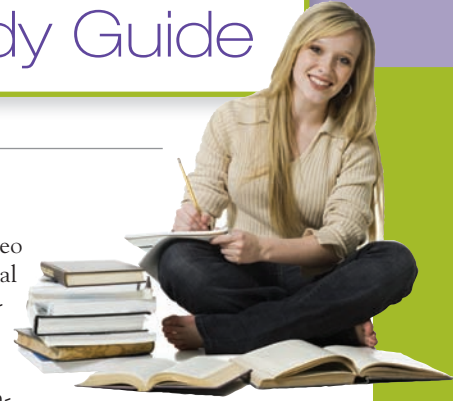
*Harter, L. M., & Japp, P. J. (2001). Technology as the representative anecdote in popular discourses of health and medicine, Health Communication, 13, 413–429.*

### CMC Literacy

Like the mass media CMC must be critically analyzed and evaluated. The issue of critical literacy is compounded when we realize that the Internet is both a mass medium and a tool for personal communication. Are web pages with discussion boards a personal communication tool or a mass-mediated message? Because the Internet blurs these forms of mediated communication, being a literate consumer is imperative.

Perhaps the key to becoming a literate consumer of CMC is being aware that the Internet is like a large city. In that city some people will be experts and very credible sources of information; others will present the illusion of expertise but actually be con artists. In cities companies advertise, students learn, and people engage in the great conversations of life. As you grow up in a city, you must learn how to judge the people you talk to. The same is true in the Internet community. Companies sell things, people profess and learn, conversations are carried out, and crimes are committed. Just as you would not walk down a dark street in a city without being aware of potential dangers, you should not travel the information superhighway without heightened awareness.

# Chapter Review and Study Guide



## Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

- ▶ Studying mediated communication is important because each of us needs to be a critical consumer of information. Additionally, the popularity of the Internet means that all of us are becoming producers of mediated communication through e-mail, chat, and even the construction of personal web pages. Knowledge of mediated communication will help you utilize this technology.
- ▶ Mediated communication is any form of communication that occurs using electronic means. There are two types of mediated communication:
  - Mass communication occurs when professional communicators use technology like radio and television to share messages to large audiences.
  - Computer-mediated communication (CMC) occurs when a human-to-human interaction takes place using networked computers.
- ▶ Examples of mass communication include newspapers, television, news magazines, the Internet, and professional journals. Each type of mass communication has several benefits and drawbacks. Knowledge of the different types of mass media and their characteristics will help you become a more effective consumer of the media.
- ▶ The mass media affect both people and the culture.
  - Some messages in the mass media affect people's behaviors.
  - The mass media have the potential to shape culture by acting as a gatekeeper of information, setting the agenda for issues, perpetuating stereotypes, and cultivating perceptions.
- ▶ Computer-mediated communication consists of electronic mail, bulletin board systems, instant messaging, chat rooms, audio-video conferencing, blogs, virtual worlds, and social networking sites.
- ▶ Various forms of CMC are characterized as synchronous or asynchronous.
  - Synchronous communication occurs when members of the communication interaction are able to communicate in real time and each participant acts simultaneously as the sender and receiver of messages.
  - Asynchronous communication occurs when the communication interaction is delayed and participants must take turns being the sender and receiver.
- ▶ CMC affects the communication process in many ways. To use CMC effectively, users must adapt their communication to the CMC environment. For example, research suggests that CMC users are more likely to discuss deep personal issues rather than focusing on superficial characteristics.
- ▶ CMC can be studied to shed light on the role of communication in forming virtual communities. CMC has the potential to shape our culture: It can create social problems like the digital divide, but virtual worlds allow people to express opinions and discuss issues of personal relevance.
- ▶ Effective consumers of mediated messages must understand how to critically evaluate messages of the mass media, beginning with an awareness of the media and how technology can be used to shape opinions. Users of CMC must become effective "listeners" during CMC interactions.

## Key Terms

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e) to further your understanding of the following terminology.

Agenda setting  
Asynchronous communication  
Blind peer review  
Bulletin board system (BBS)  
Computer-mediated communication (CMC)

Cultivation effect  
Digital divide  
Gatekeeping  
Instant messaging (IM)  
Internet relay chat (IRC)  
Listserv

Mass communication  
Mediated communication  
Netiquette  
Physical communities  
Synchronous communication  
Virtual communities



www.mhhe.com/pearson4e

## Self-Quiz

For further review, try the chapter self-quiz on the *Online Learning Center* at [www.mhhe.com/pearson4e](http://www.mhhe.com/pearson4e).

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# Glossary

## A

**accommodation goal** The marginalized group manages to keep co-cultural identity while striving for positive relationships with the dominant culture.

**active listening** Involved listening with a purpose.

**active perception** Perception in which your mind selects, organizes, and interprets that which you sense.

**adaptors** Nonverbal movements that you might perform fully in private but only partially in public.

**adoption** The listeners start a new behavior as a result of the persuasive presentation.

**affect displays** Nonverbal movements of the face and body used to show emotion.

**affection** The emotion of caring for others and/or being cared for.

**ageist language** Language that describes and denigrates people on the basis of their age.

**aggressiveness** Assertion of one's rights at the expense of others and care about one's own needs but no one else's.

**analogy** A comparison of things in some respects, especially in position or function, that are otherwise dissimilar.

**androgynous** Refers to persons who possess stereotypically female and male characteristics.

**antonym** Defines an idea by opposition.

**argument** A proposition that asserts some course of action.

**argumentativeness** The quality or state of being argumentative; synonymous with contentiousness or combativeness.

**articulation** The production of sounds; a component of enunciation.

**artifacts** Ornaments or adornments you display that hold communicative potential.

**assigned groups** Groups that evolve out of a hierarchy whereby individuals are assigned membership to the group.

**assimilation goal** The marginalized group attempts to fit in with the dominant group.

**attitude** A predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a person, an object, an idea, or an event.

**attractiveness** A concept that includes physical attractiveness, how desirable a person is to work with, and how much "social value" the person has for others.

**audience analysis** The collection and interpretation of audience information obtained by observation, inferences, questionnaires, or interviews.

**autocratic leaders** Leaders who maintain strict control over their group.

**automatic attention** The instinctive focus we give to stimuli signaling a change in our surroundings, stimuli that we deem important, or stimuli that we perceive to signal danger.

## B

**bargaining** The process in which two or more parties attempt to reach an agreement on what each should give and receive in a transaction between them.

**behavioral flexibility** The ability to alter behavior to adapt to new situations and to relate in new ways when necessary.

**belief** A conviction; often thought to be more enduring than an attitude and less enduring than a value.

**bibliographic references** Complete citations that appear in the "references" or "works cited" section of your speech outline.

**bodily movement** What the speaker does with his or her entire body during a presentation.

**body** The largest part of the presentation, which contains the arguments, evidence, and main content.

**boomerang effect** The audience likes you and your message less after your presentation than they did before.

**brainstorming** A creative procedure for thinking of as many topics as you can in a limited time.

**brakelight function** A forewarning to the audience that the end of the presentation is near.

## C

**captive audience** An audience that has not chosen to hear a particular speaker or speech.

**cause/effect pattern** A method of organization in which the presenter first explains the causes of an event, a problem, or an issue and then discusses its consequences, results, or effects.

**celebrity testimony** Statements made by a public figure who is known to the audience.

**channel** The means by which a message moves from the source to the receiver of the message.

**chronemics** Also called temporal communication; the way people organize and use time and the messages that are created because of their organization and use of it.

**chronological résumé** A document that organizes your credentials over time.

**cliché** An expression that has lost originality and force through overuse.

**closure** The tendency to fill in missing information in order to complete an otherwise incomplete figure or statement.

**co-culture** A group that exists within a larger, dominant culture but differs from the dominant culture in some significant characteristic.

**co-culture** A group whose beliefs or behaviors distinguish it from the larger culture of which it is a part and with which it shares numerous similarities.

**code** A systematic arrangement of symbols used to create meanings in the mind of another person or persons.

**collaborative style** Thoughtful negotiation and reasoned compromise.

**collectivist cultures** Cultures that value the group over the individual.

**colloquialisms** Words and phrases used informally.

**commitment** A measure of how much time and effort you put into a cause; your passion and concern about the topic.

**common ground** Also known as co-orientation, the degree to which the speaker's values, beliefs, attitudes, and interests are shared with the audience; an aspect of credibility.

**communication** The process of using messages to generate meaning.

**communication apprehension** An individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.

**communication competence** The ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

**communication networks** Patterns of relationships through which information flows in an organization.

**comparison** Shows the similarity between something well known and something less known.

**competence** The degree to which the speaker is perceived as skilled, reliable, experienced, qualified, authoritative, and informed; an aspect of credibility.

**complementarity** The idea that we sometimes bond with people whose strengths are our weaknesses.

**complementary relationships** Relationships in which each person supplies something the other person or persons lack.

**complementation** Nonverbal and verbal codes add meaning to each other and expand the meaning of either message alone.

**compliance-gaining** Those attempts made by a source of messages to influence a target "to perform some desired behavior that the target otherwise might not perform."

**compliance-resisting** The refusal of targets of influence messages to comply with requests.

**conclusion** The part that finishes the presentation by fulfilling the four functions of an ending.

**concrete language** Words and statements that are specific rather than abstract or vague.

**conjunctive tasks** Group tasks for which no one member has all the necessary information but each member has some information to contribute.

**connotative meaning** An individualized or personalized meaning of a word, which may be emotionally laden.

**context** A set of circumstances or a situation.

**continuance** Encouraging the audience to keep doing what they are doing.

**contradiction** Verbal and nonverbal messages conflict.

**contradictions** In dialectic theory the idea that each person in a relationship might have two opposing desires for maintaining the relationship.

**contrast** Clarifies by showing differences.

**control** The ability to influence our environment.

**cover letter** A short letter introducing you and your résumé to an interviewer.

**criteria** The standards by which a group must judge potential solutions.

**critical listening** Listening that challenges the speaker's message by evaluating its accuracy, meaningfulness, and utility.

**critical thinking** Analyzing the speaker, the situation, and the speaker's ideas to make critical judgments about the message being presented.

**cultural competence** The ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, and religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

**cultural relativism** The belief that another culture should be judged by its own context rather than measured against your culture.

**culture** A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world.

**culture** A unique combination of rituals, religious beliefs, ways of thinking, and ways of behaving that unify a group of people.

**culture** The socially transmitted behavior patterns, beliefs, attitudes, and values of a particular period, class, community, or population.

**customer service encounter** The moment of interaction between the customer and the firm.

## D

**dating** Specifying when you made an observation, since everything changes over time.

**deceptive communication** The practice of deliberately making somebody believe things that are not true.

**decode** The process of assigning meaning to others' words in order to translate them into thoughts of your own.

**decoding** The process of assigning meaning to the idea or thought in a code.

**deductive argument** A logical structure that uses a general proposition applied to a specific instance to draw a conclusion.

**defensiveness** Occurs when a person feels attacked.

**definitions** Determinations of meaning through description, simplification, examples, analysis, comparison, explanation, or illustration.

**delivery** The presentation of a speech using your voice and body to communicate your message.

**democratic leaders** Leaders who encourage members to participate in group decisions.

**demographic analysis** The collection and interpretation of data about the characteristics of people.

**demonstrating** Showing the audience what you are explaining.

**denotative meaning** The agreed-upon meaning or dictionary meaning of a word.

**descriptiveness** The practice of describing observed behavior or phenomena instead of offering personal reactions or judgments.

**designated leader** Someone who has been appointed or elected to a leadership position.

**deterrence** Discouraging listeners from taking some action.

**dialectic** The tension that exists between two conflicting or interacting forces, elements, or ideas.

**dialogue** The act of taking part in a conversation, discussion, or negotiation.

**discontinuance** A persuasive purpose rooted in convincing listeners to stop some current behavior.

**disjunctive tasks** Group tasks that require little coordination and that can

be completed by the most skilled member working alone.

**doublespeak** Any language that is purposefully constructed to disguise its actual meaning.

**downward communication** Messages flowing from superiors to subordinates.

**dyadic communication** Two-person communication.

**dynamism** The extent to which the speaker is perceived as bold, active, energetic, strong, empathic, and assertive; an aspect of credibility.

## E

**economic orientation** Organizations that manufacture products and/or offer services for consumers.

**emblems** Nonverbal movements that substitute for words and phrases.

**emergent groups** Groups resulting from environmental conditions leading to the formation of a cohesive group of individuals.

**emergent leader** Someone who becomes an informal leader by exerting influence toward achievement of a group's goal but who does not hold the formal position or role of leader.

**emoticons** Typographic symbols showing emotional meaning.

**emotional labor** Jobs in which employees are expected to display certain feelings in order to satisfy organizational role expectations.

**empathic listening** Listening with a purpose and attempting to understand the other person.

**emphasis** The use of nonverbal cues to strengthen verbal messages.

**encode** The process of translating your thoughts into words.

**encoding** The process of translating an idea or thought into a code.

**enunciation** The pronunciation and articulation of sounds and words.

**ethics** A set of moral principles or values.

**ethics** A set of principles of right conduct.

**ethnocentrism** The belief that your own group or culture is superior to other groups or cultures.

**euphemism** A more polite, pleasant expression used instead of a socially unacceptable form.

**examples** Specific instances used to illustrate your point.

**expert testimony** Statements made by someone who has special knowledge or expertise about an issue or idea.

**explanation** A clarification of what something is or how it works.

**explanation** A means of idea development that simplifies or clarifies an idea while arousing audience interest.

**explicit-rule culture** A culture in which information, policies, procedures, and expectations are explicit.

**extemporaneous mode** A carefully prepared and researched presentation delivered in a conversational style.

**extrinsic motivation** A method of making information relevant by providing the audience with reasons outside the presentation itself for listening to the content of the presentation.

**eye contact** The extent to which a speaker looks directly at the audience.

## F

**facial expressions** Any nonverbal cues expressed by the speaker's face.

**fear appeal** Eliciting fear to change behavior.

**feedback** The receiver's verbal and nonverbal response to the source's message.

**figure** The focal point of your attention.

**first-person observation** Observations based on something that you personally have sensed.

**fluency** The smoothness of delivery, the flow of words, and the absence of vocalized pauses.

**formal communication** Messages that follow prescribed channels of communication throughout the organization.

**formal role** Also called positional role; an assigned role based on an individual's position or title within a group.

**frozen evaluation** An assessment of a concept that does not change over time.

**functional résumé** A document that organizes your credentials by type of function performed.

## G

**gestures** Movements of the head, arms, and hands to illustrate, emphasize, or signal ideas in a presentation.

**ground** The background against which your focused attention occurs.

**group climate** The emotional tone or atmosphere members create within the group.

**group conflict** An expressed struggle between two or more members of a group.

**group culture** The socially negotiated system of rules that guide group behavior.

**group decision support system (GDSS)** An interactive network of computers with specialized software allowing users to generate solutions for unstructured problems.

**groupthink** An unintended outcome of cohesion in which the desire for cohesion and agreement takes precedence over critical analysis and discussion.

## H

**hearing** The act of receiving sound.

**heterosexist language** Language that implies that everyone is heterosexual.

**horizontal communication** Messages between members of an organization with equal power.

**hostile work environment sexual harassment** Conditions in the workplace that are sexually offensive, intimidating, or hostile and that affect an individual's ability to perform his or her job.

**hurtful messages** Messages that create emotional pain or upset.

## I

**identity management** The control (or lack of control) of the communication of information through a performance.

**illustrators** Nonverbal movements that accompany or reinforce verbal messages.

**imagery** Use of words that appeal to the senses, that create pictures in the mind.

**immediacy** Communication behaviors intended to create perceptions of psychological closeness with others.

**immediate behavioral purposes** The actions expected from an audience during and immediately after a presentation.

**immediate purpose** A statement of what you intend to accomplish in this particular presentation.

**immediate purpose** What you expect to achieve on the day of your presentation.

**implicit-rule culture** A culture in which information and cultural rules are implied and already known to the participants.

**impromptu mode** Delivery of a presentation without notes, plans, or formal preparation; characterized by spontaneity and conversational language.

**inclusion** The state of being involved with others; a human need.

**incremental plagiarism** The intentional or unintentional use of information from one or more sources without fully divulging how much information is directly quoted.

**indexing** Identifying the uniqueness of objects, events, and people.

**individualistic cultures** Cultures that value individual freedom, choice, uniqueness, and independence.

**inductive argument** A logical structure that provides enough specific instances for the listener to make an inferential leap to a generalization that summarizes the individual instances.

**inflection** The variety or changes in pitch.

**informal communication** Any interaction that does not generally follow the formal structure of the organization but emerges out of natural social interaction among organization members.

**informal role** Also called a behavioral role; a role that is developed spontaneously within a group.

**information hunger** The audience's need for the information contained in the presentation.

**information literacy** The ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the information needed.

**information overload** Providing much more information than the audience can absorb in amount, complexity, or both.

**information relevance** The importance, novelty, and usefulness of the information to the audience.

**informative content** The main points and subpoints, illustrations, and examples used to clarify and inform.

**integration orientation** Organizations that help to mediate and resolve discord among members of society.

**interaction management** Establishing a smooth pattern of interaction that allows a clear flow between topics and ideas.

**intercultural communication** The exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally.

**internal references** Brief notations indicating a bibliographic reference that contains the details you are using in your speech.

**interpersonal communication** The process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening.

**interpersonal relationships** Associations between at least two people who are interdependent, who use some consistent patterns of interaction, and who have interacted for an extended period of time.

**interpretive perception** Perception that involves a blend of internal states and external stimuli.

**intrapersonal communication** The process of using messages to generate meaning within the self.

**introduction** The first part of your presentation, where you fulfill the five functions of an introduction.

## J

**jargon** The technical language developed by a professional group.

**job description** A document that defines the job in terms of its content and scope.

## K

**key-word outline** An outline consisting of important words or phrases to remind you of the content of the presentation.

**kinesics** The study of bodily movements, including posture, gestures, and facial expressions.

## L

**laissez-faire leaders** Leaders who take almost no initiative in structuring a group discussion.

**language** A collection of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings that are governed by rules and used to communicate.

**lay testimony** Statements made by an ordinary person that substantiate or support what you say.

**leadership** A process of using communication to influence the behaviors and attitudes of others to meet group goals.

**lecture cues** Verbal or nonverbal signals that stress points or indicate transitions between ideas during a lecture.

**lecture listening** The ability to listen to, mentally process, and recall lecture information.

**listening** The active process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. It involves the ability to retain information, as well as to react empathically and/or appreciatively to spoken and/or nonverbal messages.

**listening for enjoyment** Situations involving relaxing, fun, or emotionally stimulating information.

**long-range goal** What you expect to achieve by your message in the days, months, or years ahead.

**long-term memory** Our permanent storage place for information including but not limited to past experiences; language; values; knowledge; images of people; memories of sights, sounds, and smells; and even fantasies.

## M

**M-time** The monochronic time schedule, which compartmentalizes time to meet personal needs, separates task and social dimensions, and points to the future.

**main points** The most important points in a presentation; indicated by Roman numerals in an outline.

**maintenance functions** Behaviors that focus on the interpersonal relationships among group members.

**manuscript mode** Delivery of a presentation from a script of the entire speech.

**mass communication** The process of using messages to generate meanings

in a mediated system, between a source and a large number of unseen receivers.

**meaning** The understanding of the message.

**media convergence** The way that broadcasting, publishing, and digital communication are congregating.

**memorized mode** Delivering a presentation that has been committed to memory.

**message** The verbal or nonverbal form of the idea, thought, or feeling that one person (the source) wishes to communicate to another person or group of people (the receivers).

**metaphor** A figure of speech that likens one thing to another by treating it as if it were that thing.

**metaphors** A means to understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another.

**microtargeting** A method of bringing national issues down to the individual level.

**Monroe Motivated Sequence** A problem-solving format that encourages an audience to become concerned about an issue; especially appropriate for a persuasive presentation.

## N

**narrating** The oral presentation and interpretation of a story, a description, or an event; includes dramatic reading of prose or poetry.

**narratives** Stories to illustrate an important point.

**network** An intricate web of contacts and relationships designed to benefit the participants.

**noise** Any interference in the encoding and decoding processes that reduces message clarity.

**nonverbal codes** All symbols that are not words, including bodily movements,

use of space and time, clothing and adornments, and sounds other than words.

**nonverbal codes** Codes of communication consisting of symbols that are not words, including nonword vocalizations.

**nonverbal communication** The process of using wordless messages to generate meaning.

**norms** Informal rules for group interaction created and sustained through communication.

## O

**objectics** Also called object language; the study of the human use of clothing and other artifacts as nonverbal codes.

**objective statement** An articulation of your goals.

**operational definition** A definition that identifies something by revealing how it works, how it is made, or what it consists of.

**operational definition** Defines by explaining a process.

**organizational communication** The ways in which groups of people both maintain structure and order through their symbolic interactions and allow individual actors the freedom to accomplish their goals.

**organizational communities** Groups of similar businesses or clubs that have common interests and become networked together to provide mutual support and resources.

**organizational patterns** Arrangements of the contents of a presentation.

**organizations** Social collectives, or groups of people, in which activities are coordinated to achieve both individual and collective goals.

**outline** A written plan that uses symbols, margins, and content to reveal the order, importance, and substance of a presentation.

## P

**P-time** The polychronic time schedule, which views time as “contextually based and relationally oriented.”

**paralinguistic features** The nonword sounds and nonword characteristics of language, such as pitch, volume, rate, and quality.

**parallel form** The consistent use of complete sentences, clauses, phrases, or words in an outline.

**paraphrasing** Restating another person’s message by rephrasing the content or intent of the message.

**pattern-maintenance orientation** Organizations that promote cultural and educational regularity and development within society.

**pause** The absence of vocal sound used for dramatic effect, transition, or emphasis.

**perception** The process of becoming aware of objects and events from the senses.

**perceptual constancy** The idea that your past experiences lead you to see the world in a way that is difficult to change; your initial perceptions persist.

**personal experience** Use of your own life as a source of information.

**personal idioms** Unique forms of expression and language understood only by individual couples.

**personal inventory** An analysis of your own reading, viewing, and listening habits and behavior to discover topics of personal interest.

**persuasive presentation** A message designed to strategically induce change in an audience.

**phatic communication** Communication that is used to establish a mood of sociability rather than to communicate information or ideas.

**pitch** The highness or lowness of the speaker’s voice.

**pitch** The highness or lowness of the speaker’s voice.

**plagiarism** The intentional use of information from another source without crediting the source.

**political orientation** Organizations that generate and distribute power and control within society.

**positive thinking approach** Using positive thoughts to bolster speaker confidence.

**power** Interpersonal influence that forms the basis for group leadership.

**pragmatics** The study of language as it is used in a social context, including its effect on the communicators.

**prejudice** A negative attitude toward a group of people just because they are who they are.

**problem/solution pattern** A method of organization in which the presenter describes a problem and proposes a solution to that problem.

**process** An activity, exchange, or set of behaviors that occurs over time.

**profanity** Language that is disrespectful of things sacred.

**pronunciation** The act of correctly articulating words.

**proof** Evidence that the receiver believes.

**proposition of fact** An assertion that can be proved or disproved as consistent with reality.

**proposition of policy** A proposal of a new rule.

**proposition of value** A statement of what we should embrace as more important to our culture.

**proxemics** The study of the human use of space and distance.

**proximity** The location, distance, or range between persons and things.

**proximity** The principle that objects physically close to each other will be perceived as a unit or group.

**public communication** The process of using messages to generate meanings in a situation in which a single source transmits a message to a number of receivers.

## Q

**questionnaire** A set of written questions developed to obtain demographic and attitudinal information.

**quid pro quo sexual harassment** A situation in which an employee is offered a reward or is threatened with punishment based on his or her participation in a sexual activity.

## R

**racist language** Language that insults a group because of its skin color or ethnicity.

**rate** The pace of your speech.

**rate** The speed at which speech is delivered, normally between 125 and 190 words per minute.

**rebuttal** Arguing against someone else's position on an issue.

**receiver** A message target.

**reference librarian** A librarian specifically trained to help you find sources of information.

**references** A list of sources used in a presentation.

**Reflexivity** Being self-aware and learning from interactions with the intent of improving future interactions.

**regionalisms** Words and phrases specific to a particular region or part of the country.

**regulation** Nonverbal codes are used to monitor and control interactions with others.

**regulators** Nonverbal movements that control the flow or pace of communication.

**relational deterioration** In Knapp's model the process by which relationships disintegrate.

**relational development** In Knapp's model the process by which relationships grow.

**relational maintenance** In Knapp's model the process of keeping a relationship together.

**relationship-oriented groups** Also called primary groups; groups that are usually long-term and exist to meet our needs for inclusion and affection.

**relaxation approach** Combining deep relaxation with fear-inducing thoughts.

**repetition** The same message is sent both verbally and nonverbally.

**responsiveness** The idea that we tend to select our friends and loved ones from people who demonstrate positive interest in us.

**rhetorical questions** Questions asked for effect, with no answer expected.

**rituals** Formalized patterns of actions or words followed regularly.

**role** A consistent pattern of interaction or behavior exhibited over time.

**role** The part an individual plays in a group; an individual's function or expected behavior.

**rough draft** The preliminary organization of the outline of a presentation.

## S

**Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** A theory that our perception of reality is determined by our thought processes and our thought processes are limited by our language and, therefore, that language shapes our reality.

**schema** Organizational "filing systems" for thoughts held in long-term memory.

**search engine** A program on the Internet that allows users to search for information.

**second-person observation** A report of what another person observed.

**selective attention** The sustained focus we give to stimuli we deem important.

**selective attention** The tendency, when you expose yourself to information and ideas, to focus on certain cues and ignore others.

**selective exposure** The tendency to expose yourself to information that reinforces, rather than contradicts, your beliefs or opinions.

**selective perception** The tendency to see, hear, and believe only what you want to see, hear, and believe.

**selective retention** The tendency to remember better the things that reinforce your beliefs rather than those that oppose them.

**self-centered functions** Behaviors that serve the needs of the individual at the expense of the group.

**self-disclosure** The process of making intentional revelations about yourself that others would be unlikely to know and that generally constitute private, sensitive, or confidential information.

**self-managed approach** Reducing the fear of presenting with self-diagnosis and a variety of therapies.

**semantics** The study of the way humans use language to evoke meaning in others.

**sentence outline** An outline consisting entirely of complete sentences.

**separation goal** The marginalized group relates as exclusively as possible with its own group and as little as possible with the dominant group.

**sexist language** Language that excludes individuals on the basis of gender.

**sexual harassment** Unwelcome, unsolicited, repeated behavior of a sexual nature.

**short-term memory** A temporary storage place for information.

**signposts** Ways in which a presenter signals to an audience where the presentation is going.

**similarity** The idea that our friends and loved ones are usually people who like or dislike the same things we do.



**similarity** The principle that elements are grouped together because they share attributes such as size, color, or shape.

**skills approach** Reducing fear by systematically improving presenting skills.

**slang** A specialized language of a group of people who share a common interest or belong to a similar co-culture.

**sleeper effect** A change of audience opinion caused by the separation of the message content from its source over a period of time.

**small-group communication** Interaction among three to nine people working together to achieve an interdependent goal.

**small-group communication** The process of using messages to generate meaning in a small group of people.

**source** A message initiator.

**source credibility** The audience's perception of your effectiveness as a speaker.

**source credibility** The extent to which the speaker is perceived as competent to make the claims he or she is making.

**stakeholders** Groups of people who have an interest in the actions of an organization.

**statistics** Numbers that summarize numerical information or compare quantities.

**strategic ambiguity** The purposeful use of symbols to allow multiple interpretations of messages.

**subjective perception** Your uniquely constructed meaning attributed to sensed stimuli.

**subpoints** The points in a presentation that support the main points; indicated by capital letters in an outline.

**substitution** Nonverbal codes are used instead of verbal codes.

**supporting materials** Information you can use to substantiate your arguments and to clarify your position.

**supportive communication** Listening with empathy, acknowledging others' feelings, and engaging in dialogue to help others maintain a sense of personal control.

**surveys** Studies in which a limited number of questions are answered by a sample of the population to discover opinions on issues.

**syllogism** A logical structure that contains a major premise (a generalization) applied to a particular instance (a minor premise) that leads to a conclusion.

**symbolic interactionism** The process in which the self develops through the messages and feedback received from others.

**symmetrical relationships** Relationships in which participants mirror each other or are highly similar.

**synonym** Defines by using a word close or similar in meaning to the one you are trying to define.

**syntax** The way in which words are arranged to form phrases and sentences.

## T

**tactile communication** The use of touch in communication.

**task functions** Behaviors that are directly relevant to the group's task and that affect the group's productivity.

**task-oriented groups** Also called secondary groups; groups formed for the purpose of completing tasks, such as solving problems or making decisions.

**technological convergence** The way that technological systems are changing to perform similar tasks.

**testimonial evidence** Written or oral statements of others' experience used by a speaker to substantiate or clarify a point.

**tests of evidence** Questions that can be used to test the validity of evidence.

**time-sequence pattern** A method of organization in which the presenter

explains a sequence of events in chronological order.

**topical-sequence pattern** A method of organization that emphasizes the major reasons an audience should accept a point of view by addressing the advantages, disadvantages, qualities, and types of person, place, or thing.

**transition** A bridge between sections of a presentation that helps the presenter move smoothly from one idea to another.

**trustworthiness** The degree to which the speaker is perceived as honest, fair, sincere, honorable, friendly, and kind; an aspect of credibility.

**two-sided argument** A source advocating one position presents an argument from the opposite viewpoint and then goes on to refute that argument.

## U

**ultimate goal** A statement of purposes that could be achieved with continuing attempts to persuade.

**uncertainty-accepting cultures** Cultures that tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity.

**uncertainty-rejecting cultures** Cultures that have difficulty with ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity.

**upward communication** Messages flowing from subordinates to superiors.

## V

**value** A deeply rooted belief that governs our attitude about something.

**verbal citations** Oral explanations of who the source is, how recent the information is, and what the source's qualifications are.

**verbal codes** Symbols and their grammatical arrangement, such as languages.

**visual resources** Any items that can be seen by an audience for the purpose of reinforcing a message.

**visualization approach** Picturing yourself succeeding.

**vocal cues** All of the oral aspects of sound except words themselves.

**vocal variety** Vocal quality, intonation patterns, inflections of pitch, and syllabic duration.

**vocalized pauses** Breaks in fluency that negatively affect an audience's perception of the speaker's competence and dynamism.

**voluntary audience** A collection of people who choose to listen to a particular speaker or speech.

## W

**within-group diversity** The presence of observable and/or implicit differences among group members.

**working memory** The part of our consciousness that interprets and assigns meaning to stimuli we pay attention to.

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