

PRACTICING DELIVERY

Characteristics of an Effective Delivery Style

Delivery is how a message is communicated orally and visually through your use of voice and body. **Effective delivery** is both **conversational and animated**.

A **conversational style** allows each member of your audience to feel as if you are talking with him or her rather than speaking at the group. When your **delivery is animated or lively**, you **create excitement** about what you are saying so it is easier for your **audience to pay attention**. Your speech content is conveyed through language.

Your **delivery style**, however, is conveyed through your **nonverbal behaviors**. Nonverbal communication includes all speech elements other than the words themselves. These elements include your use of voice (e.g., pitch, volume, rate, quality, articulation, pronunciation, and pauses) and use of body (e.g., facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, body language, and even appearance).

USE CONVERSATIONAL STYLE

Effective delivery reflects a **conversational style**, meaning that **you sound spontaneous and relaxed**, which helps your **audience feel you are talking with them**, not at them. The hallmark of a conversational style is spontaneity.

Spontaneity is the **ability to sound natural as you speak**—as though you are really thinking about the ideas and getting them across to the audience as you speak. A speech with a spontaneous feel **does not sound rehearsed, memorized, or read** no matter how many times you've practiced it.

Speakers who try to **memorize their speeches often have to struggle** so hard to remember the words that their delivery becomes laborious. Although talented actors can make lines they have spoken literally hundreds of times sound spontaneous and informal, most novice public speakers cannot. The **secret to developing a conversational style** is to **learn the ideas** of your **speech** rather than trying to memorize every word.

BE ANIMATED

The **secret** is to **focus on conveying the passion** you feel about your topic through your voice and body. When we are **passionate about sharing something** with someone, almost all of us **become more animated in our delivery**. It is this level of liveliness that you want to duplicate when you deliver your speech.

EFFECTIVE USE OF VOICE

Your **voice** is the sound you **produce using your vocal organs** (including your larynx, tongue, teeth, lips, etc.). How you sound should emphasize and reinforce the meaning you intend, but sometimes it can contradict it. As a result, how you **use your voice affects how successful** you are in **getting your ideas across**.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF VOICE

Pitch is the **highness or lowness of the sounds produced** in your **larynx** by the size and vibration of your vocal cords. Natural pitch varies from person to person, but men generally have lower pitched voices than women and children because they typically have larger vocal cords.

Volume is **how loudly or softly you speak**. You control your volume by how forcefully you expel the air through your vocal cords. When you push a lot of air through the cords, you speak loudly; when you push less air through, your volume drops.

Rate is the **speed** at which **you talk**. In normal conversations, most people speak between 130 and 180 words per minute. We generally speak faster when we are excited or fearful and slow down when we explaining difficult material or when we are sad or somber.

Quality is the **tone or timbre of your voice** and what distinguishes it from the voices of others—it is “how you sound” to others.

SPEAK INTELLIGIBLY

To be **intelligible** means to be **understandable**. All of us have experienced situations in which we couldn't understand what was being said because the speaker was talking too softly or too quickly or had a voice that was compromised in some way. By practicing using appropriate vocal pitch, volume, rate, and vocal quality, you can improve the likelihood that you will be intelligible to your audience. **Speaking at an appropriate pitch** is particularly important if your **audience** includes people who have **hearing loss** because they may find it difficult to hear a pitch that is too high or too low.

Appropriate volume is the **key to intelligibility**. You must speak **loudly enough**, with or without a microphone, to be **heard easily by audience members seated in the back of the room** but not so loudly as to bring discomfort to listeners seated near the front. In addition, you can vary your volume to emphasize important information. For example, you may speak louder as you introduce each of your main points or when imploring listeners to take action.

The rate at which you speak can determine how intelligible your message is. **Speaking too slowly gives your listeners time to let their minds wander** after they've processed your message. **Speaking too quickly, especially when sharing complex ideas and arguments, doesn't give your listeners enough time to process the difficult information completely.** Although your **typical rate of speaking may be within the normal range**, being nervous when giving a speech can cause you to speak more quickly or slowly.

In addition to vocal characteristics, articulation, pronunciation, and accent problems can affect how intelligible your message is. **Articulation is using the tongue, palate, teeth, jaw movement, and lips to shape vocalized sounds that combine to produce a word.** **Accent is the inflection, tone, and speech habits typical of native speakers of a language.** If your accent is "thick" or very different from that of most of your audience, **practice pronouncing key words** so that you are **easily understood**, speak slowly to **allow your audience members more time to process your message**, and consider using visual aids to reinforce key terms, concepts, and important points.

USE VOICE EXPRESSIVENESS

You achieve vocal expressiveness by changing your pitch, volume, and rate, stressing certain words; and using pauses strategically. These contrasts clarify the emotional meaning of your message and help animate your delivery. **A total lack of vocal expressiveness produces a monotone**—a voice in which the **pitch, volume, and rate remain constant**, with no word, idea, or sentence differing significantly in sound from any other.

You use **stress in your speech** that is an **emphasis placed on certain words** by speaking them more loudly than the rest of the sentence, to shape the intended meaning idea. **Pauses, moments of silence strategically placed to enhance meaning, can also mark important ideas.** If you use one or more sentences in your speech to express an important idea, pause before each sentence to signal that something important is coming up, or pause afterward to allow the ideas to sink in.

EFFECTIVE USE OF BODY

Your audience can see as well as hear you, **how you use your body also contributes to how conversational and animated your audience perceives you to be.** The body language elements that affect delivery are eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, movement, posture, poise, and appearance.

EYE CONTACT

Looking directly at the people to whom you are speaking. In speechmaking, it involves looking at people in all parts of the room throughout a speech. As long as you are looking at someone (those in front of you, in the left rear of the room, in the right center of the room, etc.) and not at your notes or the ceiling, floor, or window, everyone in the audience will perceive you as having good eye contact with them. Maintaining eye contact is important for several reasons:

- Helps audiences concentrate on the speech
- Bolsters ethos
- Helps you gauge audience reaction to your ideas

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Your facial expressions are the **eye and mouth movements that convey your personableness and good character** (bolstering ethos) and can help you animate your speech (bolstering pathos). Your **audiences expect your expressions to be animated** when you give a speech. **Speakers who do not vary their facial expressions** during their speech and instead wear deadpan expressions, perpetual grins, or permanent scowls will be **perceived as boring, insincere, or stern** (hindering ethos).

GESTURES

Your gestures, **the movements of your hands, arms, and fingers, can help intelligibility and expressiveness.** You can use gestures to **describe or emphasize** what you are saying, refer to presentational aids, or clarify structure. Effective gestures must **appear spontaneous and natural** even though they are carefully planned and practiced.

MOVEMENT

Movement refers to **changing the position or location of your entire body.** During your speech, it is important to **engage only in motivated movement**, movement with a **specific purpose** such as emphasizing an important idea, referencing a presentational aid, or clarifying macrostructure. To emphasize a particular point, you might move closer to the audience. **Avoid unmotivated movement** such as bobbing, weaving, shifting from foot to foot, or pacing from one side of the room to the other because unplanned movements distract the audience from your message. Because many unplanned movements result from nervousness, you can minimize them by paying mindful attention to your body as you speak.

POSTURE

Posture refers to the **position or bearing with which you hold your body**. In speeches, an upright stance and squared shoulders communicate a sense of competence and confidence, which enhances your ethos. Speakers who slouch may give an unfavorable impression of themselves, including the impression of limited self-confidence and an uncaring attitude.

POISE

Poise is a **graceful and controlled use of the body** that gives the impression that you are self-assured, calm, and dignified.

APPEARANCE

Some speakers think that what they wear doesn't or shouldn't affect the success of their speech. But your appearance, the way you look to others, does matter. Studies show that a neatly groomed and professional appearance sends important messages about a speaker's commitment to the topic and occasion, as well as the speaker's credibility (ethos).⁶ Your appearance should complement your message, not detract from it. Three guidelines can help you decide how to dress for your speech:

- Consider the rhetorical situation.
- Consider your topic and purpose
- Avoid extremes.

DELIVERY METHODS

IMPROMPTU SPEECHES

An impromptu speech is one that is delivered with only seconds or minutes of advance notice for preparation and is usually presented without referring to notes of any kind.

SCRIPTED SPEECHES

A scripted speech is one that is prepared by creating a complete written manuscript and delivered by reading or memorizing a written copy.

EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECHES

An extemporaneous speech is researched and planned ahead of time, but the exact wording is not scripted and will vary somewhat from presentation to presentation. When speaking extemporaneously, you refer to speaking notes reminding you of key ideas, structure, and delivery cues as you speak. Extemporaneous speeches are the easiest to give effectively

because you are able to prepare your thoughts ahead of time and to have notes to prompt you.

REHEARSAL

Iterative process of practicing your speech aloud. A speech that is not practiced out loud is likely to be far less effective than it would have been had you given yourself sufficient time to revise, evaluate, and mull over all aspects of the speech.

PREPARING SPEAKING NOTES

Prior to your first rehearsal session, **prepare a draft of your speaking notes.** Speaking notes are a key-word outline of your speech, including hard-to-remember information such as quotations and statistics, as well as delivery cues designed to help trigger memory.

HANDLING PRESENTATIONAL AIDS

Some speakers make the mistake of thinking that once they have prepared good presentational aids, they will have no trouble using them in the speech. However, many speeches with good aids have become a shambles because the aids were not well handled. You can avoid problems by following these guidelines:

- Carefully plan when to use the presentational aids.
- Consider audience needs carefully
- Share a presentational aid only when talking about it.
- Display presentational aids so that everyone in the audience can see and hear them.
- Talk to your audience, not to the presentational aid.
- Resist the temptation on to pass objects through the audience.

REHEARSING AND REFINING DELIVERY

Effective speech delivery requires practice, and the more you practice, the better your speech will be. During practice sessions, you have three goals. First, you will practice language choices so they are appropriate, accurate, clear, and vivid. Second, you will practice your speech aloud until your voice and body convey your ideas conversationally, intelligibly, and expressively. Third, you will practice using presentational aids. As part of each practice, you will want to analyze how well it went and set goals for the next practice session.

ADAPTING TO YOUR AUDIENCE AS YOU GIVE YOUR SPEECH: THE RHETORIC SITUATION

- Be aware of and respond to audience feedback.
- Be prepared to use alternative developmental material.

- Correct yourself when you misspeak.
- Adapt to unexpected events.
- Adapt to unexpected audience reactions.
- Handle questions respectfully.