PART TWO: Listen and Look

Analyzing and Adapting to the Audience

UPON COMPLETING THIS CHAPTER’S TRAINING, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

1. Analyze your audience using formal and informal tools
2. Use the makeup of the audience to tailor your message
3. Plan your speech to reflect audience demographics
4. Plan your speech to reflect audience psychographics
5. Plan your speech to reflect the nature of the situation
Would you be wise to deliver the exact same speech to two or more different audiences? The answer is, “Probably not.” The public speaker’s audience is composed of people who come together to listen to and respond to a speech. Every speech is designed to be shared with a specific audience. In fact, successful speakers view the audience as central to their speech. They use the audience as they would a compass—for direction. After all, speakers should not speak to inform, convince, motivate, or entertain themselves. They should speak to inform, convince, motivate, or entertain an audience. Thus, in many ways, a speaker and the receivers create a speech together. The audience, in many ways, functions as the speaker’s partner.

Your success depends on how well you partner with or reach your audience—building your relationship and sharing your message. That’s why we focus on audience analysis, the process of gathering and interpreting information about receivers, and putting yourself in their shoes, so you can empathize with them, and adapt your message to meet and reflect their needs and interests.

COACHING TIP

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

—Maya Angelou

Actors are a lot like speakers. Actors who are in tune with audience members reach them on a level that those who perform only to hear themselves speak cannot hope to attain. If you consider only your words without considering the needs and wants of audience members, you risk having the words that are so important to you fall on deaf ears. To accomplish your goals, take time to customize your speeches for the people you are trying to reach—whether your purpose is to inform, persuade, or entertain them.
Reach Out to Your Audience

Imagine the potential audiences you might speak before in the near future. You might speak to a student group; the members of a temple, church, or mosque; a teachers’ organization; coworkers; a sales force; a community group; or a fraternity, sorority, or alumni group. Would you know each of these audiences equally well? Would you speak to each group about your topic in the same way? It is likely you would not. Your knowledge of each audience would influence your approach.

To decide how best to reach, influence, motivate, or entertain an audience, you need to figure out its members. This is not a new notion. More than two millennia ago, in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle noted, “Of the three elements in speechmaking—speaker, subject, and person addressed—it is the last one, the listener, that determines the speech’s end and object.”

4.1a Consider the Audience’s Makeup—Explore and Celebrate Its Diversity

Adapt your speech to reflect your audience’s makeup and perspective. While not everyone in the audience may like what you have to say, if you adapt your speech to reflect areas of common concern, you increase the likelihood that they will give your ideas a fair hearing. So focus on areas of agreement. Divisive rhetoric, including appeals to racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, and bigotry diminish us and have no place in a public speaker’s tool box.

Not only do audiences differ, individual members also differ. Not all African Americans, 20-year-old women, or college students, for example, think alike. You will be well served to discover just how much you and the receivers have in common and tailor your message to reflect their interests.

4.1b Be Audience Centered—Use Empathy

If you center attention on audience members, they will make you the center of their attention. When your words resonate, audiences are more likely to be more attentive and respond as you hope. Although you can’t, of course, expect to interact individually with each audience member, the more you find out, the more adept you become at adapting and tailoring your presentation.
Effective speakers select topics based on both their expertise and their knowledge of what audience members need or want to listen to. The audience-centered speaker is not self-centered but is motivated by an understanding of receivers. If you can empathize with audience members, taking the perspective of your receivers and exhibiting emotional responsiveness to their wants and needs, then it becomes more likely that they will listen to and respond as you hope they will to your speech.

Journalist and political consultant Peggy Noonan served as a speechwriter for presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. In her book *What I Saw at the Revolution*, Noonan advises speechmakers to find inspiration from unlikely public venues—one place being a shopping mall—that are filled with people from all walks of life, like the audiences whom speakers seek to reach. She counsels, “Show [your audience] respect and be honest and logical in your approach and they will understand every word you say and hear—and know—that you thought of them.”
Answer Preliminary Questions

Audience members pay closest attention to messages they perceive to be meaningful, filtering out the information they deem less important. To penetrate the invisible shield that receivers use to protect themselves from information irrelevance, relate your ideas to their specific values, beliefs, needs, and wants.

Posing questions like these early in your analysis of the audience can help you get a jump start in designing a speech to which your audience will tune in:

- To whom am I speaking?
- How do they feel about my topic?
- What would they like me to share with them?
- What kind of presentation do they expect me to deliver?

- What do I hope to accomplish?
- How important is my presentation to them?
- What do they know, want to know, and need to know about my subject?
- How do they feel about me?
- What problems or goals do the members of the audience have?
- What should I do to gain and maintain their interest and attention?

Drawing on her knowledge of what new college graduates expect to hear from her, in an address to the graduating class of Tulane University, comedian Ellen DeGeneres told them, “Follow your passion. Stay true to yourself. Never follow someone else’s path unless you’re in the woods and you’re lost and you see a path. Then by all means, you follow that.” Because she knew her audience well, she drew a big laugh.

Finding Ellen. Commencement speakers often try to relate their life experiences and values with those of the graduating class.
Compose a Demographic Snapshot

Developing an understanding of an audience starts with drawing its demographic profile. A demographic profile is a composite of characteristics including age; gender; educational level; racial, ethnic, or cultural ties; group affiliations; and socioeconomic background.

For example, imagine that you are asked to speak to two different audiences on the value of taking socioeconomic diversity into consideration in college admissions. Your first audience is composed primarily of middle-aged, well-educated, wealthy people employed in professional or executive jobs. Your second audience is composed primarily of middle-aged, high school-educated Americans who live in the inner city, work in service or trade jobs, and occupy the lower or lower-middle rungs on the socioeconomic ladder. Which group do you believe would be more sympathetic to your position? Why? Would a successful speaker give the same speech to both groups? Without sacrificing your own stand on the issue, how could you adapt your message to these and other groups?

A homogeneous audience—one whose members are similar in age, have similar characteristics, attitudes, values, and knowledge—is rare. More often than not, you will speak before a heterogeneous audience—one composed of persons of diverse ages with different characteristics, attitudes, values, and knowledge. When this is the situation, be sure you include all groups, paying attention to the kinds of demographic data you can use to help enhance communication with them.

4.3a Consider Age

How old are the members of your audience? One of your key goals is to diminish the age difference between you and those you hope to reach. To accomplish this, you need to be sensitive to the references you employ and the word choices you make. Ask yourself questions like the following:

- Will they give the same meanings to the words I use?
- Will they be able to identify with my examples and illustrations?
- Are they old or young enough to be familiar with persons and events I refer to?
Speakers would be wise to understand how generational differences influence receivers. According to Lynne Lancaster and David Stillman’s *When Generations Collide*, age is a key determiner of audience attitudes. They note, for example, that those born before 1945 are more apt to lean toward the conservative end of the spectrum, respecting both authority and symbols such as “the flag” and are less likely to be easily persuaded. Their guide word is *loyal*. Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, tend to be belongers, competitive, more cynical, and less likely to bow to authority. Their guide word is *optimism*. Generation X members, born between the mid-1960s and 1980, are more apt to have grown up in blended or single-parent households and tend to be more independent and media savvy. Their watchword is *skeptical*. Millennials, born between 1981 and 2000, have grown up with technology and are both friendship and safety focused. Their watchword is *reality*. Our newest generation, known as the iGen or Gen Z, were born between the late-1990s and now. They are the first generation to have spent their teen years totally in the smartphone age. They are safety obsessed and value equality. The generation’s guidewords are *security* and *interaction*. Speakers can use the events and trends that serve as generational markers to guide them in appealing to different audience segments.

Of course, age is more relevant to the development of some topics than others. For example, the age of listeners is crucial if you are speaking about life after retirement, but it would be less important if your topic were taking care of planet Earth.

### 4.3b Consider Gender

Another key variable to consider when analyzing your audience is the ratio of males to females. According to sociolinguist Deborah Tannen, whereas “women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy … men speak and hear a language of status and independence.” Whether you are a male or a female speaker addressing a predominantly male, female, or mixed-sex audience, this finding should affect the amount of time you spend building rapport with your listeners and could alter the approach you select to deliver your information and ideas to them. For example, if you were speaking about national security to an audience of mostly men, you might focus on the importance of strengthening defenses and the necessity for surveillance. On the other hand, were you speaking on the same topic to an audience composed of mostly mothers of school-aged children, you might focus instead on what needs to be done to ensure that children learn in environments that are safe and secure.
4.3c Respect Affectional Orientation

Although affectional orientation is often an invisible variable, it is important to recognize that not everyone in your audience will have the same orientation as you. Just as using racially insensitive remarks or demeaning the race or ethnicity of receivers is inappropriate, so is speaking disparagingly of or displaying a bias against someone’s sexual orientation. By making the effort to include supporting materials that feature the LGBTQ community and heterosexuals, you ensure that you include all types of receivers. For example, if you were to speak about adoption, you may include in your speech information about local and state resources for both heterosexual couples and same-sex or transgender couples who seek to adopt.

4.3d Gauge Knowledge Level

Knowing the average level of education of receivers will help you make choices regarding vocabulary, language style, and supporting materials. Your goal is to adapt your words to your listeners’ knowledge. If you miss your mark and speak above their knowledge level, they will not understand you; if you speak below their knowledge level, you will insult and bore them.

When speaking before a more knowledgeable audience, you will want to deliver a two-sided presentation—that is, a presentation that considers alternative perspectives rather than the more simplistic one-sided presentation. For example, if you were speaking on the trade policies of the United States to a well-informed audience, you would want to show receivers how familiar you were with the variety of viewpoints on this issue and explain why, after reviewing existing trade stances, you chose the position you now want them to adopt. Because individuals who are knowledgeable are used to processing complex communication and distinguishing among a variety of options, they will be more accepting of your ideas if you present them with strong evidence to back them up and include arguments that are logically sound.

4.3e Understand Racial, Ethnic, Religious, and Cultural Ties

As you prepare your speech, keep in the front of your mind any potential misunderstandings that racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural differences could foster. For example, a predominantly Catholic or Orthodox Jewish audience is likely to support the abolition of abortion. If you have an audience of diverse listeners, it is helpful to acknowledge that some of your listeners may disagree with your stance or point. However, it is also up to you to find ways to encourage them to consider different ideas.
4.3f Identify Affiliations

Memberships in occupational, political, civic, and social groups also provide speakers with a pretty accurate prediction of the way audience members will react to a topic. Group affiliations serve as a bond. Workers who belong to the same union, citizens who support a political candidate, or parents who are active in the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) probably share a number of key interests, attitudes, and values with others in the group.

Whenever you function as a speaker, you need to consider how the various affiliations of audience members could influence both your topic and your approach. Remember, your goal is to identify clues regarding how listeners will respond to your presentation.

4.3g Consider Socioeconomics

Socioeconomic status encompasses the incomes, educational background, and occupations of a group of people. People from different socioeconomic backgrounds naturally look at situations, events, and issues from very different perspectives. A highly educated wealthy audience who never had difficulty finding work might not appreciate what it means to grow up in poverty. It is up to you to increase audience understanding of and identification with your subject.

Writing about this issue some years ago, journalist Anthony Lewis noted, “Upper-income Americans generally, whether in public or private employment, live not just a better life but one quite removed from that of ordinary families. They hardly experience the problems that weigh so heavily today on American society.” How can you as a speaker close the perceptual gap created by this disparity? How can you encourage empathy?

First, you need to develop insight into how income affects life experiences. For example, a more privileged audience member listening to a speech against the Affordable Care Act might think $400 a month for health insurance for a family of four is quite reasonable, without considering the family’s other expenses—rent, food, utilities, transportation—on an overall income of only $4,000 a month. Second, you need to locate examples and appeals that relate your topic to the varied experiences of your audience and make direct references to them during your speech.

Although each member of your audience is a unique individual, he or she is also a composite of a set of demographic factors. Rather than functioning as a means for stereotyping receivers, demographic variables should guide you in knowing your audience.
Compose a Psychographic Snapshot

Learning about your audience members' psychographics—how they see themselves; their attitudes toward various issues; their motives for being in the audience; and how they feel about your topic, you, and the speaking occasion—provides additional clues to their likely reactions. To draw this kind of audience picture, you need to understand the beliefs and values that underlie audience members' attitudes.

4.4a Understand Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes

**Values** are the principles important to us; they guide what we judge to be good or bad, ethical or unethical, worthwhile or worthless. They represent our conception of morality and are the standards against which we measure right and wrong. Knowing that respect for elders is among the core values shared by Chinese people; machismo and saving face are important to Mexicans; devoutness and hospitality are valued by Iraqis; and family, responsibility to future generations, and a healthy environment are valued by many in the United States, how might you adapt a speech on texting and driving to appeal to members of each group?

**Beliefs** are what we hold to be true and false. They are also the building blocks that help to explain our attitudes. For example, those who believe that individuals will make better decisions with their money than the government often favor lower taxes. Because our belief systems are composites of everything we hold to be true and untrue, they influence the way we process messages. Some beliefs are more important to us than others. The more important our beliefs, the harder we work to keep them alive and the less willing we are to alter them.

Our values and beliefs feed into our **attitudes**, the favorable or unfavorable predispositions that we carry with us everywhere we go. The attitudes we hold help direct our responses to everything, including a speech. Attitudes are evaluative in nature and are measured on a continuum that ranges from favorable to unfavorable. For example, some hold favorable attitudes toward school voucher programs; others do not. Our attitudes reflect our likes and dislikes and are shaped by myriad influences, including family, education, culture, and the media.

What this kind of analysis suggests is that a speaker needs to appeal to audience member feelings, not merely their logic, and then to use it to build connection.
4.4b Understand How the Audience Perceives Your Topic

Before class starts or right after it finishes are good times to make small talk with your peers in an effort to discover what they think about certain topics. Even just listening to what’s on their minds as they chat with others can provide you with clues about their mind-set. Knowing your audience’s attitudes toward your topic can help you determine how to handle your material. It can aid you in your search for common ground. If you can gauge your audience’s predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably, you can adapt your approach so that you address their beliefs and reflect their values and more readily identify the kind of information you need to add or the misconceptions you need to correct. And if you can demonstrate for them how your message supports the values they already hold dear, you are much more likely to succeed.

4.4c Understand How the Audience Perceives You

No matter how audience members feel about your topic, if they believe you to be a credible source, they are much more apt to listen to what you have to say.

What if you know audience members don’t look favorably on you? Ask yourself whether they lack information, have received misinformation, or have a legitimate reason for holding the judgment. Then identify what you can do to influence them to view you more favorably. For example, if they don’t believe you are an authority on your subject, you can work into your presentation experiences you’ve had that qualify you to speak on the topic. One student who asked his audience to accept that the U.S. government should significantly increase social services to the homeless made his message stronger by relating his own experiences as a homeless person some years earlier.

What your audience thinks of you could change the way they respond to your message. Your credentials and your reputation accompany you to the podium.
Consider the Speaking Situation

An important component of your audience analysis is considering the reason for their attendance as well as the occasion, location, and time at which your speech will take place.

4.5a Analyze the Occasion

Is your audience attending the speech voluntarily or are they required to attend? If you know in advance why people are present for your speech, you can adjust your remarks accordingly.

When thinking about the occasion, you also need to consider the kind of speech audience members are expecting you to deliver. If you are speaking to commemorate someone who has passed away, they expect you to deliver an eulogy. If you are speaking at a rally to encourage fund-raisers, listeners might well anticipate a motivational speech.

Whenever possible, it is wise for you to fulfill audience expectations. Be sure you can answer these questions:

- What is the nature of the group you are to address?
- What is your reason for speaking?
- What is the length of time allotted for your presentation?

Environmental variables like place, time, and audience size similarly affect the audience, influencing their reaction to you and your presentation. Consider how these factors could affect your style, language, and manner of delivery and take steps to ensure that “little things” like the room being too small or the presentation running overtime don’t stand in the way of communication.

4.5b Consider the Location

Consider some of the ways that the physical setting could affect the receptivity of listeners by answering these questions:

- Why do we find it difficult to concentrate when we’re too hot or too cold?
- Why do we find it tough to focus on or pay attention to a speaker when a room is poorly lit or noisy?
- Why might an environment that is unattractive or too attractive adversely affect audience response?
- Why might the location and space affect use of technology?
Adapt your presentation to reduce listener discomfort and promote understanding and acceptance. That could mean talking louder or more softly, turning a thermostat down or up, bringing extra lights, or working extra hard to attract and maintain audience interest. The location and its space also could influence the nature of the technology used. Some rooms, for example, have smart boards and are digitally enabled, while others are not.

4.5c Consider the Time

If you are giving a speech early in the morning, right after lunch, later in the evening, or late in the week, you probably will have to wake up members of your audience by doing something unusual or by including some intriguing or startling example or illustration that compels their attention. You might, for example, ask a question or relate an experience that reveals your understanding of the situation.

Also consider the length of time you are given to speak. If you go over the time allotted, don't expect audience members to necessarily listen. If you speak for much less time than expected, don't expect that audience members will necessarily be pleased. Instead, find out the amount of time you are given, and work to fill that time with as stimulating and as informative a presentation as you possibly can.

Another consideration is the number of speakers sharing the program with you. Will you speak first, last, or somewhere in-between? Will you be flexible enough to tie your remarks to the remarks of those who precede you? Will you be sensitive to the lethargy that could affect your audience after a long evening of virtually uninterrupted listening?

Speakers need to empathize with what the audience is feeling and decide how best to communicate that empathy. Accurate perception can prevent audience rejection.

4.5d Gauge Audience Size

How many people will be in your audience: five, ten, fifty, a hundred, five hundred, a thousand, tens of thousands, or millions?

Audience size and formality are directly related. As audience size increases, speaker formality increases. Audience size also directly influences the amount of interaction you are able to have with members of your audience, the kinds of visual aids you use, and whether you will use an amplification system and a podium. Adept speakers are ready to vary their manner and means of presentation to meet the requirements of different audience sizes. In fact, audience size is one of those variables that help make every speech situation different. When you are sensitive to it, you increase your chances for success.
Get Information About Your Audience

By now you should understand the kinds of information it would benefit you to have about your audience. How can you collect it? What do you ask, where do you go, and what kinds of tools can you use to gain insight into the audience?

4.6a Ask Your Contacts

Earlier, you posed and thought about some preliminary questions about your audience. It’s now time to reach out for more thorough answers. A sensible person to contact is the person inviting you to speak. Ask that individual about the group he or she represents. Questions such as the following will yield valuable information:

- Why does the group exist?
- What goals does the group have?
- What is the nature of the occasion at which I will speak?
- How many people do you anticipate will be in attendance?
- Can you share any insights about the composition of the audience?
- How much time will be allotted for the presentation?
- What expectations do you believe audience members will bring with them to the presentation?
- Are you aware of any attitudes held by audience members on the whole that could positively or negatively affect how they receive my presentation?
- Will any other speakers be sharing the program with me?
- At what point in the program will I speak?
- What will the physical setting be like?
- Will I be introduced?

Of course, your sponsor is not the only person you might query. If you know anyone who has spoken to the group before, or if you know members of the group, you might also ask them similar questions.

Observe and report. Make observations of your audience members beforehand to make educated guesses about their characteristics.
4.6b Use Personal Knowledge and Observations

If you’ll be speaking before a group to which you belong, such as a class, club, or civic organization, you can make decisions regarding your presentation based, at least in part, on prior conversations you have had with audience members, your perceptions of their opinions of you, and insights you have gained from hearing many of them voice personal opinions. Don’t be afraid to watch people in action prior to the speech and to make educated guesses regarding ages, education and income levels, and cultural backgrounds.

4.6c Research Audience Attitudes

The library and the Internet hold clues to the attitudes of audience members. By researching what local, regional, and national opinion polls reveal about the attitudes of various groups on a variety of social and political issues, you might be able to make a number of assumptions regarding the attitudes of those before whom you will speak.

To increase specificity and add to the knowledge you are gathering about the group you will address, you can also use a questionnaire.

The Questionnaire

Your instructor may allow you to distribute questionnaires in class or online, especially if your class is set up as a listserv and you have access to a platform such as Blackboard or Canvas. Twitter and online survey sites such as SurveyMonkey also can be used. A well-thought-out questionnaire helps you estimate the amount of knowledge your listeners already possess about your subject and their attitudes toward it. Questionnaires generally contain three different kinds of questions: closed-ended questions, scaled questions, and open-ended questions.

Closed-ended questions are highly structured, requiring only that the respondent indicate which of the provided responses most accurately reflects his or her opinion and so generate clear, unambiguous answers. The following are examples of closed-ended questions:

Do you think the open carry of guns should be banned in the United States?
- □ Yes  □ No  □ Undecided

Will a sugar tax help reduce obesity?
- □ Yes  □ No  □ Undecided
In contrast, **scaled questions** make it possible for a respondent to indicate his or her view along a continuum or scale that ranges by degree from polar extremes, such as strongly agree to strongly disagree, extremely important to extremely unimportant, and extremely committed to extremely uncommitted, thereby allowing the respondent to indicate the strength of his or her feeling.

The following are scaled questions:

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How important is it for Congress to raise the minimum wage?
_ Extremely       _ Important   _ Neutral   _ Unimportant _ Extremely       _ Important   _ Neutral   _ Unimportant
Important Unimportant

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
“Colleges should consider socioeconomic background when making admissions decisions.”
_ Strongly        _ Agree      _ Neutral   _ Disagree     _ Strongly      _ Agree      _ Neutral   _ Disagree     _ Strongly

Open-ended questions invite participants to answer in their own words and so produce more detailed and personal responses; however, they are also harder to interpret and may not provide the desired information. For example,

- How do you feel about schools that require students to wear uniforms?
- **Respond to this statement:** “No one is above the law, not even the President of the United States.”

Because each kind of question can aid you in drawing a profile of your audience, use a mix in any questionnaire you design. (See the sample questionnaire in Figure 4.1.)

Developing a comprehensive understanding of your audience will have profound effects on your speechmaking. Your challenge as a speaker is to find ways to make your message inclusive of the different ages, religions, educational levels, gender identities, races, cultures, group memberships, and psychographic profiles represented among the receivers. As you prepare and plan your speech, keep in mind everything you have learned about your audience as well as the specifics of the speaking situation. You need to

- Phrase your topic in such a way that audience members will not be turned off by it or tune it out.
- Resist the urge to concentrate exclusively on what you want to say; spend more time understanding what the audience wants to hear.
### FIGURE 4.1
Sample Questionnaire on the Open Carry of Firearms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age:</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sex:</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Race:</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religion:</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Highest education</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Occupation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Organizational memberships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Income:</td>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Marital status:</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Political affiliation:</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you or a member of your family own a gun?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Have you or a significant other ever fired a gun?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Have you or a significant other ever been the victim of gun violence?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Have you or a significant other ever taken a gun-safety course?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. On a scale of 1–10, with 1 representing not at all knowledgeable and 10 representing extremely knowledgeable, how knowledgeable do you feel you are about the open carry of firearms in the United States?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How important is the issue of open carry of firearms to you?</td>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Which answer best reflects your opinion of the following statement: “The open carrying of a firearm should be prohibited.”</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Explain your response to question 17.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Convince audience members early in your presentation that what you are communicating will solve a problem they have, help them reach their goals, or otherwise enrich their lives.
• Use your creative powers to encourage your listeners to care about your subject.
• Build on whatever common ground exists between you and your audience; make a personal connection with them.
• Always refer first to areas of agreement before speaking about areas of disagreement.
• Demonstrate that you respect your listeners; if they sense that you think you’re superior to them, chances are they won’t listen to you. If you communicate to them in words they don’t comprehend, your speech won’t matter even if they listen to it.
• Hear and see yourself and the speaking environment through the ears and eyes of the members of your audience. Put yourself in their place and they will more readily give you their attention.

GAME PLAN

Analyze Your Audience

☐ I have considered the demographic factors of my audience and strategized the best approach for my speech.
☐ I have a good understanding of my audience’s values, beliefs, and attitudes toward my topic.
☐ I understand the purpose of my speech, and I know what my audience expects of me.
☐ I have queried my contact about the physical setting and order of speeches, and I’ve adjusted my speech to suit the occasion.
Exercises

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Participating in the following activities will enhance your audience adaptation abilities.

1. What Do You Know?
Use what you know about demographics and psychographics to analyze the members of this class and another class. Explain how you will apply the information in your next speech or presentation in each class.

2. Adapt This
Imagine that you were asked to deliver a speech on the contributions of the women’s movement twice—once to an audience composed of primarily feminist receivers and then to an audience composed of predominately antifeminist receivers. Describe how you might prepare your address to appeal to members of these diametrically opposed audiences without sacrificing your personal principles.

3. Analyze the Audience: Do Audience Members Want to Be Present?
Some audiences attend speeches voluntarily, while others have to be present, which affects how you go about presenting your message. Explain what you will do to try and win over audience members who don’t want to be there. What will you do to make your speech relevant and interesting to them? What will you do to create a relationship with them that draws them into your speech and invites them to shift the way they think of themselves?

4. Approach the Speaker’s Stand
Develop an audience survey to analyze an issue of your choice; your survey should contain closed-ended, scaled, and open-ended questions. Once you are sure your survey’s questions are clear and unambiguous, have class members complete it. Then explain how you would take that information and your personal knowledge about your audience into account when planning a presentation.

   Specifically, in a two- to three-page paper, explain how conducting such an analysis helps in addressing both the needs and interests of receivers and describe how you could use the insights you gained from surveying receivers to guide you in

   • Formulating your objective
   • Creating an introduction and a conclusion
   • Organizing your main points
   • Wording a speech

Once this is done, develop a presentation that puts your plan into action. Finally, after delivering your presentation, ask your classmates to rate your speech on a five-point scale indicating

   • How relevant it was to them
   • How interesting it was to them

If the outcome is not what you anticipated, discuss steps you might have taken to increase receptivity and interest.
1. **Analyze your audience using formal and informal tools.** In addition to drawing three key audience analysis profiles—a demographic profile, a psychographic profile, and an environmental situational profile—speakers need to query contacts, use their personal knowledge and observations, and when possible, also research the attitudes of their audience using a questionnaire.

2. **Use the makeup of the audience as a guide.** Speakers need to adapt their speeches to account for the makeup of the audiences they address. In addition to acknowledging differences, speakers also need to discover how much they and their audience members have in common.

3. **Plan your speech to reflect audience demographics.** By developing an understanding of audience characteristics, including the age, gender, educational level, racial, ethnic or cultural ties, group affiliations, and socioeconomic status of audience members, public speakers are better able to customize and adapt their messages to reflect the specific needs and interests of receivers.

4. **Plan your speech to reflect audience psychographics.** By learning about audience member psychographics—what’s going on in the minds of receivers and their attitudes, beliefs, and values—speakers are better able to fine-tune their speeches and develop presentations that speak to the lifestyle choices and preferences of receivers.

5. **Plan your speech to reflect the nature of the situation.** By conducting environmental or situational profiles, speakers develop a fuller understanding of how the “where and when” of presentations affect speech content, delivery, and audience reaction.

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**KEY TERMS**

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