PART ONE: Get Ready to Speak

Give Your First Speech

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

1. Understand the basic moves used in speechmaking
2. Approach public speaking systematically
3. Deliver a brief first speech
4. Score your first speech performance to establish a baseline on which to build your skills
Imagine yourself standing smack in the middle of a sports field. “What am I doing here?” you ask yourself. You don’t play sports. You are unprepared to participate in the game that’s about to start. Because of your lack of familiarity with the sport, lack of training, and lack of equipment, you have absolutely no idea what to do as more skilled players take the field, milling about, looking at you. You feel like an idiot.

Now let’s change the setting. You are seated in your public speaking class. And your instructor has just told you that you’re going to have to come to the front of the room and give a speech. But public speaking is something you’ve had no formal training in and little, if any, experience with. You feel unknowledgeable, unprepared, and unconditioned. “What?” you ask, stunned. “The course has just begun and you already want me to give a speech. How am I supposed to do that?”

Though few, if any, coaches would expect you to have mastered a game by your first practice, they would expect you to be familiar with how it is played—and to have a sense of the kinds of rules and moves you will be expected to learn. So let’s begin by previewing the four primary plays involved in giving a speech for the first time.

Every play is made up of one or more key steps—each necessary for the play’s success. The four key plays to delivering your first speech are (1) topic selection; (2) speech development, support, and organization; (3) practice and delivery; and (4) post-presentation analysis.

**COACHING TIP**

*Believe everything you say.*

When you share your message, you share yourself. Having a personal connection affects the delivery of your speech and your relationship with your audience. Belief in the significance and relevance of your words is contagious.
Select Your Topic

This move is made up of three basic steps. First, analyze your interests and use this information to select a general subject area. Second, compare this general subject area to your audience and the occasion. Third, vet the topic, selecting your goal and narrowing your subject.

2.1a Analyze Yourself

Learning what motivates you and makes you tick will help you become a better speaker. In fact, conducting a self-analysis is a prerequisite. Although at times you may be handed a specific topic assignment, most often the choice of topic will be yours. Even if given a topic, we recommend that you still conduct a self-analysis to uncover aspects of yourself that may be particularly interesting or appealing to others.

Conduct a Life Overview

Whatever your age, divide your life into thirds—early life, midlife, more recent life. Compose a sentence to summarize your life during each stage, for example, “During high school, I lived in Norman, Oklahoma, where my dad worked for an oil company, and I went to Sooner football games.” Under each summary statement list your main interests and concerns during that life period. Examine your list. Which topics still interest or concern you?

Focus on This Moment in Time

Fold a sheet of paper in half. On the left side, list sensory experiences—whatever you are able to see, hear, taste, smell, or touch right now. On the right side, list topics suggested by each sensory experience. For example, if you wrote “balloon” on the left side, you might enter “party planning” on the right side.

Be Newsy

Peruse a newspaper, newsmagazine, or online news aggregator to find potential topics. Read a story and list topics suggested by it. For example, the February 19, 2016, New York Times featured an article titled “The Résumé and References Check Out. How About Social Media?” Imagine the possible speech topics the article suggests: how to prepare a résumé, how to use social media responsibly, interviewing skills, and so on.

Use Technology

Explore websites such as About.com, eHow.com, or YouTube, searching for sample presentations. Additionally, the speech topic resources at edge.sagepub.com/gamblepsp2e can prove helpful.

▶ See Chapter 6 for more information on selecting a topic.
2.1b Consider Your Audience and the Occasion

Once you've conducted your self-analysis, you turn your attention to your audience, conducting an audience analysis. Why? Because if you consider only your interests and don't take the needs and interests of your audience into account, audience members are more likely to experience boredom and become easily distracted. If this happens, you lose the attention of receivers, which prevents your message from getting through.

Pay attention to your audience, and they will pay attention to you. This means you will want to consider how familiar audience members are with your selected topic area, what their attitudes toward it are, and what they would like to know about it. Take into account some of the demographic characteristics of the audience, such as their genders and ages, the cultures represented, their socioeconomic backgrounds. Think about how factors like these could influence how they feel about your topic and, consequently, how you should frame it. For example, if you decide to speak about student services for on-campus residents, but your class is made up primarily of students who commute to campus, a substantial number of students could find your talk irrelevant.

Take the time needed to get to know your receivers. Talk to them, asking about their interests and concerns. For this first assignment, chatting with three to five students should be sufficient. Ask them what they already know about your topic, whether it appeals to them, and what else they'd be interested in finding out about it. Their answers will help you narrow your subject and relate it more directly to them.

Chapter 5 will help you analyze your audience and adapt your presentation to them.

Getting to know you. Speak more directly to your audience by knowing their demographic characteristics and relationship to your speech topic.
2.1c Criteria for Choosing Your Topic

There are a number of other criteria aside from your interests to consider when selecting a topic for your initial speech.

1. Avoid overused topics, unless you will be taking an unusual slant or offering a fresh perspective. Thus, rather than speaking on the legalization of marijuana, speak on how it helps deter the ill-effects of chemotherapy.

2. Select an appropriate topic—not one that will be alienating or that you or your receivers have no interest in learning more about. Make the effort to meet their needs and expectations.

3. Limit the scope of your topic so that it fits the time allotted for your speech. For example, speaking on The Story of My Life or The History of the Computer could be too broad, making it impossible for you to cover the topic in the time available.

4. Make sure you have access to the material you will need to prepare the speech.

Choices matter. What topics would be engaging, fresh, and easily understood by your audience?
It is of paramount importance that your selected topic interests your audience. Among the topics students have used for a first speech are

- My Favorite Ancestor
- What I Learned Studying Abroad
- My Greatest Fear
- A Difficult Choice I Had to Make
- Why You Need a Mentor
- How Discrimination Affects Me
- How to Avoid Boredom
- The Dangers of Texting and Driving
- How to Get the Most Out of College

Which of these, if any, interests you? What topics would you like to hear about?

- **Chapters 5 and 6** will give you more strategies for selecting a topic that is appropriate for your audience.

**Don’t procrastinate.** Choosing a topic isn’t necessarily easy, so start weeks in advance to have ample time to prepare.
Develop, Support, and Organize Your Speech

Once you have chosen a topic, decide what you want to share about it with receivers. This becomes your speech’s goal. For example, is your goal to inform, persuade, or mark a special occasion? Once you answer this question, you are ready to formulate your speech’s purpose.

**2.2a State Your Speech’s Purpose**

Your speech should have a specific purpose—a single sentence specifying your goal. For example, if your goal was to inform receivers about self-driving cars, your specific purpose might be “to inform my audience about three ways self-driving cars will impact society.” You then use the specific purpose to develop your central idea or thesis.

> Chapter 6 will show you how to develop the general and specific purpose of your speech.

**2.2b Compose a Thesis Statement**

A thesis statement expresses the central idea of your speech in just one sentence. Here are three examples of thesis statements:

- Self-driving cars will change the way we live and get around in three ways: (1) by reducing accidents, (2) by permitting overnight travel, and (3) by fundamentally changing the taxicab and ride-sharing industries.
- Excessive personal debt is burdensome, inhibits a person’s quality of life, and also results in financial instability.
- Fears of an epidemic of birth defects due to the Zika virus and questions about how to respond are prevalent in society.

The thesis statement, along with the specific purpose, acts as a road map for building your speech. Your next move is to develop the main points that flesh out the thesis.

> Chapter 6 will show you how to create an effective thesis statement.
2.2c Identify Your Speech’s Main Points

If your specific purpose and thesis are clearly formulated, it will be easy for you to identify your speech’s main points—the major ideas your speech will relay to receivers. Most of your speeches will contain two or three main points, with each main point supporting your expressed thesis. For example, let’s look at the last thesis statement identified in the previous section. Its two main points might read:

I. There is fear of a surge in birth defects due to the Zika virus.

II. There are questions about how to protect the population and prevent birth defects in the event that Zika becomes widespread.

We see the speaker plans to first confront the fears about Zika and then discuss questions about how to control and treat the disease if it develops into a pandemic. Once you formulate the main points, your next move is to locate and select supporting materials.

► Chapter 10 will help you to establish your main points.

2.2d Research and Select Materials to Support Main Points

At this point, your focus is on conducting research and gathering supporting materials for your speech. To develop your speech, for example, you will use personal experiences, examples and illustrations, definitions, expert testimony, statistics, and analogies. The better your research and selection of support, the more credible receivers will find your speech.

► Chapters 7 and 8 will show you how to find relevant research and use it in your speech.
2.2e Outline Your Speech

Indicating Transitions and Signposts

Every speech can be divided into three major parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Develop the body of the speech, the part that elaborates on the main points, first. When it is done, you then bring it together with an introduction and a conclusion. In the introduction, orient the audience to your topic, pique their attention and interest, state your thesis, and preview your main points. In the conclusion, restate your thesis in a memorable way, remind receivers of how your main points supported it, and motivate them—leaving them thinking and/or ready to act.

An outline provides the skeleton upon which you hang your main ideas and support. Two principles guide its creation: coordination (the main points should be relatively equal in importance) and subordination (the support underlying your main points). The outline of your speech’s body will look something like this:

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INTRODUCTION

BODY

I. Main Point 1
   A. First level of subordination
      1. Second level of subordination
      2. Second level of subordination

II. Main Point 2
   A. First level of subordination
      1. Second level of subordination
      2. Second level of subordination

III. Main Point 3
    A. First level of subordination
       1. Second level of subordination
       2. Second level of subordination

CONCLUSION
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When outlining your speech, you’ll want to keep each of the speech’s main sections in mind—paying careful attention to the introduction, body, and conclusion. The first component in your introduction should be an attention getter, followed by your thesis statement, then a statement of what’s in it for the audience (why they should care), a credibility enhancer for yourself (why they should listen to you), and a preview of your main points. Similarly, the outline of your conclusion should contain a summary of your main points and your “home run”—a move that clinches audience support for and belief in your message.
Chapters 9 and 10 will demonstrate how to organize and outline your speech. Once the outline is complete, you’ll want to create transitions that connect the parts. You can use signposts, such as “first,” “next,” and “finally,” to let receivers know where you are in your speech, and brief statements, such as “most important,” to help focus the audience’s attention.

2.2f Consider Presentation Aids

Once your outline is done, consider whether visual or audio aids such as physical objects, drawings, charts, graphs, photographs, or sound recordings will enhance the understanding and interest of receivers. Be sure to indicate in the outline when you will use such aids, if you choose to do so.

Chapter 17 will offer you tips on using presentation aids effectively.

Consider presentation aids. When used effectively, visual aids can reinforce your main points.
Practice Delivery

How well you do in your first speech depends in part on how effectively you have prepared, practiced, and overcome any anxiety. Instead of reading a speech word for word or, worse, choosing to wing it, practice speaking in front of a mirror or friends. Make it a habit to plan and prepare the structure of your speech and all content including supporting materials and visuals. Then rehearse extensively so that on the day you present your speech, you are comfortable using your notes to remind yourself of its content.

2.3a Rehearse and Revise as Needed

You will want to become so familiar with the contents of your speech that you can deliver it seemingly effortlessly. Focus on the word seemingly for a moment. Preparing and presenting a speech require real effort on your part. But if you work diligently and conscientiously, your audience will see only the end results—to them it will seem as if you are a natural.

When it comes to vocal cues, for example, you’ll want to regulate your volume, rate, pitch, and vocal variety, being especially careful not to speak in a monotone, and being certain to use correct pronunciation and clear articulation so you convey ideas accurately and clearly. Beyond words, you’ll also want to use appropriate facial expressions, sustain the right amount of eye contact, and use gestures and movement in support of your message.

Practice delivering the speech at least four to six times, initially to a mirror, and then to a small audience of family and friends. Stand when you practice. Always say your speech aloud. Use a timer. Revise your words or presentation as needed. Replicate the same conditions you will have when delivering it for real. Practice from the speech’s beginning to its end without stopping. You might even record a rehearsal to assess how you’re doing.

See Chapters 14, 15, and 16 for more help with the delivery of your speech.
2.3b Anticipate Questions From the Audience

When you’ve finished speaking, audience members may have questions to ask you. When prepping for your presentation, think about what you would ask if you were a member of the audience. Also solicit questions from the rehearsal audiences made up of family and friends.

- Chapter 27 will prepare you for questions that the audience may ask about your speech.

2.3c Take the Podium, Harness Nervous Energy, and Present the Speech

You’ve prepared. You have rehearsed and revised, and now it’s time to have fun! Harness any nervous energy and remember to use the confidence building techniques you learned in Chapter 1. Visualize yourself succeeding!

- See Chapter 1 for tips on managing speech anxiety and building your confidence before you speak.

**COACHING TIP**

*See yourself enjoying your speech.*

Enjoy delivering your speech, and the audience will enjoy it too! Enjoyment is an attractor. It is also inclusive.
Conduct a Post-Presentation Analysis

Like an athlete or any performer, you'll want to review and critique your own performance, comparing and contrasting your expectations with your actual experience. Try to learn as much as possible from the first speech so you can apply these lessons to your next one. Complete a self-assessment scorecard or checklist that you can compare to the one your professor and/or peers offer.

- Chapter 4 will help you listen effectively in order to analyze your fellow students’ speeches and assess your own presentation.

**COACHING TIP**

*A scorecard is a speaker's friend.*

How are you doing? Use a scorecard to track your progress. Needing to improve isn’t a negative. It’s a step on the road to mastery. It’s time to measure up!
2.4a Assess Your Performance

Use the accompanying preliminary scorecard to assess your performance. Score yourself on each item using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning least effective and 5 meaning extremely effective.

**POST-PRESENTATION SCORECARD**

**Introduction: How Well Did I Do?**
- Capturing attention
- Conveying my thesis
- Previewing my main points
- Relating the topic to my audience

**Body: How Well Did I Do?**
- Communicating each main point
- Transitioning between main points
- Integrating support for each main point

**Conclusion: How Well Did I Do?**
- Restating the thesis
- Summarizing my main points
- Motivating receivers to think and/or act

**Delivery: How Well Did I Do?**
- Using vocal cues to create interest and convey meaning
- Using eye contact to connect with receivers
- Using gestures and movement that were natural and effective

Overall, I would give myself ________ points out of 5.

I believe my strong points were ________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________.

I believe I need to improve when it comes to _____________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________.

Based on this scorecard, I set the following goals for my next speech: ________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

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Exercises

FIRST SPEECH

Use these chapter exercises to apply your understanding of this chapter’s content. When you commit to a practice regimen, you commit to building your public presentation skills.

1. First Speech Primer

Prepare a list of “do and don’t” suggestions for preparing a first speech. Include the speaker’s role in selecting a topic, formulating a goal, researching, thinking about his or her relationship to the audience, organizing ideas, preparing to present, and assessing the extent to which the speaker and the speech succeeded.

2. Cue the Critiquer

Offer advice to a student whose task it is to critique the first speech. What should he or she look for? How should he or she offer feedback?

3. Analyze This: A First Speech

Let’s look at one student’s first speech. (Comments or annotations on the speech are presented as side notes, or SN.) The topic was “My Hometown.” As you read the speech, imagine it being delivered. Here are some questions for you to consider when evaluating it:

1. How do you think students in your class would respond to the speech? Would they, for example, find the topic as relevant and appealing as the speaker? Why or why not?
2. Is the speech organized effectively? What do you believe is its purpose? Can you identify the thesis? Does the speech have an introduction that captures your attention, a clear body, and a sound conclusion? Are there transitions to link ideas? Is there sufficient support for each of the speaker’s points?
3. What changes, if any, would you suggest making to improve the speech? For example, would you add presentation aids?
4. What questions would you like to ask the speaker?

4. Approach the Speaker Stand: My First Speech

Use what you have learned about topic selection; speech development, support, and organization; presentation, practice, and delivery; and harnessing positive energy to prepare and give a brief speech on your hometown or another topic selected by your instructor. After delivering the speech, offer a self-assessment of your performance.
MY HOMETOWN

Good afternoon. I have learned a lot from all of you about your hometowns in the United States by listening to your speeches over the last few weeks. You’ve shared fascinating details that have helped me form mental pictures of many places I have never seen. Now I would like to take you to my hometown, the city of Shanghai, China.

Have you ever been to New York City?

Did you know that Shanghai has almost twice as many skyscrapers as New York City, and will soon have 1,000 more? It is one of the biggest and most modern cities in China, and 18 million people live there. Shanghai already has many elevated highways and a subway, and the government is building a new ship terminal. The city even has a high-speed train line, the fastest in the world, that brings visitors from Shanghai’s international airport into the city. And there are thousands of cars, many of them taxi cabs in bright gold, red, and blue.

There are big changes taking place in Shanghai today, and they are happening very fast, but first I want to tell you about the city the way I remember it. Try to picture it with me.

Over the past hundred years, many Chinese people were able to improve their lives by moving into “the city about the sea”—that’s what the name Shanghai means, the city about the sea. Leaving the undeveloped countryside behind, they came to the city to work and live, and they made their homes in small apartment buildings near the Huangpu riverfront, or at the northern and southern edges of the city. My parents came to the city when they were young, leaving their families behind in the countryside. They worked hard, riding bicycles to their jobs and saving as much as they could. For a long time, they didn’t have very much.

I grew up in our two-room apartment on the third floor and knew everyone in our neighborhood. Everyone knew everyone, in fact! We lived on the western riverbank, near the famous Shanghai Bund, which is a thoroughfare about a mile long of historic old buildings in the Western style. Our own neighborhood was also old, but crowded and full of busy apartment buildings. Our building was separated from the others by narrow lanes filled with bicycles and motorbikes, and there was laundry hanging everywhere to dry. I could often hear our neighbors laughing, arguing, or playing the radio, and the smell of food cooking was always in the air.

continued
I walked or rode my bicycle to school, and my route took me past the open-air markets and street vendors selling all kinds of food. Sometimes it was hard not to stop and buy something, or to linger by the park where there was always a little crowd of people performing their morning tai chi exercises, but I would never want to shame my parents by being late for school.

Sometimes when we had a school holiday, my friends and I would go to Nanjing Donglu. That is the big shopping area in the middle of Shanghai, where there are all kinds of stores. There are places to buy food of all kinds, like duck, sausages, fish, oysters and shrimp, and of course tea, and you can also find tools, hardware, art, clothes, and even pets. My friends at home have told me that, because one part of it is now closed to cars, Nanjing Donglu has even more tourists than ever before. These are mostly Chinese tourists, from other parts of the country, who enjoy coming to Shanghai to see the sights.

There were still cars allowed in Nanjing Donglu when I was growing up in Shanghai, but as I said there are many changes happening there. One of the biggest is the change in old neighborhoods like mine, which are being torn down to make way for the new skyscrapers I told you about, and other developments like new ports, factories, shipyards, and parks and pavilions. The World Expo took place in Shanghai some years back, and the government was very anxious and worked really hard to make the city as modern and as developed as possible, and it did this very quickly at great cost. There are many people who worked to preserve as much of old, historic Shanghai as they could, but hundreds of people lost their homes in the old town and moved away into the suburbs.

Next time I return to the city, my neighborhood near the Bund will be the first place I visit. I want to see whether my old home and my neighbors are still there.
RECAP AND REVIEW

1. **Understand the basic plays used in speechmaking.** There are four basic plays in speechmaking: (1) topic selection; (2) speech development, support, and organization; (3) practice and delivery; and (4) post-presentation analysis.

2. **Approach public speaking systematically.** By working your way through all the sections step-by-step, you approach speechmaking systematically.

3. **Deliver a brief first speech.** Only by preparing and delivering a speech can you tell how well you understand and how effectively you are able to execute the plays involved.

4. **Score your first speech performance to establish a baseline on which to build your skills.** Like athletes, actors, and musicians, speakers review and critique their own performances, attempting to learn as much as possible from each experience so they can apply the lessons to future events.

KEY TERMS

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