

Delivering Your Presentation: Tips for Success

Even the best content will fail to have the desired effect on the audience if the delivery is flawed. It is important that you put as much effort and time into making sure you can present the information as you did with making sure the content was well developed and organized.

- There is no substitute for practice! This will help you gain confidence, thereby reducing your speech anxiety. It also will familiarize you with your own content and make you better able to adapt to the situation if needed.
- Be aware of your nonverbal communication as well as the words you are saying. Your gestures, facial expressions, posture, eye contact, and dress all speak volumes about you and your credibility. Practicing with friend or in front of a mirror can help you become aware of your nonverbals.
- Become familiar with the speaking context, if possible. Know your audience size, where you will be standing or sitting with respect to the audience, whether you'll be using a microphone, and as many other details as you can. These will help you visualize your successful delivery and adapt to the context.

The following reading provides some guidelines for effective delivery. It is an excerpt from: Fujishin, R. (1997). *The natural speaker* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

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DELIVERING YOUR SPEECH

Being Yourself

Mike enrolled in a public speaking course during his first quarter at the University of California at Santa Barbara. As a first-quarter freshman, he was surprised to discover that the vast majority of students in the class were seniors who had avoided the public speaking course until their final year of college.

There was one senior in the class named Ron, who spoke with authority. If God had a voice, it would be just like Ron's. Deep, rich, deliberate, and strong. Mike would sit mesmerized by the sound of this voice. Ron would stand behind the podium, almost motionless, with only the slightest twist of the wrist or a subtle tilting of his head to accentuate a point or ease the audience into his next thought. What confidence! What command! Mike now had a true hero and role model.

As he practiced his third speech of the course, Mike literally spent hours trying to lower his voice to match Ron's deep, resonant musical notes. As he practiced his talk, his body wanted to dance, as it had during the first two speeches, but Mike restricted his movements, so he could match Ron's subtle and almost aloof gestures and posturing. As he practiced, Mike became more and more excited. His practice was paying off. He was speaking and moving just like Ron. It was working.

Mike's third speech, however, was a bomb. He didn't really know what had happened that morning in class when he got up to speak. His voice was deep like Ron's. His posture was motionless like Ron's. And his gestures were as subtle as any Ron had presented. In fact, Mike felt like he was Ron! But something wasn't right.

It wasn't until after class that Michelle, one of the other students, came up to Mike in the hallway and said, "I liked the 'friendly' Mike

more." That's all she had to say. Michelle liked the "friendly" Mike more. She liked the old Mike, and not his imitation of Ron.

It wouldn't be until the following year when Mike enrolled in a persuasive speaking course that he would relax and his normal conversational tone would return. But that one speech in his public speaking class taught him how uncomfortable and awkward it is trying to be someone else.

Characteristics of Good Delivery

The content of your speech is what you say. Your delivery is how you say it. It's the overall "who" that you present to the audience, not the "what" you say. Delivery is more than just the volume, rate, pitch, and enunciation of your voice. It includes your appearance, posture, body movement, hand gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions. In other words, *delivery is all of the nonverbal communication you express to your audience when you speak.*

The old adage "It's not what you say, but how you say it" merits serious reflection, especially in light of current research. Studies have shown that nonverbal communication has a greater impact than verbal communication when we receive and interpret messages. One such study asserts that only 7 percent of our emotional response to another person is determined by the verbal component of what is said, while 93 percent of our response is shaped by the speaker's nonverbal behavior!¹

What does this mean to you as a public speaker? Obviously, it suggests plenty. The most thoroughly researched and well-organized speech will have little impact on an audience if the speaker's delivery lacks a conversational quality, a sense of communication, and speaker naturalness.

Enlarged Conversational Quality

The majority of impressive professional speakers you have observed in person or heard on radio or television were speakers who probably sounded more like formal orators whose voices boomed rather than whispered, whose gestures painted grandiose scenes, and whose bodies illustrated every phrase. Often these speakers were addressing large audiences, and such delivery might have been appropriate for the occasion. But for our public speaking purposes, the most effective speaking style is an enlarged conversational quality.

An *enlarged conversational quality* of speaking means talking with the same naturalness and quality of voice you would use when speaking with another person, only enlarged just a little. To do this, you increase

the volume of your conversational tone of voice so people in the back of the room can hear you, and you expand your gestures and movements a bit so all the audience can see them. The primary goal of using an enlarged conversational quality is that your audience will get the feeling that you are talking to them in a natural fashion, not talking at them with calculated and rehearsed gestures.

How can you speak with an enlarged conversational quality when your body stiffens, your hands freeze, and your voice tightens even at the thought of addressing an audience? The most useful way to achieve this enlarged conversational quality while planning and practicing your speech is to imagine that you are talking to just *one* person.

See this person in your mind's eye as you prepare the wording of your outline and practice the delivery of your talk. Try practicing your speech with the mental image of someone you feel safe with. You don't need a photograph of the individual, just the mental image. If you can do this successfully, you will begin to acquire the correct conversational tone.

Sense of Communication

It's been referred to as "speaker directness," "speaker presence," "focus," "love for the audience," and "immediacy." We'll simply refer to it as the speaker's *sense of communication*. This sense of communication is the feeling the audience senses when a speaker really wants to be there sharing her message. The audience knows the speaker really desires to communicate with them. She wants to be there, and not somewhere else. The speaker is not forced to talk; she wants to talk.

With a sense of communication, the speaker also communicates an awareness of and a sensitivity to her audience. The speaker's eyes are focused on the audience, not on the notes. She is aware of the audience's feedback, sensitive to their responses. They get the sense that she sees them, feels them, is with them in body and spirit.

This sounds like a description of the behavior of someone who loves you—the immediacy, the focus, the concern, and the sensitivity. No, you're not required to fall in love with your audience; however, you are encouraged to forget yourself and focus your attention, your thinking, and your energy on being there with your audience, showing your desire to communicate with them.

Emerson once warned, "Who you are speaks so loudly, I can't hear your words anymore." Hopefully, you are a speaker who wants to be there sharing with the audience. They will soon forget most of your words, but they will remember you and your desire to communicate.

Speaker Naturalness

There's an old Jewish proverb that wisely asks the question, "If you can't be yourself, who can you be?" A common and disturbing problem that prevents us from living a free and healthy life is our inclination to try to act, think, and be like someone else—awkward attempts to be someone we are not. Granted, imitation is one of the basic tools in learning, whether for language acquisition or writing style. But as a template for living, it can be hazardous.

When Mike was trying to imitate Ron, the public speaking god and former role model at Santa Barbara, he was uncomfortable and awkward. For 18 years Mike had spoken like Mike. He had talked and behaved in a manner that was natural for him, and no one else. Mike was comfortable with the way he communicated. His voice may not have been as deep as Ron's, but it was friendly and warm. His gestures may not have been as smooth as Ron's, but they were expressive. And his body movement wasn't as controlled as Ron's, but it showed his enthusiasm and desire to communicate.

Over the years, Mike has improved the quality of his voice, the smoothness of his gestures, and the movement of his body. And so will you. But Mike's fundamentally the same speaker he was back then. The big difference now is that Mike has come to accept and appreciate his natural speaking style. He isn't trying to be someone else. And neither should you.

No one else in the world speaks exactly as you do. And no one else in the world feels, acts, or thinks exactly as you do either. Your individuality is what makes you, you. That's what makes life so stimulating and exciting—the differences, not the similarities. Perhaps your individuality or naturalness is the most "precious possession" you can share with another person.

As you speak to your audience, let them see the real you. Don't hide behind the voice of someone else. Don't disguise the rhythms of your gestures. And don't conceal your body's true dance. The audience has you for only a few minutes of their lives; let them hear the real you, not someone else.

"If you can't be yourself, who can you be?"

Elements of Good Delivery

Now that we've examined the three characteristics of good delivery, we can look at its specific elements. Those elements include your body, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, breathing, and vocal characteristics.

Body

Your body communicates a great deal about you to others. The first thing your audience will notice about you is your overall appearance as you step up to the podium or take center stage. Your appearance in terms of dress and grooming will have a significant impact on an audience.

A speaker's attire can enhance or detract from the effectiveness of the presentation. Somewhat formal dress can often increase a speaker's credibility with an audience, whereas flamboyant, shabby, or enticing attire can actually distract, annoy, and even anger the audience. You don't necessarily have to suit up in a tux or evening gown, but you should carefully and thoughtfully consider the audience and the occasion, and dress accordingly. This is not the time to dig into your car trunk and throw on your cut-offs, dirty beach T-shirt, and rubber thongs.

Grooming should also be an important consideration when preparing for your talk. A hot shower and a splash of cologne or perfume will not only enhance your appearance, but also make you feel better about yourself.

Once you're up there at the podium, your audience will check out your overall *posture*. Before you begin speaking, *pause at least three seconds to center your weight evenly on your two feet*. Don't lean on one foot more than the other. Equal weight, that's what we want here. And your feet should not be spread more than shoulder width. A little less would be fine. Keep your back straight and square your shoulders to the audience. Don't aim a shoulder at the audience—square those shoulders.

Let your hands hang at your sides freely as you take your three-second pause before speaking. A common error made by novice speakers is that they don't pause and get set before speaking. They simply run up and begin talking nervously even before they reach the podium. That sends a loud message to the audience. It says the speaker is nervous, anxious, and literally out of control. Take those three seconds to center yourself. It will pay off for the remainder of your talk.

When an individual faces an audience, the normal response is to freeze. Not move. But a rigid, motionless delivery style would be monotonous to watch for even a short period of time; and it will only serve to make you, the speaker, more tense and nervous. *Body movement* has been shown to attract the attention of an audience. You don't need to do cartwheels across the stage or backflips off the podium, but there are some body movements that are helpful in sustaining audience interest and emphasizing important points.

Speaking of podiums, try moving away and speaking from the side of the podium to communicate a more informal speaking style. This more informal and natural speaking style is beneficial in most speaking

situations. If the audience can hear your voice without the use of the podium microphone, you might want to try getting out from behind that hideous contraption. Anyway, don't you want to show off the seven pounds you lost over the past few weeks? Another reason you might want to leave the podium is that this new, less restricted position gives you more room for body movement and gestures.

You might also find it useful to walk two or three short steps to your right or left when you state a main-point transition or stress an important phrase in your talk. That's called *walking into your points*. This walking movement recaptures the audience's attention and visually reinforces the transition from one point to another. Walk slowly when you do this. Don't rush. Pretend you're moving in a vat of molasses (wow, what an image!). Anyway, be calm. And stroll slowly into your next point.

If you want to get more intimate with your audience, walk a few steps in their direction. Be careful not to fall off the stage, but stroll toward the audience. This movement works really well when you're giving the punch line to a joke or the climactic ending to a story. You can do just the opposite, that is, walk away from the audience, when you want to voice strong emotion. Just a few steps back is all you need.

A final word on body movement. Too much movement, unrelated movement, or repetitious movement can be distracting to an audience. Use your body movement to direct attention and emphasize points during your talk. Use it carefully.

Gestures

Your *gestures* consist of your hand and arm movements during your speech. Use your gestures to emphasize and express important ideas and emotions. The normal tendency for a beginning speaker, when facing an audience, is to cement her hands to the sides of the podium, clutch her hands either in front or in back of herself, or freeze them at her sides. This too can only serve to increase the speaker's anxiety. There are two excellent practice techniques you can use to loosen up your hands and arms.

The first one we'll call the *silent hula technique*. Just as a Hawaiian hula dancer does, you can practice communicating passages or sections of your speech *without words*, using only your hands and arms to express the thoughts and feelings. Sounds silly, but it gets your mind off the words of the speech and refocuses your attention on your gestures. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how your hands come alive once you forget about the words and concentrate on the message.

The second technique for loosening up your hands and arms is called *catching rain*. Catching rain is exactly what it sounds like. You

stand with both hands comfortably outstretched in front of you, with elbows at your sides. Then begin to recite your speech. The only rule with this practice technique is that your hands and arms cannot fall beneath your waist. That's the only rule. As you speak, you will notice your arms will begin to move by themselves as you talk! It's like they have a life all their own. Small movements at first, but then more pronounced as you get into your talk. Who knows why it works. But once your mind is occupied with your mental chatter, it forgets about the hands and arms, and the body takes over. Sounds weird. But give it a try.

Eye Contact

The manner in which eye-contact behavior is interpreted varies from culture to culture. But in the American culture, you are expected to have direct eye contact if you are to be perceived as interested, honest, and credible. If not, you run the risk of being seen as uninterested, reticent, or even devious. When you speak to an audience, this principle holds true also.

Direct eye contact with your audience serves a variety of positive functions for the speaker. First, it establishes contact with the audience. How can a relationship be established if you don't even see them? Second, eye contact holds the attention of the audience. You don't need to look into the eyes of every one of your audience members to keep their attention, but spread your eye contact around the room. Look at the front, the back, and the sides. Don't get stuck on one section of the room. Avoid looking at your notes, the floor, or the ceiling. Third, eye contact is the best way to receive feedback from the audience. Do they look bored? Are they interested? Are they confused? All these questions can be answered quickly and silently by glancing around the room. Finally, eye contact suggests honesty. The old adage "A person won't look you in the eye if they're lying" seems to be true in public speaking as well.

Facial Expressions

Once a relationship has been established, research has found that the face is the area at which most people look to observe and evaluate the emotional responses of another person. As a public speaker, your facial expressions are important in your communication. Although many of the audience members in the back rows will not be able to see your expressions in detail, all of your listeners will develop a sense of how you are feeling and who you are by your facial cues. In addition to your eye contact behavior, your ability to use your mouth and face to emphasize, stress, and illustrate emotions cannot be overlooked.

Facial expressions and habits are one of the most difficult movements to change or modify, primarily because we are so unaware of them. Like the sound of our voice, our facial expressions have a life all their own, outside of our conscious awareness. We simply cannot see our face as we go about our daily life. Sure, we can view it in a mirror, a photograph, or even on videotape, but those are indeed brief moments. So, our faces are literally strangers to us.

If you want to try something really unusual, stare at your face in a mirror for five minutes without looking away. No distractions. No one else in the room. Just look at your own face for five minutes. See what happens. The image in the mirror becomes almost unrecognizable after a few moments of studying the detail of your own face. Who are you, anyway?

Here's one specific suggestion for your facial expressions while you give your speech. Smile. This suggestion may sound trite, and yet it needs repeating. You need to smile. Did you know it takes less muscle effort to smile than to frown? No wonder we get so exhausted when we're frowning during our bad moods.

Smile during the first three seconds you're in front of your audience, as you get your posture centered. Even if you are going to present a very somber topic, you can still invest three seconds for smiling. It'll relax both you and your audience. You'll discover when you smile during this initial phase of the speech that you're more likely to loosen up and express a variety of emotions during the remainder of your talk.

But what if you're not a smiler by nature, or you happen to be depressed that day? Fake it! Yeah, fake it! Life's too short. You owe it to your audience to be "up" for your talk. Heck, you can frown for the rest of the day. But give your audience the best you have. This is not therapy; it's your speech, your gift to the audience. Make it a good one! (End of sermon. Sorry about that.)

Breathing

An entire book could be written on the importance of breathing, but we're only going to spend three paragraphs stressing its pivotal role in making you an effective speaker. For starters, if you didn't breathe once during a five-minute speech, you'd most likely pass out, and maybe even die. How about that for being important? You could go through an entire five-minute talk and never once look at one person, give one gesture, state one transition, or wear a stitch of clothing, and not much would happen to you. Maybe speaking naked would cause something to happen, but overall, nothing much would. Yet, without breathing for those five minutes, you die. That simple.

More than 2,000 years ago, Lao Tsu said, "It is not wise to rush about. Controlling the breath causes strain." Did you know that when you're frightened or anxious, you hold your breath? When speaking before an audience, you have a tendency to hold your breath. You see it in just about every beginning speaker. The rapid rate of speech. The run-on sentences, punctuated occasionally by huge gulps of air. Remember, even when you're under extreme stress, your body knows enough not to kill itself.

What can you do to breathe properly when speaking to an audience? Three things, really. First, begin breathing in deep, even breaths about a minute or two before you are called to speak. Don't hyperventilate and pass out. Just slow, deep, even breaths. Second, while you're smiling and centering your posture during the first three seconds in front of your audience, draw in three deep breaths while you're doing your "one thousand one . . . , one thousand two . . . , one thousand three." This will give you air to begin your speech. Third, breathe after each long sentence during your speech. Breathe from the stomach, not from the throat. Try to look like a pregnant woman when you inhale with your stomach. Pause often in your speech. Pause long enough to inhale deeply and exhale completely. This will seem like an eternity when you're up in front of all those people, but it will save you. It will save not only your life, but your speaking style as well.

Vocal Characteristics

There are six aspects of your voice worth mentioning here. Your vocal characteristics are made up of rate, volume, pitch, inflection, enunciation, and vocal variety.

Your speaking *rate* is the speed at which you talk. It's generally measured in number of words per minute. The average speaking rate is about 110 to 130 words per minute. Some people speak more slowly, some faster. If you speak too slowly, you run the risk of losing the attention of your audience. If you speak too quickly, you make it difficult for your audience to understand you. In addition, an extremely rapid rate of speech can annoy or irritate an audience. Find a rate of speech that is comfortable for you, but don't feel that it is best to stick to this speed. One of the marks of an experienced speaker is the ability to vary the speaking rate. The most common error is for the beginning speaker to speak too rapidly. In that case, you should pause more after long sentences and phrases, and take deep breaths. Another helpful aid is to occasionally mark in red the word "SLOW" on your note cards.

Volume is the loudness of your voice. In public speaking, you have to speak loudly enough so that your listeners in the back row can hear

you without straining. If the people in the back appear to be having difficulty, stop your talk and ask them if your voice can be heard. Speak louder if they can't hear you. A soft voice not only makes it difficult for the audience to listen to your speech, it also can be interpreted as a sign of reticence, weakness, or fear.

If you discover that you need to develop more volume in your speaking, you might try practicing the *backyard yelling exercise*. You'll need a friend for this one. Anyone will do. Have your assistant sit in a chair in the backyard, in the parking lot of your apartment house, or anywhere you have 30 feet of free space where you won't get hit by traffic. Pace off about 30 feet between you and your assistant. Begin your speech. If your friend cannot hear you, have him raise his hand for you to increase your volume. Increase your volume, even if you feel as if you're screaming. Your assistant will lower his hand when he can hear you. This goes back and forth until you reach a volume that is loud enough for your assistant to hear from 30 feet. If you can pass this test, you'll be heard in any room.

Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of your voice. It can be thought of as the placement of your voice on a musical scale. Each individual has a natural pitch level. The movement of pitch either upward or downward from this natural pitch level is known as *inflection*. Inflection is used to give certain words or phrases emphasis. A speaker who never varies her pitch (inflection) is said to speak in a monotone fashion. A monotone voice is a boring voice after a few minutes.

One way to get inflection into your voice is to emphasize important words in your sentences. Read aloud the sentence that follows while emphasizing a different word with each reading. Begin with the emphasis on the first word and read the sentence. Then read the sentence again, with the emphasis on the second word. Repeat the process until you've read through the sentence seven times.

I would love to see you again.

The meaning of the sentence changes with each different reading, doesn't it? Inflection is a powerful verbal tool in speech emphasis, and it is one of the most effective cures for a monotone delivery.

One last method for changing the monotone voice is called the *singing exercise*. You simply sing your words as you practice your speech. In a standing position, deliver your speech by singing every word. Make up a melody as you go along. Don't sing to the melody of a song you know. Just let the words and melody flow. It may feel foolish initially, but who cares. The point is to break your monotone habit.

Enunciation consists of articulation and pronunciation. *Articulation* is defined as the ability to pronounce the letters of a word correctly, whereas *pronunciation* is the ability to pronounce the entire word correctly. There are three common causes of articulation problems: sound substitution, slurring, and the omission of sounds.

Sound substitution happens often in speaking. Many of us say "budder," instead of "butter," or "dat" instead of "that." In the first case, we substituted the sound of "d" for "t," and in the second example, we substituted the sound of "d" for "th."

Slurring is usually caused by a rapid rate of speech or a running together of words. We often say "I'll getcha a hot dog," instead of "I will get you a hot dog." Be aware of slurring your words when you speak.

The final cause of articulation problems is the *omission of sounds*. We sometimes say "flowin'" instead of "flowing," or "singin'" instead of "singing." Don't get lazy when you pronounce your words.

The final characteristic of your voice is *vocal variety*. Vocal variety refers to the variance or range you give to the rate, volume, and pitch of your speech. You'll recall that inflection is the variance or change in pitch. This gives your voice vocal variety. Variance in your volume and rate also plays an important role in keeping your speech interesting and lively. Vocal variety in your pitch, volume, and rate prevents a monotone speech delivery, and nothing puts your audience to sleep faster than a monotone voice. Lord help us.

Speech Practice

No one is born with public speaking skills, no matter what you think. The outstanding speakers are those individuals who invest countless hours of practice time improving their skills. Nothing comes without a price.

This book isn't worth a penny if you don't actually take the time and effort to practice the skills that we have been discussing up to now. The choice is ultimately yours. It's always yours. When you practice your speech, consider these guidelines for a productive practice session.

Complete Your Outline before You Practice
Begin your practice sessions only after you have typed your final outline. Read through your outline a number of times so you become familiar with the content and structure. Then make your 3 × 5-inch note card of main points and key words so you can quickly refer to it during your practice sessions.

Choose a Private Practice Site

Select a room in your house, apartment, or yacht that will give you adequate space to walk three or four steps in any direction. Don't practice in your car during a rush-hour commute. Select a real room that is free of interruptions and distractions, such as telephones, children running through, a noisy television, or even Grandma knitting quietly in the corner next to the laser disc unit. After you've selected the room, set up three chairs, side by side, to represent your audience. You should be standing about eight feet away from the chairs, facing in their direction. Remember to have about three or four steps of clear space all around you so you can walk into your transitions.

Practice in a Standing Position

There are people who practice their speeches in a prone position, in a sitting position, and even in the lotus position. But you will be standing when you deliver your speech to your audience, so you should be standing when you are practicing. If you won't practice from a standing position, you might as well just squirt lighter fluid on this book right now and set a match to it. Make sure you burn it in a safe place, however, like the fireplace. Please practice your speech in a standing position. Anything short of this is a sin.

Loosen Up before You Begin Practicing

As you stare at the three chairs representing your audience, get a mental picture of one of your favorite people in the world sitting in the chair on your left. Don't worry about the chair on your right. As you visualize that person, begin your deep breathing. Breathe for a minute or two with your eyes open. Deep, even breaths from your stomach. Shake your hands vigorously at your sides. Keep breathing. Roll your head to the right a couple of times, then to the left a few more times. Sing a song or just talk gibberish for a minute or so, starting out with a low volume, then going up in volume until you almost reach a shouting intensity. Keep this up until you feel like you're loose and ready to go.

Practice in Small Increments Initially

Practice your introduction all the way through two or three times until you get it right. Then move on to your first main point. Practice it by itself two or three times until you're satisfied with your command of the material. Then move on to the second main point. Continue the process until you've completed the conclusion. Just one section at a time. Small increments for now. Once you've moved through the entire speech, section by section, go back to the introduction and first main point, and see if you can get through both of those parts combined. Try it again

until you feel satisfied. Then add the second main point to your cluster. Then add the third main point. And finally the conclusion. There, you've got the entire speech.

Time Your Speeches

A stopwatch is a wonderful aid when timing your speeches, but any watch with a sweep second hand will do. Time your small increment practice sessions. You should be able to figure out roughly how long each section should be. As you practice and check your time, you might have to add a little here and cut a little there. But that's what this is all about. When you are comfortable with each section, time the entire speech and edit your talk so it's within the required time limit. With timed practices, you should know within 30 seconds either way how long your final presentation will be. Now that's preparation!

Practice the Entire Speech Five Times

At one practice session, practice your entire speech two times. A few hours later or the next day, practice your speech another two times all the way through, referring to your note card only when necessary. On the morning you are scheduled to speak, practice your speech only once all the way through. And that's it. No more practice. If you practice your speech too often, you run the risk of sounding memorized, and that's a no-no. Five times, no more.

Don't Practice in Front of a Mirror

You won't be speaking into a mirror when you deliver your speech, so don't practice with one. Mirrors have a tendency to confuse the speaker. They can distract more than help. So don't even think of practicing in front of one.

Record Your Practice Sessions

If you're really serious about conducting practice sessions that are worthwhile, invest \$20 and pick up the cheapest department store audiocassette recorder you can find, and record your five full-speech practice sessions. This takes a little guts and some money, but there's nothing quite like it for evaluating your performance and progress. Don't practice with a videotape unit just yet. It'll overwhelm you with visual stimuli and you won't be focusing on your speech patterns. Save the videotape for later speeches. For now, just the audiocassette, okay? When listening to your recording, check for naturalness, the desire to communicate, and an enlarged conversational quality. Also check your voice for proper volume, rate, pitch, and vocal variety. Did you have too many verbal pauses, such as "ah," "um," and "you know"? Observe your energy level.

Did you sound enthusiastic or dead? See how helpful this \$20 recorder can be in your speech practice regimen?

Evaluating Your Speech

Before you deliver your speech to an audience, evaluate one of your practice speeches for content, organization, and delivery. Your practice speech can be videotaped for your viewing, or have a friend watch your practice session. Either way, have your friend or yourself complete the evaluation form that follows. Don't limit yourself to the objectives contained in the list. Feel free to add your own points. The important thing is for you to critically evaluate your speech before you present it to your audience.

Speech Day Checkout

On the day of your talk, practice your speech one time all the way through. Take a hot shower and dab on your cologne or perfume liberally. Smell good for yourself, if for nobody else. Don't eat a heavy meal or really greasy food three hours before you're scheduled to talk. It'll make you sleepy. And no alcohol anytime before you speak. Arrive early to the auditorium or room, so you can get a feel for the layout, the atmosphere, the podium, and the microphone setup. Also, find out where the bathroom is, a telephone if you need it, and where you will be sitting before you speak. Do all this *before* people begin arriving. As your speaking time nears, try to keep to yourself. This is not the time for idle chit-chat. Keep to yourself, and begin breathing deeply and evenly from your stomach. Glance over your key-word note card once more. Wait quietly until your name is announced. Then slowly get up from your chair, breathing evenly and deeply, as the applause fills your ears. You're now ready to walk to the podium. Aren't you glad you practiced? Have fun. And remember to breathe from the stomach, deeply..., evenly...

Be Gentle on Yourself

No matter what happens—be gentle on yourself. It's only a speech! A hundred years from now, it won't matter all that much. What really counts is your decision to attempt a speech. Go get 'em.