

CHAPTER 3

EFFECTIVE SPEAKING--FROM TASKING TO FINAL PRESENTATION

You, the speaker, have the task of clearly communicating your message to your audience so that they understand your intention(s). There is an old saying that illustrates some of the difficulties:

You have told me that you understand what I said.
But I'm not sure that you heard what I said, because I'm not sure what I said.

Every message you send will pass through noise filters before it reaches the intended audience. Your audience will receive the "perceived message" and act accordingly. However, you will never know whether your audience received it as you intended until they give you feedback. Remember feedback always passes through noise filters before it reaches you. Considering the communication process (see fig 3-1 below), it's amazing that we communicate as well as we do.

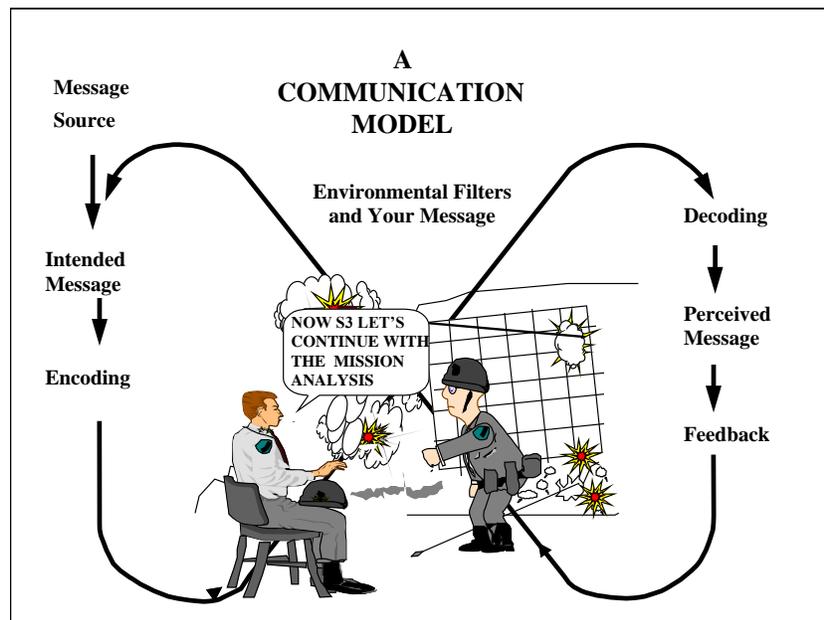


Figure 3-1

Effective speaking, like effective writing, *requires you to use the same systematic approach and attention to detail whenever you prepare for a speaking engagement.* Like writing, you begin your speech preparation by using **critical reasoning** and **creative thinking** skills to **research** your topic (refer to pages 2-1 through 2-9). As you conduct your research you begin to develop a **plan** on what you are going to say and how you will say it. Then you **draft** or **run through** your speech to ensure you include what you need to say.¹ Next, you **revise** and **rehearse** your speech to ensure you clearly communicate your message. Finally, you conduct **dress rehearsals (proofing)** to prepare yourself emotionally to speak before your audience.

¹ Some speakers will write out their complete text while others may speak without notes. We suggest, however, that beginning speakers may want to write out the complete text to ensure they have captured the key points to present.

RESEARCH

The first step in preparing to speak which is also the first step in writing is research. The research process you use in writing will also apply to preparing a speech. However, in developing a speech you need to consider additional factors. Begin by identifying the central issue of your speech (see fig 3-2). Next focus your attention on the requirement, clarify your role, identify the audience, determine the setting, and consider issues of timing.

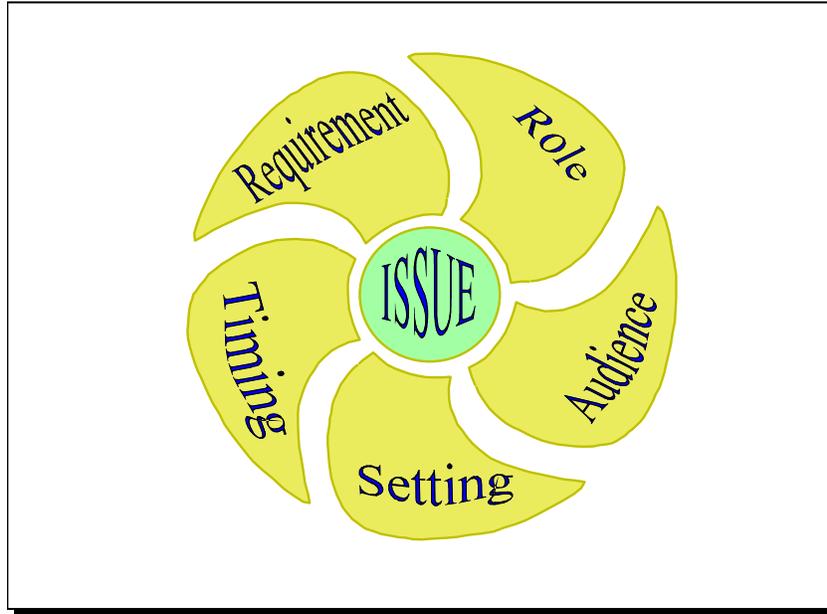


Figure 3-2

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Every speaking event revolves around some issue. It could be safe driving, prevention of sexual harassment, registering voters, esprit de corps, etc. The issue provides the subject of the speech. Circling the issue are the requirements for the speaker, the speaker's role, the audience, the setting for the speech, and the factors affecting timing.

a. Requirement? It is very important that you understand the actual requirement, not what you think it is, before beginning to develop the speech. You have probably sat in a briefing or maybe even delivered a briefing where the boss said, "This is not what I asked for." For example, your commander assigns you the task of briefing junior officers on the benefits of effective presentations. The focus of this speech would be the benefits for the speaker and the audience. However, if you focus on the process of preparing a briefing instead of the benefits of effective presentations, you fail to fulfill the assigned requirement. (See app D for two military briefing guides.)

b. Role? Think for a moment about your role as a speaker. Why is it important to know what your role is? You should know if you are flying solo on this one, part of a team, or the subject matter expert. This knowledge will help focus your attention on *your* role.

c. *Audience?* Your first step is to determine the requirement and the audience. This information is easy to overlook as you begin preparing the speech. For example, you can prepare a very moving speech, but if it does not fit the needs of your audience, then you have failed to address what is important--their needs. Audience analysis is critical when beginning your research. It helps you anticipate the audience's reaction and to prepare yourself to respond effectively to their feedback. The word AUDIENCE can serve as an acronym to help you identify the categories your analysis needs to consider.

- **A** nalysis--Who is the audience? Who will be there? How many will be there?
- **U** nderstanding--What is it they know? What is it they need to know?
- **D** emographics--What is their age, gender, education, social background, ethnic background, etc.
- **I** nterest--Why is the audience there? Who asked them to be there?
- **E** nvironment--What can distract the audience? Where will I stand? Can they see and hear me?
- **N** eeds--What does the audience need? What are my needs?
- **C** ustomized--What specific need(s) should I address?
- **E** xpectations--What should I expect to accomplish? What do they expect from me?

d. *Setting?* As an instructor, you would not develop a lesson plan around viewgraph transparencies if your classroom did not have an overhead projector. Also you could not develop an effective computer aided presentation for a large audience if your equipment was only adequate for a an audience of 1 to 15 members. The same is true for a speech or briefing. The size and dimensions of the room where the speech will take place are critical. Find out, for example, if you will need a sound system, lectern, projection equipment, and extension cords. What are the seating arrangements for the audience? How will this affect your delivery? Take the time to check out the location for your briefing. Knowledge of these details will help you plan for and deliver your presentation. (See app E, Designing Visual Supports.)

e. *Timing?* This may not seem like a very important point, but you don't want to design a 40-minute briefing for a 20-minute timeframe. Identify how much time you have to speak. Find out what else is occurring that may affect your presentation. How do these factors conflict with or support your speech? Whenever you use any special materials or equipment, you must consider how much time you need to set up and operate. Timing concerns affect the length of your speech, the resources you may want to use, and what you have to say.

In summary, speech development requires that your research starts with an issue important to your audience. Revolving around the issue are "five Ws" that your must consider.

- What is my requirement?
- What is my role?
- Who is my audience?
- What is the setting?
- What is the timing?

PLAN

Coincidentally, the second step for writing and speaking is planning. In chapters 1 and 2 we covered the topics of planning the introduction, the major and minor parts, and the conclusion. Therefore, this chapter will only concentrate on what's unique to speaking.

a. *Beginning with the introduction, what's different about speaking than writing?* The introduction is your "show time." If you have ever given a speech or taught a class, you know how important it is to get off to a strong start. There are two goals you must achieve during the introduction. First, you must gain the audience's attention. Second, you must establish credibility with the audience. Introductions are important. An introduction should smoothly lead the audience from your opening remarks into the body of the speech. In far too many speeches the introduction fails to accomplish this purpose. Remember the introduction sets the stage for everything that follows.

b. *Effective writing includes forming the major and minor parts. Basically, you do the same thing for speaking. However, there are four unique differences:*

(1) Plan your verbal supports. Use active verbs, precise nouns, vivid adjectives and adverbs along with well-chosen illustrations to help your audience understand and remember the speech.

(2) Design your visual supports. If you use visual supports to reinforce your speech, you must keep in mind the following considerations:

Are they necessary and appropriate?

Does each visual aid focus on only one idea?

Does each visual aid have balance and visual appeal?

Does each visual aid have coherency?

(3) Add the transitions. Transitional words and phrases such as the following help your audience follow your argument.

Let me illustrate this point . . .

Most importantly, we must consider . . .

In the meantime, we will continue to deadline . . .

In spite of these disadvantages, there are many advantages we must consider . . .

(4) Plan the setting. Identify the equipment you need and how to arrange it.

Podium.

Microphone and cables.

Projector and extra projector bulbs.

Props, displays, and handouts.

c. *Some other differences between speaking and writing include:*

(1) Keep the listener in mind. You are conveying a message, not a report.

(2) Organize the speech or briefing to take the listener in one direction.

(3) Organize the speech to help the listener grasp your thoughts the first time heard.

DRAFT THE SPEECH (THE RUN THROUGH)

Whether you work from an outline or a manuscript, you must *rehearse*. This is the only way to achieve a delivery that has spontaneity, personality, and authority. (See app F for information on handling nervousness and appropriate gestures and movement.)

We recommend that you conduct several rehearsals after you complete the outline or manuscript and before the actual speaking occasion. Use the available resources when you rehearse. These include speaking in front of a mirror, using a tape recorder, or, better yet, a video recorder. Probably the most effective resource available is a discerning listener who will provide you appropriate and accurate feedback.

You need to pay attention during each rehearsal to the words and tone you use. Practice your gestures, voice quality, dress, and using your visual aids.

Keep your voice natural, but change pitch to emphasize important points.

Pronounce your words correctly. How you pronounce words can enhance or detract from what you are trying to say. Have someone you trust listen to your rehearsal. Ask them to identify any mispronunciations and give you honest feedback. Then practice pronouncing the words that give you difficulty. Use these words in sentences until you are pronouncing them correctly.

Enunciate your words clearly. Speak clearly and distinctly. Take the time to use each new word in casual conversation until you master the enunciation of each. With time and practice you will cease dropping syllables and slurring sounds in both casual and formal speaking situations.

REVISE

Following each rehearsal, take the time to review your speech and revise as necessary. Use the speech evaluation form (app G) to assist you with revising. Also, ask yourself the following questions:

- Were you comfortable with the words you chose?
Don't use long words when one or two syllable words will do the job.
- Was your voice natural?
Vocal variety is a feature of your ordinary conversations; use this variety in your speeches.
- Did you enunciate each word clearly?
Do practice enunciating unfamiliar words until you are comfortable using them.
Do not drop syllables and slur your words.
- Did you speak too fast, too slow, or at the right pace?
Pace your delivery to your audience and material.
Use a faster tempo when the material is familiar to your audience, and a slower tempo when it is new.
- Did you pause at the right places to reinforce your speech?
Do pause at the end of a thought.
Do not pause in the middle of a thought.
- Did your gestures reinforce your speech?
Do use gestures that clarify or reinforce your ideas.
Do use gestures appropriate to the audience and occasion.
- Did you look at your audience?
Look your audience in the eye.
Let your eyes move from person to person.

- Do not look over the audience's heads.
- Was your posture appropriate to the setting?
- Do not be informal in a formal setting.
Do not be formal in an informal setting.
- Did you control your nervousness?
- Don't tell your audience you are nervous.
Do visualize keeping your hands at your sides between gestures.
- Did you hide behind the podium?
- Don't hold on to the podium.
Do step away from the podium while speaking.
- Did you use your visual aids appropriately?
- Don't read your visual aids to your audience.
Do face your audience, not your visual aids, when speaking.

DRESS REHEARSAL (PROOFING)

Dress rehearsals are very important. This is as close to the real thing as you're going to get. Dress rehearsals should approximate the actual speaking situation.

Wear the clothes you'll wear during the speech. Practice your speech, whenever possible, using the equipment in the setting where you will deliver the final speech.

EVALUATION

Take a few minutes after the actual speech or briefing to evaluate what you did, how you spoke, and what happened. Record the questions and answers that followed your presentation. Write down the lessons you learned about yourself as a speaker and your audience. Be specific.

Take advantage of every opportunity to deliver speeches. Keep practicing. Keep reviewing. Always evaluate your speech, your delivery, yourself as a public speaker, and your audience.