

Public Speaking

Public speaking, also known as oratory, is the process of delivering a speech or presentation where the individual speaks directly to a live audience in a structured manner for the purposes of informing, persuading, motivating or entertaining. Public speaking or delivering a speech is not just reading a prepared essay. There is a fundamental difference between orality and literacy in that the medium for public speaking is aural. There is interaction between the speaker and the audience, as the speaker must tailor inflection, the choice of terms, the pitch of voice based on how the people listening to the speech react.

There is no single method of public speaking that is successful in all situations because the expectations, constraints, and culture are never the same. You may have to deliver a presentation on the progress of a given project where the scope is informational. Naturally, your audience expects to receive precise figures, numbers and dates in a professional setting, such as a meeting room, where you use slides with charts and graphs to convey your information. This is a much different situation than a speech designed to persuade a room of stockholders to finance the project in the first place. In this situation, you have to craft your speech to convince them. It is also different from a speech where you try to motivate your audience to do something, like a sports coach exhorting players to expend their very last drop of energy to win a game. Your speech will change in function of the culture of the audience, which includes factors such as origin, age and education. There are also constraints that affect your speech, such as the layout of room in which you deliver it. You may not feel comfortable standing behind a podium and would rather walk through the audience. This might not be possible in many situations and impacts your delivery. In addition, what was successful twenty years ago may not be the proper choice today. The important thing is to acquire the skills needed to craft and adapt your speech to the present conditions.

Imitation

The art of public speaking has been around for centuries, and has undergone substantial change over that period of time, but there are numerous speakers that have excelled in delivering their messages to the most varied audiences. However, most of them learned their art through study, practice and imitation. Most people have heard the famous speech of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "I have a dream." His studied, emotional delivery to a huge audience in front of the Lincoln Memorial still stirs the hearts of all who hear it even after so many years. However, few people realize that King borrowed from various sources. In fact, the phrase "I have a dream," had already been used in a speech by Prathia Hall in 1962. There are also other allusions to the Psalms, the Book of Isaiah, etc. Not only did he borrow widely in terms of the content of his speech, but he also used voice merging, which is a common technique among African American preachers where the speaker incorporates her own, unique ideas with those of predecessors and excerpts from the Bible to create

their own personal style. Imitation is a great way to begin building your own style.

Persuasive speeches

A persuasive speech is used in quite a few different contexts by lawyers, politicians, clergy and so on to convince their audiences that their point of view is the correct one. Speakers want to persuade their audience of their opinion, lawyers want to win the case, politicians want to be elected, etc. A persuasive speech is based on a thesis, a point of view you are trying to support in order to convince your audience.

There are numerous ways to structure a persuasive speech, but a good place to start is with classical rhetoric, where this type of speech is structured using five canons:

- Invention
- Arrangement
- Style
- Memory
- Delivery

Invention (*inventio*) is the phase in which you must think up arguments to support your thesis. You have to find the most convincing arguments to persuade your audience. In the arrangement phase (*dispositio*), you organize the way you present your content. In classical rhetoric, there are six parts to a speech: introduction, statement of facts, division, proof, refutation and conclusion. The third canon, style, deals with how you deliver your speech in terms of the vocabulary you choose, figures of speech, etc. Memory refers not only to memorizing your speech in preparation for its delivery, but also, and foremost, the memorization of a vast deal of information that can be called upon given the circumstances and the audience. Delivery, finally, originally referred to oral rhetoric at use in a public context, but in a more general sense it concerns the presentation of your discourse and how you establish your appeal.

Informative speeches

The informative speech is used just to convey information, not to convince people that your point of view is the correct one. There are several types of informative speeches which concern:

- Objects
- Events
- Processes
- Concepts

Motivational speeches

A motivational speech is a persuasive speech taken to the next level. The speaker must go beyond persuasion and motivate the audience to take action. Few people succeed in mastering this type of speech. You have to have charisma and truly engage the audience. Famous examples of

motivational speeches are those by Winston Churchill during the Second World War to convince the British not to give up.

Speeches for special events

There are also speeches for special events, like weddings, graduations and so on. In this type of speech, you have to add entertaining, emotional or moving details to make it more personal. You have to be very sensitive to people and situations in order to deliver a successful speech.