

# Teaching Public Speaking in the Undergraduate Classroom

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# Challenges for Faculty

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- Most teachers have received no formal training in public speaking and even fewer have received training in *teaching* public speaking
- Public speaking is a key skill in virtually every job role and is vital to democratic participation
- To do as the discipline does or follow best practices?

# Best Practices

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- Extemporaneous speaking: Practiced but **not** memorized or read
- Formal outline for crafting a presentation, keyword outline for speaking
- Visual aids should comprise no more than 20% of speaking time (e.g. video, audio)
- Verbal Delivery: Elevated conversation
- Nonverbal Delivery: 75/25 rule, “touch the ring”, plant friendlies

# Challenges for Students

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- 3 main issues: Organization, Delivery & Anxiety
  - Organization: Researching and putting together and outline with appropriate introduction, signposts, transitions and conclusion
  - Delivery: Verbal and nonverbal
  - Anxiety: Probably the biggest issue students face in speaking in public

# Resources

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- Amy Young ([youngam@plu.edu](mailto:youngam@plu.edu) or 536-5165)
- Melissa Franke ([mfranke@plu.edu](mailto:mfranke@plu.edu) or 535-8175)
- Presentation Resource Center: Begins in October
  - Consultants are trained by faculty
  - Consultants can come to your class
  - Consultants will meet with students one-on-one in their office hours
  - Faculty resources include: classroom visits, sample assignments, sample outlines, sample rubrics, videos of what we consider an “A” speech
  - Students schedule appointments by calling x7761. Faculty email Amy Young or Melissa Franke.

# The Rest...

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- The rest of this slideshow is a set of slides that you can use (or riff off of) to teach the basics of public speaking in your classroom. Based on my ten years of experience, I focus this PowerPoint on the 3 biggest issues for novice public speakers: Organization, Delivery & Anxiety.
- Enjoy!

# Presentation Skills: Cliff's Notes Version

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- Agenda: We will address the 3 biggest challenges in public speaking
  - Organization: creating an outline, the basic parts of a speech
  - Delivery: verbal and nonverbal
  - Anxiety: what causes it and how to reduce it

# Basic Presentation Outline for a 10 Minute Speech (adjust accordingly)

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- Introduction (about 2 minutes)
  - Get audience's attention
    - Appropriate: Startling fact, quote, narrative, thoughtful question
    - Inappropriate: Your name, topic
  - Tell audience why they should care—make it meaningful—it is your job to do this
    - How might you do this?
  - Provide thesis
  - Preview presentation

# The Body

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- Body (7 minutes)
  - Issue/Topic 1
    - Transition statement: Now that we understand X, let's move on to discuss Y.
  - Issue/Topic 2
    - Transition
  - Issue/Topic 3
    - Stop at 3 major points—our brains remember and sort information in groups of 3
    - Weakest or least significant point should go in the middle—primacy and recency

# The Conclusion

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- Conclusion (1 minute)
  - Review of 3 major points/issues
  - End with a statement of closure
    - A great way to do this is to return to the way you opened to bring it full circle
    - Ex: Attention getter: Former NFL players' number one cause of death? Sleep deprivation.
    - Closure: If sleep deprivation is enough to kill a 300 lbs. lineman, we should all be vigilant about getting at least 8 quality hours a night.

# Problems with Conclusions

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1. Non-existent: Some speakers use all of their time for the message and offer no conclusion at all—huge mistake.
2. Afterthought: Some conclusions may as well not be there because it was such an afterthought. Be strategic—“thanks” doesn’t count.
3. Introduce new idea: Never introduce a new idea in the conclusion. It is for summarizing and providing closure.

# Memory and Recall

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- Recall: Americans have very poor recall in general because we have short cultural attention spans.
- Grouping elements correctly (in 3's) can help your audiences recall your message.
- Transitions, signposts assist in making sense of speeches.
- Introductions and conclusions count—primacy and recency again.

# Delivery

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- Verbal Delivery Issues:
  - You'll want to work towards an elevated, conversational style.
  - The audience wants you to talk to them not at them.
  - Use a sincere tone that lets the audience know you're that you are invested in the material.
  - Be yourself.

# Verbal Delivery

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- Word choice: Know your definitions, avoid speaking like a thesaurus
- Avoid jargon and technical terms when possible—if they are necessary, define any terms people might not know
- Use vivid, colorful language
  - Fix this: The city is a nice place to visit.

# Nonverbal Delivery

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- Eye contact: strategically place friendly faces
- Gesture: Try to be natural; “touch the ring”
- Stance: Don’t lock your knees, don’t put your hands in your pockets or behind your back
- Vocalics: Pause, up or down in volume
- Rate: Not so fast we can’t follow, not so slow we feel like its patronizing
  - Know you will speak faster in front of people than you do in practice by yourself

# Presenting in a Group

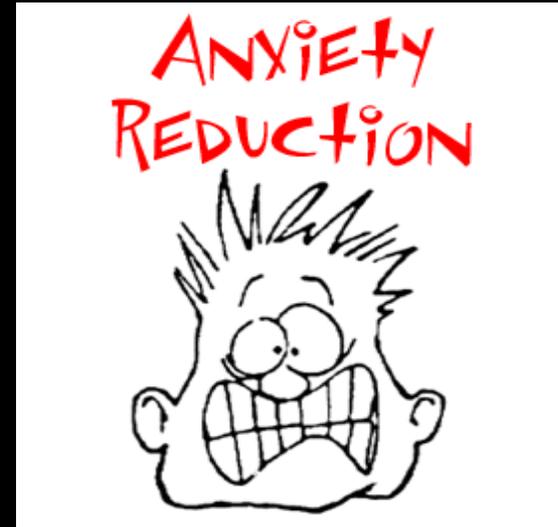
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- Rehearse the entire presentation including slides, handouts, etc.
- Look engaged in the presentation even if you are not the one speaking at the time (we can still see you!).

# Communication Apprehension

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- An individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.
- Empathy!!!



# Causes of CA

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- Excessive activation: occurs when the normal increase in activation in anticipation of a performance continues beyond the point where an individual is able to control it.
  - regurgitating meals, fainting
- Inappropriate cognitive processing: depends on the way activation is interpreted—everyone feels activation, but some “read” it as “getting amped” and others read it as “I’m going to die.”
  - people who “choke” in a game because any activation is perceived as negative
- Inadequate communication skills: person feels that they do not know how to communicate effectively.
  - perception of your skills more important than your actual skill level

# Treatments

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- Systematic Desensitization (Wolpe, 1958; McCroskey 1972)
- Several steps that involve moving from talking about an activity of least apprehension to the activity of greatest apprehension
  - Ex: talking to your friend on the phone--- appearing on TV
  - Deep muscle relaxation

# Treatments

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- Visualization (Hopf & Ayres, 1992)
  - Encourages people to think positively about communication by taking them through a carefully crafted script
  - Picture the day full of confidence and energy, ending with a successful presentation—student should congratulate him/herself on a job well done

# Tips for Reducing Anxiety: Control what you can

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- Breathe—breathing exercise
- Plant friendly faces
- Know your stuff—practice, practice, practice
- Know the room
- DO NOT MEMORIZE OR READ YOUR SPEECH
- Sleep and water
- Notes to yourself on your notes—smile, breathe, etc.
- What to wear, what to put your notes on, etc.
- Perfection is the enemy
- Keep at it—it will get better