

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE
VASYL STEFANYK PRECARPATHIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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**PUBLIC SPEAKING
FUNDAMENTALS**

IVANO-FRANKIVSK
2019

УДК 811.111:808.51

ББК 81.2.Англ

П29

*Друкується за ухвалою вченої ради факультету іноземних мов
Прикарпатського національного університету імені Василя Стефаника
(протокол № 1 від 26 грудня 2018 р.)*

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П29 Public Speaking Fundamentals = Основи публічного мовлення.
Івано-Франківськ : Прикарпатський національний університет
імені Василя Стефаника, 2019. 71 с.

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PREFACE

Whatever the context, speaking in public is becoming increasingly common. You will find that an ability to express yourself clearly and effectively will be of help to you right now and throughout your career, and the principles you learn as a public speaker can carry over to your written communication – papers and take-home exams – as well.

As universities are asking students to demonstrate proficiency in communication they need to know how to make oral presentations in classes as diverse as marketing, biology, history, and foreign language. Successful professionals, whether they work in business, health care, education, law, or government, will inevitably need to make presentations sometime, somewhere, most likely many times in many places.

In a practical sense, being able to speak well in front of others is an important communication skill that you will need to function effectively across diverse situations throughout your life. In a more philosophic sense, the ability to speak well, to articulate your ideas persuasively, and to defend your beliefs against the attacks of others has long been the foundation of democracy, wherever and whenever it is found. Those who command public speaking skills share their insights and ideas, influence and persuade, and move others to act.

This book is intended to provide tools students need to prepare and deliver a wide range of speeches and develop the knowledge and skills that will allow them to become effective public speakers. It offers information and materials that are not included in the lecture course “Academic Public Speaking” and can be used as supplementary materials for senior students as well as for students of post-graduate courses. In order to meet the needs and reflect the interests of a diverse student body we have paid significant attention to the critical thinking of communicative process, creative and innovative advice for using presentational aids, ethical choices regarding the subject and effective listening. The book is also directed at those who are interested in self-improvement and development.

The text is divided into five chapters. Chapter I gives an overview of the communication process and the basic principles of public speaking as they apply to both speaker and listener, presents the model of audience-centered communication, and introduces the concept of the speaker-listener partnership. Its preview of basic public speaking principles helps students immediately understand the key concepts and issues addressed throughout the course. In Chapter II we guide students in using their own resources to decide what to speak about, how to choose an audience-centered purpose, and how to make themselves credible to listeners. Chapter II is unique in combining an explanation of ethos and speaker credibility with instructions on selecting a speech topic. Chapter III outlines the processes of gathering relevant materials, organizing ideas and information, and finding evidence to support those ideas. It also provides in-depth coverage of the research process, including how to initiate a search for information, how to take notes and organize them, how to use the library, how to use the Internet, how to plan and conduct interviews, and how to quote appropriately and cite one's sources. Chapter IV discusses the functions of presentational aids, surveying the various options available and providing guidelines for their use. We devote a special section of this chapter to computer-generated presentational aids. Having learned how to present a speech effectively, students will be ready to consider particular applications of public speaking principles. Chapter V examines the importance of listening, particularly from the perspective of the audience, and gives the speaker insights into the audience's listening challenges. We offer guidelines for effective critical listening and suggest ways that the speaker can actually help the audience to listen more effectively.

Although the chapters in the book may be read in any order, they are organized so that each chapter is built on the skills taught in those preceding it. The skills are discussed practically and lend themselves to immediate application. Activities at the end of the chapters suggest ways for readers to practice new skills and techniques.

CHAPTER 1: *Public Speaking in the Communicating Process*

Chapter survey:

1. The importance of public speaking.
2. The audience-centered communication model.
3. Key principles of ethical communication.
4. Basic principles of public speaking.

Communication is an integral part of our lives, occurring in a wide variety of settings. Public speaking has always been crucial in the conduct of human affairs and has a direct bearing on our own successes – interpersonally, at University and work, in our community, and in various groups to which we belong. In the contemporary world, with its increasing complexity and diversity, the ability to communicate effectively has become even more crucial.

In a practical sense, being able to speak well in front of others is an important communication skill that you will need to function effectively across diverse situations throughout your life. In a more philosophic sense, the ability to speak well, to articulate your ideas persuasively, and to defend your beliefs against the attacks of others has long been the foundation of democracy, wherever and whenever it is found.

Public speeches are important. They sustain our democratic way of life; they provide opportunities for us to share our knowledge, life experience, and ideas with others; and they create a communication context in which ideas can be advanced and listeners can respond. Ideally, all who participate will grow from the experience, will come to understand more about the bases for their differences, and will begin to discover some emerging common ground. The public speech acts as a bridge between speaker and audience. Of course, you build a bridge for people to cross both ways, so the principles you learn should also help you improve your skills as a consumer as well as a producer of communication.

In the category of “Intellectual and practical skills” public speaking is listed as one of these core skills. This is not particularly surprising given that communication skills are critical for intellectual development, career trajectory, and civic engagement. Public speaking is universally applicable to all types of majors and occupations and is seen by employers as a critical employability skill for job seekers. No matter what your ambitions and interests are, developing speaking skills will benefit your personal, professional, and public life.

Personal. People don’t just give presentations on the job and in classes. At times we are called upon to give speeches in our personal lives. It may be for a special event, such as a toast at a wedding. Developing the skill to give these types of speeches can help us to fulfill essential roles in our family and community. Another great personal benefit of public speaking is that it builds selfconfidence. It’s no surprise that speaking in public is scary, but by engaging in the activity you will build self-confidence through the experience.

Professional. TV announcers, teachers, lawyers, and entertainers must be able to speak well, but most other professions require or at the very least can benefit from the skills found in public speaking. It is believed 70% of jobs today involve some form of public speaking. With the recent economic shift from manufacturing to service careers, the ability to communicate with others has become crucial. Great leaders must be able to communicate ideas effectively, they must be able to persuade, build support, negotiate and speak effectively in public. But before you even start a career, you have to get a job. Effective speaking skills make you more attractive to employers, enhancing your chances of securing employment and later advancing within your career. Employers, career counselors, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) all list good communication skills at the top of the list of qualities sought in potential employees.

Public. Public speaking is important in creating and sustaining a society, which includes informed, active participants. Even if you do not plan to run for office, learning about public speaking helps you to listen

more carefully to and critically evaluate other's speeches. The progress of the past century involving segregation, women's rights and environmental protection are the result of people advancing new ideas and speaking out to others to persuade them to adopt changes.

The speaker's task today is in many ways different from the problems that faced speakers in the past. Greek orators had to project their voices very well, or no one would hear them. Today we just assume that if we are speaking to a large crowd, a microphone will be there to amplify our voices. Speakers of the past could often count on a homogeneous audience. In fact, not very far back in history, most public speeches were given by men to men. Such homogeneity of sex and race simplified the speaker's task in that he could make certain assumptions about his audience that no speaker could make today.

Today we live in a world of increasing diversity where men and women of varied ages, races, religions, educational levels, and ethnic and regional backgrounds come together. When you make a speech in your classroom, your community, or your place of employment, your audience will almost undoubtedly be more diverse than it would have been even a decade ago. You can't assume that most of your listeners will be like you, sharing the same values, beliefs, and experiences. All listeners won't view fraternities and sororities in the same light that you do; all listeners won't trust the police to protect them; all listeners won't agree that the measure of success is the amount of money you make; all listeners won't interpret "moral values" in the same way, and some listeners may reject such values. One challenge for today's public speakers, then, is to acknowledge and adapt to the diversity of their audiences. To be effective, public speeches must be audience-centered (focused on one's audience – their characteristics, needs, and well-being).

Communication is an effort on the part of the speaker to get the listener to respond in a particular way. Of course, there are situations where important ideas or values are planted by a speaker and only gain acceptance over time. But most of the speaking situations in which you'll find yourself will be those in which you have a concrete goal in mind: you

will know what you want listeners to understand, believe, or do when your speech is over. But that's only part of the picture. The true **effectiveness** of a speech must be judged by the outcome for both parties in the speaker-listener partnership.

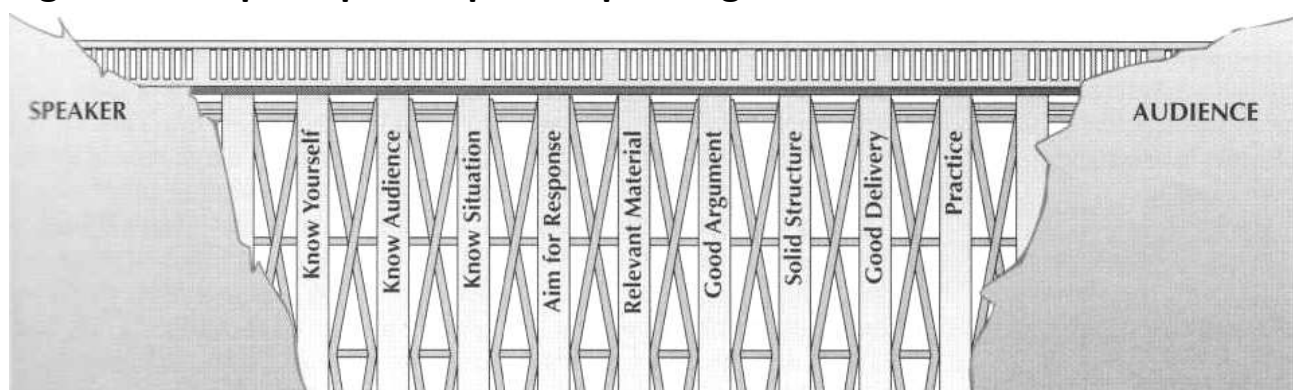
Ethical communication. Every speaker should be committed to communicating ethically. Ethical speakers examine their own motives. They insist on accuracy and are concerned with the way they acquire and present information. They see human communication as a transactional dialogue. They strive to adapt to and promote the interests of their listeners. They are alert to ethical dilemmas that may arise in different speaking situations. They stay in touch with the ethical standards of their community while remaining true to their own values and convictions. Communicating ethically is central to being an effective public speaker. Ethics are a set of behavioral standards generally considered to be good or desirable. Ethical communication means speaking honestly and truthfully, with a thoughtful and genuine concern for the well-being of the audience and the community. Ethical communication is not just something you tack onto a public speaking checklist. Rather, ethical speaking must grow out of your own values and character and the values of the community of which you are a part.

Ethical speaker. What, then, are the characteristics of an ethical speaker? Ethical speakers examine their motives – they do not slant the truth for the sake of their own gain. Ethical speakers insist on accuracy – they tell the audience what they believe to be truthful based on their own research and reflection. Ethical speakers are committed to communication as a transactional dialogue (an exchange in which speaker and listener are viewed as equal partners in the creation of meaning) – they honor the right of all participants to raise questions, offer ideas, and make choices. Ethical speakers are concerned with the way they acquire information and are sensitive to the way in which they present it. They carefully examine the best interests of those to whom they speak, always thinking of the audience's rights, needs, and values along with their own. Finally, ethical speakers are concerned with the tension introduced by the

need to adapt their ideas to the audience – they question how far they can adapt without compromising their own basic beliefs.

Basic principles of public speaking. Getting ready to give a speech is hard work. This is not just a trick of words; rather, it is a way of thinking about what you need to do to get ready to give a speech. It is a way of developing a strategy you can use each time you give a speech. Preparing yourself to speak is the process of understanding and applying the principles of audience-centered effective speaking.

Figure: Basic principles of public speaking



Source: *Public speaking: second edition, Andrew Williams*

Know yourself. You first need to canvass your own interests and concerns to find a topic to talk about, you also need to think of another dimension of yourself: your credibility. The word *ethos* is often used, a concept explored more than two thousand years ago by the philosopher-rhetorician Aristotle, to describe the speaker's character, intelligence, and values, as perceived by the audience. Being well prepared lets the audience know that you take them and the topic seriously and are in command of the facts. Being able to communicate directly and easily with your audience reassures them that you can be trusted.

Know the audience. Speeches are given for audiences, to get people to respond in some way to ideas. The audience's needs, interests, beliefs, and knowledge must also play a part in your deciding what you will talk about and how you will put your speech together. Your knowledge of yourself needs to be supplemented by and compared with the knowledge of those who will listen to what you have to say.

Knowing an audience makes adaptation possible. The point is that you must consider carefully the characteristics of the audience that are relevant to the speech you plan to give and take this understanding into account as you prepare to speak.

Know the Situation. The setting for a speech can influence how an audience responds to you. You may be speaking in a comfortable or an uncomfortable physical setting. Or you may be close to your audience or separated from them by an orchestra pit. You may be speaking directly to them or using a microphone. Your audience may be there because they are interested in what you have to say or because they have to be. It is to your advantage to know in advance something about the setting in which you will be speaking so that you can anticipate potential problems.

In addition to the setting, you will also need to consider the temporal context of your speech. Imagine, for example, that you are giving a class presentation on the role of government in student aid. The student newspaper has just published a story detailing proposed cuts in student aid programs. It is likely that your audience will be aware of this turn of events and will be listening for what you have to say about it. You need to be aware of what is happening in your audience's world that is relevant to your topic so you can prepare yourself to speak as the context requires.

Aim for Audience Response. As a beginning speaker, your most critical task is to develop an audience-centered perspective – to understand that everything you do and say as a speaker is done and said because you hope to influence an audience. This principle is fundamental to everything else you will learn in public speaking.

Knowing what you want the audience to do will help you determine what ideas to include in your speech. Remember, your aim in any speech is to get a specific audience response. One of the first things you should do in preparing yourself to speak is to determine your specific purpose as precisely as possible, since it will affect all your other choices. Specific purpose is a precise statement of how the speaker wants the audience to respond to her or his message, which serves to direct the research and

construction of the speech.

Discover Relevant Material. As you begin to work on your chosen speech topic, you will most likely have some information already in your head. Once you have decided on the specific purpose of your speech, you will need to explore potential sources of information for supporting material that develops and proves your points. Supporting material is an information presented in your speech to support your various points.

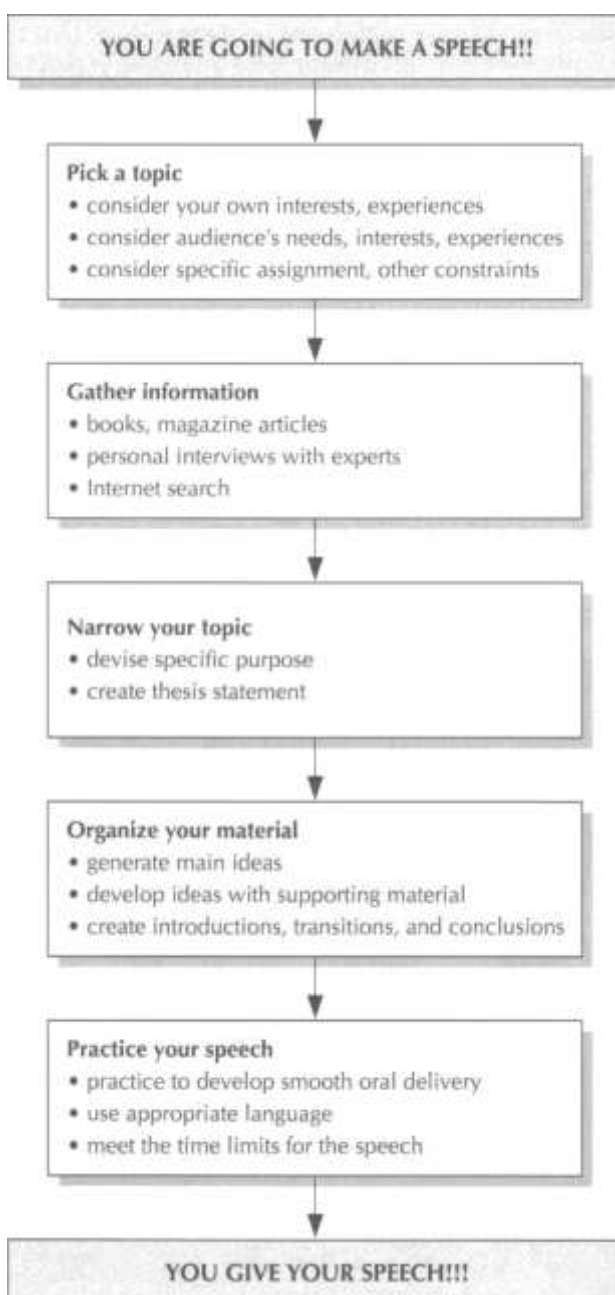
Gathering pertinent information may begin with a computer search of the World Wide Web. You do need to exercise caution, however, when using information from the Web. Since it is relatively easy to post material to the Web, sites often present highly biased or even totally false information, rumors, or unsubstantiated gossip. Unless you know a source to be highly reliable (a government bureau, the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*, a professional journal, and the like), it is best to confirm information through other sources. In addition, CD-ROM encyclopedias present useful information in the form of sound and pictures as well as written text. And, of course, you can find specific articles, books, and government publications in your campus or local public library. Whatever sources you use, they must be completely and correctly cited. You may also want to interview experts, depending on the subject of your speech. Experts can be quoted as sources, and often they can direct you to additional resources.

Any topic of importance calls for research. All speakers, no matter how knowledgeable, can benefit from learning more about their topic.

Present a Reasonable Argument. When you know what you want to accomplish in your speech, you will need to set about framing ideas and finding material that supports those ideas and builds a reasonable argument. Remember that this is a process: your purpose may change as you gather more information. As you learn more, what you hope to accomplish will become less tentative. This process helps you build your argument. As you begin to find relevant material, this material helps you formulate ideas that further your purpose and provides data to make those ideas more convincing to your audience. Consulting several

different kinds of sources and always looking for diverse perspectives will help you build the strongest, most compelling argument possible.

Give Your Message Structure. Well-organized speeches make it easy for the audience to follow the speaker's argument, they help the audience remember what has been said, and they give clear and convincing reasons for responding as the speaker wishes. So, your speech must have structure. Your ideas must relate to one another logically. Taken together, they must present the kind of coherence (coherence the logical and orderly relationship of information and ideas to develop or support a larger point) necessary to accomplish your purpose. As a



speaker, you will need to plan carefully how to move the audience smoothly from one idea to the next by techniques such as devising smooth transitions (transitions are words, phrases or sentences that help the audience perceive the relationship of ideas and the movement from one point to another) between your ideas and selecting places where it makes sense to summarize what has been said before going on. The speech must form a pattern that is clear to your audience. Using a meaningful pattern helps the audience take "mental notes" so that they will remember what you have said. The pattern also makes clear to them how everything in the speech fits together, points to the desired response, and contributes to your ethos as a speaker.

Speak Directly with Your Audience. The language you use and the way you use it can have a great impact on an audience and the way that audience responds to you. Suitable language keeps both audience and purpose in mind – it is language that is precise, clear, interesting, and appropriate to the context in which your speech takes place. Beginning speakers sometimes believe that speaking situations demand formal language, with the result that their speeches can sound stiff. We have often had the experience of talking with a student who describes a particular event or personal experience in an animated and natural way, then recounts the same story in a stiff, unnatural way to an audience. It helps to think of a speaking situation as an enlarged conversation in which you convey information to the audience in a way similar to the way you would talk with friends – similar, but not exactly the same. In speaking with an audience, you should be sure to omit the "fillers" we often use in informal conversation; avoid the "likes" and "you knows" that tend to clutter everyday speech.

No matter how much work you put into preparing yourself to speak, what the audience finally sees and hears will determine their response. The best delivery does not call attention to itself: the audience is more aware of *what* is said than *how* it is said. Good delivery, in most of the contexts in which you will speak, should be conversational and relaxed. If the delivery is good, listeners can hear and understand what you say and will not find themselves distracted by mannerisms, inappropriate language, or a too dramatic presentation.

Develop Confidence Through Practice. Being nervous just before and while you give a speech is normal. Everyone, however experienced or accomplished he or she may be, feels some communication apprehension, or speech anxiety. The ill-prepared speaker may deserve to squirm, but even with good preparation, effectively expressing ideas orally doesn't come naturally to anyone. There are many ways of reducing and managing speech anxiety. One of the most effective is repeated oral practice (oral practice is practicing one's speech aloud in conditions that simulate the actual speaking environment). Practicing out loud and

frequently will show you what problems you may have putting any of your ideas into oral language. More important, oral practice will give you confidence in your ability to deal with these problems.

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Explain the importance of developing public speaking skills.
2. Define the terms *transactional dialogue*, *ethical communication*, *audience-centered model*, *transitions*, *coherence*.
3. Summarize the qualities of an ethical speaker.
4. Pinpoint the characteristics of the audience-centered communication model.
5. Briefly describe the basic principles of public speaking and list at least three of the greatest importance. Explain your choice.

Practical assignments:

1. You are suggested two possible first speaking assignments that can get you started: introducing a classmate or paying tribute to someone you admire. As with all aspects, you will need to prepare carefully, but these speeches require minimal research and may be a good way to get started.

a) **Introducing a classmate** (*As you and your partner talk with each other, remember that you are not just gathering a random set of facts to pass on to the class. You will want to discuss topics such as family, hometown, travel, jobs, interesting personal experiences, hobbies, leisure activities, intellectual and academic interests, and goals for the future. Then you will have to put this information together in a speech. You have a purpose: you want your audience to understand what the person you are introducing is like and what is important to her or him, it does focus on what seems important to her or him*);

b) **Paying tribute** (*In preparing a **speech of tribute**, you must, as in any speech, have a clear, narrow purpose and well-structured ideas that support that purpose. In addition, you should consider the following guiding principles: make sure you are well informed, choose vivid,*

colorful, memorable information to share, deliver your speech with warmth and sincerity. When we pay tribute to a person or an event, we are remembering the values we hold dear, the bonds we share, our common aspirations, and our hopes and dreams).

2. Working in groups of 3 – 5, generate a list of the characteristics of ineffective speakers you have seen. Next, generate a list of the characteristics of the effective speakers you have seen. What three qualities do you believe are most important to be a successful speaker? Explain.

3. Locate a speech on YouTube. While watching the speech, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the speaker's content and delivery? What three things could the speaker improve on? What three things did you like about the speaker? If you were to deliver the speech, how would you do things differently?

CHAPTER 2: *Considering the Subject*

Chapter survey:

1. Self-inventory.
2. Career Goals.
3. Leisure Activities and Interests.
4. Personal and Social Concerns.
5. Narrowing the topic.

As you start thinking about a topic, first focus your attention on what you know and care about. Taking an inventory of your intellectual and educational interests, your career goals, your leisure activities, and your personal and social concerns will help you come up with potential speech topics.

Deciding what to talk about may or may not be one of your initial concerns as a speaker. In some situations, the topic of your speech will be predetermined. For example, an employer may ask an employee to make a presentation on how to market the company's latest product, or a community forum may ask a health professional to speak on whether the local hospital should be sold to a private concern. Sometimes, however, a very broad and nonspecific topic will be suggested. For example, the health professional may be asked to speak on whatever she or he believes to be an important public health issue; the employer may want a report on the most interesting new developments in the employee's department. These situations demand that the speaker refine the vague suggested topic and come up with something far more specific. Regardless of specificity, however, the speaker was invited because of his or her expertise, and the invitation determines the topic.

Early on in your public speaking class, you may be assigned a very specific topic that doesn't require much preparation or specialized knowledge, primarily to help you get comfortable speaking before a group. You may be asked to give a short speech describing a person you greatly admire, telling about a recent job, demonstrating a simple skill, or introducing yourself or another person in the class. Normally, however,

you will not have so narrowly defined a topic assigned to you either in or outside of your class.

A good way to start thinking about a topic is by thinking about yourself. The fundamental question to ask is, *What things do I already know and care about?* This doesn't mean, *What can I already give a speech about?* Don't try to find a speech ready-made in your head; don't try to limit yourself to topics on which you are already an expert. That kind of thinking could lead you to imagine that you don't have anything to talk about. What you really mean is that you don't know enough to get up and give a speech on this topic at this particular moment – and of course you don't! Giving a good speech takes a lot of work, and part of that work is learning more about the topic. Research is essential to support your personal perceptions and experiences. Keep in mind that one of the real benefits of a course in public speaking is that it will give you the opportunity to learn more about things you want to learn more about.

By doing a self-inventory – taking a thoughtful look at what you really know and care about – you can come up with a list of more topics than you might have thought possible. Your intellectual and educational interests, your career goals, your leisure activities and interests, and your personal and social concerns all offer possible topics. In the following discussions of each of these categories, try to answer the questions and see what topics you can come up with that are personally meaningful and exciting to you.

Begin by brainstorming – writing down anything that comes to your mind under a category without thinking about whether the topic would be interesting to your audience, whether you will be able to get enough material, or anything else. Just put down all the possibilities that come to you. When you have come up with a number of ideas, you can proceed to a self-analysis in which you evaluate possible topics critically, considering your own capabilities, limitations, and personal characteristics.

You must carefully examine the list of possible topics you generated during the self-analysis and audience-analysis phases of your preparation. During this examination, you evaluate your ideas according to specific

criteria. These criteria include (1) apparent worth, (2) appropriateness, (3) interest, and (4) availability of material. When you keep these criteria in mind, selecting a topic will be easier – if only because few of your choices will meet each of the criteria equally well with regard to the needs of particular audiences.

Intellectual and Educational Interests. A good place to begin your self-inventory is by thinking of what you enjoy learning about or what you would like to know more about, asking yourself questions such as:

- What do I like to read?
- What interesting things have I learned from television?
- What specific courses, or issues covered in courses, have

particularly interested me?

Courses in your major field of study can also be a source of topics. In each case, the topic grew from something the student had heard about in a course.

Career Goals. Giving a speech related to a career has the added bonus of providing you with information you can use in the future. Ned, for example, hoped to start his own business. He had accumulated a great deal of practical experience and had decided he was ready to strike out on his own. Here is how he began his speech on beginning a small business:

I had a very bright idea. It was an idea that would give me some practical experience, help me make a lot of money, and be a lot of fun as well. I decided that I could start my own business.

I had worked in the summers for my uncle in his greenhouse and learned quite a bit about gardening. I had also taken a course on landscape architecture and helped my uncle on several landscaping projects. All I needed was to find a place to locate – there was a small barn in pretty good shape on the edge of town that I could rent and fix up; a couple of willing workers – I knew two guys who had worked part-time for my uncle and would be interested; and some equipment – which my uncle was willing to lend me to get started. So, I had all I needed to start a

landscaping business, right? Well, when I started to think about how to put my bright idea into action, I found out that I was dead wrong!

I was going to give a speech telling you about my idea and how I was going to become an entrepreneur. Well, as I began to gather information, I found out that it was going to be a lot harder than I thought. I didn't have the slightest idea how to fill out the required social security forms for my potential employees. I didn't know what kinds of insurance I had to have for them or what kind of insurance I had to have to protect myself against lawsuits. I didn't know what taxes I was liable for and how to keep accurate tax records. I didn't know the best ways to let people know that I was in business and how to get them to hire me once they did know I existed. In short, I discovered that starting a small business is fraught with many pitfalls – pitfalls that I'm going to tell you about today.

Your possible career choice could open up a host of topics for you to explore and also help you understand more about the field you have chosen. There are some examples of speech topics generated by students on the basis of their career goals: teacher: the characteristics of a good teacher; engineer: the deteriorating infrastructure; accountant: simplified tax laws; research chemist: Generic drugs and how they affect the consumer; marketing analyst: consumer choices among similar products; television producer: the role of viewers in network programming.

Leisure Activities and Interests. Things you do for pleasure or enjoyment are another source of topics. Begin with the basic question, *What things do I do for fun that others might like to learn more about or participate in?* Then develop a list of possible topics based on your particular leisure interests.

Sometimes you may think that your hobby or interest won't be very interesting to someone else. But leisure activities can be made very compelling. Take, for example, the student who began his speech this way:

I was in a room filled with groups of four people sitting around small, square tables. At my table were four men. Each was intently studying the

objects he held in his hand. No one laughed, no one smiled, no one made small talk about the weather or politics. The first man, sitting across from me, spoke briefly and calmly. The man to his left then spoke. The first man looked across the table at me, his gaze so intense I felt like he was boring a hole in my head – he probably was trying to read my mind or send me a psychic message. I hoped that I didn't look as panicked as I felt. I hoped that the sweat that was now congealing on my clammy forehead wasn't noticeable. I took a deep breath and spoke. The man across from me seemed to relax just slightly. I thought that he approved of what I had said.

Now you might find this hard to believe, but I was playing a game – if bridge can properly be called a “game” and if participating in a bridge tournament can be called “playing”.

From describing the intensity of the players, the student went on to discuss the strategies that developed, the mental agility demanded, the financial stakes involved, and even the intrigues among players who wanted desperately to win. On the face of it, a speech about bridge might sound as exciting as renewing a driver's license. But even those in the audience who didn't understand the basics of the game were caught up in the drama of the tournament. This student speaker's love of bridge and his experience in competition led him to give a fascinating speech.

A word of caution about choosing topics that deal with your hobbies or leisure activities: speeches designed for particular audiences and settings may be very interesting or important in some circumstances, yet very ordinary or trivial in others.

The major problem with such trivial speech – and this is something that should be avoided in any speech on any topic – is that it would present no challenge either to the speaker or to the audience. It would demand little preparation by the speaker, and it would give the audience little to take away from the speech. To return to the sample of the speech given by the bridge player, that absorbing, compelling speech about human interactions in a highly charged, competitive situation captured the audience's attention.

Personal and Social Concerns. Here are two major questions to start you linking of topics in this category:

What is going on in my life that bothers or concerns me? All of us know of things that we would like to change. We've all been upset by people or events that have affected our lives or the lives of people we care about. All of us have values or ideals that we wish would influence the behavior of others. Sometimes these concerns are very much a part of our daily lives. Begin a list of things that frustrate or upset you – things that you would like to change as you go through a typical day – and then consider the possible speech topics you might generate from such a list.

What is happening outside my immediate world that is unfair, unjust, or in need of correction? What good things going on in the world deserve more support? Consider the larger world of which you are a part. Read newspapers and newsmagazines. Watch television news broadcasts and documentaries. Write down issues that capture your interest. Jot down matters that you believe need some kind of public action. Ask yourself what kinds of things give you particular concern. Consider what topics these concerns might lead to.

From Interests to Topic. But for now, you need to take the next step in topic selection: evaluating potential topics before selecting one. To do that, you need some guidelines for refining and narrowing your topic.

Narrowing the topic. The potential speech topics that emerge from your self-inventory are just that – potential. Now you can narrow and refine your choices by understanding how the situation, time constraints, and audience factors will determine a topic that is suitable to both you and your listeners.

For now, let's review two guidelines for considering your audience and the situation that will help you choose and refine a final topic from your self-inventory.

1. Consider the situation.

- *Will my audience be familiar with any immediate events or information that will help me choose a topic?*
- *Can I choose a topic to highlight recent events that may be of serious*

concern to my listeners?

- *Could I encourage my listeners to be less apathetic towards events that matter deeply to me?*
- *Do I have sufficient time to cover the topic adequately?*

2. Consider the audience.

- *What does my audience already know?*
- *What common experiences has my audience had?*
- *Where do my and my audience's interests meet?*
- *How diverse is my audience?*

Select a topic and place it at the top of a “ladder”. Then subdivide the topic into constituent parts; that is, break it down into smaller and smaller units. The smallest unit should appear on the lowest step of the ladder. The process is like whittling or carving a stick of wood. The more you shave off, the narrower the topic becomes. Like the carver, you decide what shape to give your topic and when to stop shaving.

Note that even when you have completed these steps, your topic will still be somewhat tentative because doing research and shaping a specific purpose usually can further refine any topic. But by following the process we have explained here, you will have gone from a broad range of interests to a concrete topic for a speech.

Questions for review and reflection:

1. What is meant by finding a “suitable” topic?
2. What are the four things to consider when looking for a speech topic? Give a specific example of how each of these categories might relate to you personally (for example, you might have an intellectual interest in medical advances or in history of jazz).
3. As you narrow a basic speech topic, what are some factors you will need to keep in mind? Why is each important?

Practical assignments:

1. Working individually or with a group, draw up a list of 10 topics that you believe are worthy of your time and attention. Next, compile a list of

10 seemingly worthless or trivial topics. Compare your list with lists made by others.

2. Working individually or in groups, develop a list of criteria by which you believe a topic for a class speech should be assessed. Share your criteria with others. Which criteria seem to be most important in the selection process? Which appear to be least important? Why? Compare the criteria you developed with those we have identified. How are they similar or different?

CHAPTER 3: *Searching for Material Through Research*

Chapter survey:

1. Searching for material.
2. Investigating in the library.
3. Investigating on the Computer.
4. Investigating through Interviews.
5. Quoting and citing sources.

From the moment you begin contemplating your topic, you begin formulating ideas for your speech on the basis of what you already know or believe. You begin envisioning what areas you will discuss, what material you will include, what the purpose and thesis of the speech will be, and what might provide an intriguing introduction or a moving conclusion. This is not busywork; you have actually begun the process of writing the speech and should take advantage of these thoughts. You will not want any ideas to escape beyond recall.

As you prepare yourself to speak, you gradually compile information from a variety of sources. Your speech consists of information and ideas arranged into a coherent form and made more understandable and appealing through good style and appropriate word choice. Your mind will operate on all these levels as you sift through material that may or may not make it into your final speech.

Research is necessary to make sure your ideas are supported by accurate and up-to-date facts, data, and examples. Effective support materials keep listeners interested and help them remember the information in your presentation and remain convinced by your arguments even after hearing opposing views. And, of course, a dynamic and enthusiastic delivery not only adds interest and clarity to your words, but it also increases your credibility with your listeners.

In researching their topics, inexperienced speakers often make one of two mistakes: (1) they do too little research because they plan to rely primarily on their personal knowledge and experience or (2) they use only

the Internet to do their research. Even if you have a great deal of personal experience with your topic, you need to present additional sources as well. Using information from other respected sources shows that you are an objective and informed speaker, and it adds to your credibility.

Focus is important because it will direct your search for information, allowing you to discern what is or is not relevant and to know which sources are most appropriate. For example, if you are speaking on a very current issue such as advances in genetic engineering, you will need to consult sources that provide the latest information, such as journal articles and recent news-magazine articles. Books will not present the latest information because many of them are written a year or more before their publication date. If you wanted to explore the origins of the study of genetics, however, books might be the most valuable sources.

While researching your topic, you need to record more than information. You also need to note the idea the information suggests or supports and where it should appear in your speech. Jot down other thoughts that come to you – possible sources to consult, the design of a presentation aid, what might be a good title or a good analogy, and so forth.

The Compilation Process. Speech preparation should include time for reflection, time to think about the ideas you are developing and time carefully to absorb and shift through the information you gather as you do research. A good speech is built by compiling; it is constructed gradually from a variety of materials. Starting the process early is essential. Once the topic is identified, it still may take some time to establish a focus. Even without a specific focus, however, your mind sets to work. As you undertake the process, you go through several crucial stages.

Once you have identified your topic, sensitivity will begin to work for you. Sensitivity refers to an awareness of relevant materials in your environment that otherwise might pass unnoticed. Not only will you notice items for your speech, but you will notice them more quickly. Similarly, you will notice information pertaining to your speech suddenly

appearing in various places. Once you notice what appears to be relevant material, your mind will take in the information and ideas, adding them to existing ideas.

Your mind also needs time for *reflection* – time to think about and evaluate the information, to test ideas, and to begin making sense of all that you've found. You will associate findings with other information and ideas you have encountered, as well as those within your long-term memory, and you will begin to assimilate them into your existing thoughts or accommodate them into new structures of meaning. Assimilation and accommodation may occur quickly and accurately, or you may have to wait and return to your thoughts later. As cognitive psychologists have noted, when your thinking is "stuck, your mind probably cannot be forced to produce; it probably needs a brief rest. Once you are no longer fixated on the "problem," your mind can operate quietly in the background, making associations and generating new ideas. When you return to the task after a period of time, you often will find new ideas flowing from your mind and a new, improved understanding of the subject and the goals for the speech. You do not have to be "on task" for these ideas to emerge; they may emerge as flashes of inspired thought while you are barely thinking about it. When these flashes appear, jot them down as soon as possible to prevent them from escaping and also to free your mind from the burden of trying to retain them. In this manner, your mind will continue working creatively.

Along with quiet time, you may also benefit from some intensive thinking. Write down whatever pops into your head without stopping to analyze or critique it. Later, after this brainstorming session, you will have something to review and evaluate. In addition to writing thoughts down, you can try to explain or work through something aloud, perhaps in the presence of a friend.

In addition to allowing time for your creative processes to work, you also need to set aside time for incorporation. Incorporation involves deciding if and where specific information and ideas belong in the speech and then fitting them in. This process continues as you search for

materials.

Productive Note Taking: Drafting as You Do Research. As you gather information and explore the ideas and opinions of others, you seek to determine what is relevant. In doing so, you shift your attention from the particular information and the idea it suggests to the theme and/or purpose of your speech. To keep your information aligned with your theme, you need to take notes methodically.

To maximize efficiency and avoid frustration, establish a system for taking notes and for recording information about the sources. Whether you use a laptop computer, an electronic note pad, or a pen and index cards, you will need to establish a system that allows you to record information and ideas consistently.

Index cards are commonly used to record source information and notes from your reading and interviews, as well as from radio broadcasts you have heard or telecasts you have seen. Devise a format for *source cards* and a format for *note cards*, and stick to it. The format should be comprehensive and allow you to find, at a glance, whatever element you are looking for – whether it is the page number for a quotation, the title of a source, or the publication date.

Design a consistent format for recording source information. Place the bibliographic information in the central part of the card, the code you assign in the upper left or right corner, and the call number at the bottom of the card if it is material from the library. If you are photocopying an article, make sure all source information appears on the card or photocopy. If it is material from an interview, place the person's address, phone number, email address, and/or fax number there in case you need further contact.

Obviously you have some sense of why the information is valuable. Force yourself to write it down, even if you believe it will be obvious later. Use a concise phrase to articulate the idea. You might often enter the information before writing the idea because you may not have fully determined the meaning and the best wording.

Group the cards into categories, noting what related areas emerge.

Contemplate the idea in the heading on each card; these ideas that you have penned likely will be a subpoint or a sub-subpoint within your speech, perhaps even a main point.

As you group and arrange the cards, create a rough sketch of your speech. Watch it grow and evolve as you continue to sort through the cards and arrange them with one another and with the thesis and purpose statements.

After sorting your materials, you will have new substance to ponder. Revision is essential for quality. Upon reexamination, you will evaluate what you have produced, retaining the good, modifying what needs to be rewritten, and deleting faulty or extraneous material. It occurs anytime you reassess what you have done, whether it is a word, or a sentence, or a title. No set formula exists for when and how often this should occur, but it must occur from time to time throughout the drafting process if you expect to produce a quality message. Revision is part of the ongoing process; the key to good preparation is working through multiple drafts.

You develop and revise your speech as you evaluate content and arrangement, detect and repair weaknesses, recognize the need for more material, try out the best phrasing for an idea, assess the fit with the goals (as well as assess the fitness of the goals), and so on. Preparing the speech, as with any act of composition, involves intense, multidimensional cognitive activity.

If you are relatively unfamiliar with your topic, it's a good idea to begin your search for information by obtaining one or two current books on the topic. Reading them should give you a good overview. Two other excellent sources for up-to-date information are book stores that offer popular books and textbooks on your topic (not only is the information current, but additional valuable sources will be listed in the footnotes and references) and phone books (where you can find the numbers for local agencies, such as the American Ecology Society, to call and request printed information).

Investigating in the Library. Some students find the library's size and layout and the complexities of its holdings overwhelming. But the

resources of a library are invaluable to a speaker, and you can learn to use them effectively. Librarians are one of the most helpful resources the library offers. Professional librarians are schooled in the latest information and communication technologies and systems, and they use this knowledge and skill daily. They know the way around their own holdings and resources, but they also know how to locate and retrieve information located in other libraries and information sites. In addition, they work cooperatively with other librarians in the academic, public and private sectors to classify and organize materials and databases so that information is well managed and easily retrieved via a common interface. The library's catalog of holdings is likely available in electronic form, accessible from computer terminals located throughout the library. The user can simply search the holdings file for a particular author or title or for works on a particular subject. Your library also has a number of reference materials, such as various indexes and abstract services, bibliographies, atlases, encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, and other similar works. Reference librarians can help you determine which resources might be useful and can help you use a particular resource.

Don't overlook the following library sources:

- *Brochures and pamphlets.* Many libraries have lists of available pamphlets. Also check with local and national organizations for pamphlets on your topic.
- *Books.* Most city and college libraries have an online catalog for locating books in their collections. To save time, check the Library for terms under which your topic is likely to be indexed. Your college may also have an electronic database for online books through eBooks or netLibrary.
- *Magazines /Journals.* Although it may be easier to use one of the library's many electronic databases to search for magazine and journal articles, reference sections of libraries contain valuable magazine indexes such as the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, Business Periodicals Index, Cumulative Index, the Social Science Index and others.
- *Newspapers.* Although newspaper accounts may not tell the

complete story, they are more current than magazines and books and contain personal details and quotes that can serve as good supporting materials for your speeches. Check your library for local and national newspapers, or use electronic databases that include complete newspaper articles.

- *Specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias.* If you are new to your topic, begin your research with a specialized dictionary, such as the *Dictionary of History*, or an encyclopedia, such as *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, or the *Physician's Desk Reference*. These reference books contain overviews of basic information in various fields – a good place to find background information. If you decide to use Wikipedia.org (“a free encyclopedia that anyone can edit”), be sure to verify all information in at least one other reliable source.

- *Quotation books.* Libraries contain many quotation books like *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, or *Speaker's and Toastmaster's Handbook*. Most contain humorous stories, sayings, and proverbs, as well. Many quotation books are now available online.

- *Yearbooks.* For facts or little-known statistics, look in such yearbooks as the *Book of Lists*, the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the *World Almanac*, *Facts on File Yearbook*, and the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. Most universities now provide many of these yearbooks online for student use.

- *Other library resources.* Check with your librarian for government documents, special collections, films, videotapes, and special databases that are relevant to your topic.

Mastering the library's resources can take a little time and effort, but it will be one of the most important skills you can learn, not only for doing research for a speech but also for your entire career.

Investigating on the Computer. Michael Gorman, writing in the *Library Journal*, compared the Internet to a library where all the books have been stripped of their indexes and their pages ripped out and

scattered. “The net,” he wrote, “is even worse than a vandalized library because thousands of additional unorganized fragments are added daily by the myriad of cranks, sages, and persons with time on their hands who launch their unfiltered messages into cyberspace” (Michael Gorman, “The Corruption of Cataloging”, *Library Journal* 120 (September 15, 1995): 34).

Gorman's observation ought to serve as a warning to everyone who uses the Net to gather information. Anybody with a minimum of skill can set up shop on the Net at very little cost. Although the Internet offers seemingly unlimited access to information, you must keep three facts in mind:

1. *Not all information on the Web is authoritative.* Some of it is outdated, fallacious, biased, and basically worthless. You must carefully evaluate what you find.

2. Unless you know where to look, *it is possible to spend hours on the Internet without finding the information you need.*

3. *Many valuable sources are not available on the Internet (or are not available for free).*

Considering the preceding three facts, and to save time and the frustration of an inadequate search, do your homework before going online. First, prepare a rough-draft outline of the main points and supporting information you think you might use in your speech. A look at this rough draft should tell you what information sources you already have or know from personal experience and what information (such as facts, statistics, quotes, or examples) are still needed. Second, when you visit the library looking for print materials and electronic databases, make a list of keywords and phrases ahead of time to use when searching the Internet. The information you want may be on the Internet, but if you search using the wrong keywords, you may never find it – or at least, only find part of it. Third, search one or more electronic databases available through most libraries and many organizations. You know this information is reliable and can use it to verify the credibility of other sources you find on the Internet.

Whether you are using an electronic database or a search engine,

keyword searches, which look for websites that contain a specific word or phrase, will be more effective if you try the following suggestions:

- Check that spelling and keywords are correct.
- Use the wildcard (*) to search for all forms of the word. For example, *legisl** will search for *legislature, legislation, legislator*, and so forth.
- Use fewer search words.
- Connect search words with OR.
- Use alternate keywords. For example, try *automobile* instead of *car*.
- Change full name to initials or initials to full name.
- Don't use "s," "ing," or "ed" on search words.

Usually, if the first two pages of hits don't contain what you want, you used the wrong term or search engine!

Evaluating Internet Resources. The Internet is a blend of many kinds of sites: educational (identified by Web addresses ending in .edu or .cc), commercial (.com), governmental (.gov), organizational (.org), military (.mil), and personal. Therefore, you can't assume that all the information you find on the Internet is authoritative or of the quality you need to support your speeches. Internet searches are likely to include outdated, inaccurate, and biased information along with the valuable. It's up to you to evaluate the credibility of your information by asking the following questions:

- *Is the author of the information a qualified expert in the field?*

Along with the author's name should be an explanation of his or her occupation, position, education, experience, and organizational affiliations. If no author is given, is the website clearly attributed to a reliable source such as a university or agency?

- *What is the purpose of the page?* Some web pages are designed to give information, while others advocate certain policies or ideologies. It is not always easy to tell the difference, since advocacy groups frequently try to give the impression that they are just giving you the facts. The purpose of the page is sometimes given as a mission statement or a "who we are" link. The purpose is closely associated with

the source, of course. These are not bad things. But whoever uses the information provided needs to be aware that those who produce it have an agenda, and it is a wise and ethical consumer who tries to understand what that agenda is.

- *Is the information objective?* Are conclusions based on facts? Are sources cited? Are opinions and personal bias clearly stated? Is the purpose of the website clear – to inform, persuade, or sell? Is the author affiliated with an organization or group that might indicate a bias? For example, an article supporting animal testing of cosmetics on the website beauty supply.com might be biased if the sponsoring site sells animal-tested cosmetics.

- *Is the information accurate?* Generally, avoid websites with grammatical and typographical errors because such errors suggest that content may be faulty as well.

- *Is the information current?* When was it written? Has it been updated? Some websites include the date of the last revision. NOTE: Netscape allows you to check the date – go to the File menu, select Document Info, and select Last Modified. Are the sources used by the author up-to-date? If no date is given, the information may be outdated.

As a speaker, you will be expected to use information that is current, accurate, objective, and attributed to a qualified expert. Always verify the credibility of documents obtained on the Internet by comparing them to similar information from other sources.

If it turns out that you can't answer most of these questions after close inspection of the site, that in itself should raise doubts in your mind about the site's credibility. Be skeptical of a source that doesn't identify itself or its purpose, that makes unsubstantiated claims, or that is out-of-date. The thing to remember is that the Internet is not a "one-stop" research source. Information should be crosschecked with other sources. By all means, use the Internet in your research, but don't use it thoughtlessly and don't use it exclusively.

Using Email. To use email effectively, you will need to be aware of standard practices. For example, people expect users to check their mail

frequently and to respond promptly. Further, messages should be kept short, simple, and to the point. Since email is used for its quickness, receivers generally do not want to be burdened by lengthy messages or by inquiries that require elaborate responses.

As a student working on a speech, email can assist you in a number of ways. For example, you may want to consult your instructor about the focus of your speech, possibilities for research, or some other matter related to the speech. You also can send and receive messages beyond the local network. You might, for example, use email to request information from a relevant person or agency that may be able to email you a response. Be mindful, though, that not all sites that allow inquiries are as prompt or as helpful. You should continue your search for information elsewhere while awaiting a reply. Also, before making any request for information, be sure that it is not information you can find with relative ease in printed material or on that agency's web pages.

An electronic mailing may be appropriate for requesting and arranging an interview by phone or face to face. In addition, it can allow you to acquaint the person with the questions you wish to ask. You may even find that an email conversation will suffice if it yields all the information you had hoped to gather in an interview.

Email presents other advantages as well. A message can be printed out if you need a hard copy. It also can be saved to a file for later reference and can even be pasted into a word-processing document. This versatility, coupled with its speed, has prompted more and more people to use email as a communication medium.

Investigating through Interviews. If your personal knowledge and your library and Internet searches do not provide exactly the type of information you need, you may want to conduct some personal interviews. One of the most useful resources you can tap is people who have personal experience with your topic or who have studied the topic and are recognized experts. For example, a student at San Jose State University in San Jose, California, investigated gang activity in schools. He interviewed students, counselors, and gang members at a local high school to

determine the number of active gangs, the approximate number of members, the reasons people join gangs, and gang rituals, activities, and rules. He combined this information with that found in newsmagazines, newspapers, and broadcasts to provide a good overview of teenage gangs. A student at Southwest Missouri State University investigated crime on campus and interviewed two campus police officers. One acquainted her with the various types of theft and told her which were the most common on campus; another discussed violent crime. She discovered, among other things, that opportunity theft was the most common type of crime on campus and that the campus was, by and large, a safe environment because of the security measures taken by the university and increased awareness among the community.

As these examples illustrate, interviews with laypeople and experts can furnish material that relates your speech to the local community and can provide specific examples of human interest.

Preparing the Interview. Determine whom you should interview. Perhaps you need to consult an expert who knows the latest developments, literature, history, trends, and issues related to your topic. Or perhaps you need a layperson who has direct experience and can provide insight or recount real-life experiences. Maybe you would benefit from interviewing both types. Once you know what type of person can best help you, you can begin searching for a person who meets that profile.

As soon as you have determined whom you might interview, make an appointment. Obviously you will want to contact the person early to improve our chances of getting an appointment when you need it. Acquaint the person with your project and goals. Explain who you are, what you are doing, and how you believe he or she may be able to help you. If the person feels enable to provide the assistance you need, he or she might refer you to someone who can.

Establish a friendly, cordial tone and respectfully explain your goals and needs and how you believe the person with whom you wish to speak can help you. Once an appointment is set, you may request a fax number,

mailing address, or email address so you can provide a set of questions in advance of the interview. The person will then have time to consider her or his responses and thus provide better information. You should design some questions that ask for a simple "yes" or "no" response or a brief explanation and other questions that encourage a longer response, where the person might provide his or her opinion and elaborate on why he or she holds that opinion. The first type of questions, which limit the response, are called closed questions. Questions that encourage elaboration are called open-ended questions.

In devising questions, you should have a general knowledge of the topic and know what types of information and materials are available. In other words, you should have surveyed some general readings on the subject or otherwise have acquainted yourself with the topic. Doing so will help you construct better questions and avoid wasting the interviewee's time asking for information that you could easily locate at the library or via the Internet. Consider how the interviewee might respond if it were obvious that you had not done your homework.

During the interview, you might want to mention some of the sources that you have consulted. Doing so not only indicates that you have done your homework, but it also indicates what you already know and do not know. Also, the interviewee may be able to critique your sources and point out additional works you should consult. Within your questions, you might even have the person react to something you have read. The interviewee may even supply you with pamphlets or other materials produced by the agency or organization for which he or she works.

For note taking during the interview, you might ask if the person minds if you use a tape recorder. Be mindful that some individuals may feel uncomfortable or be distracted by the recorder. Others may refuse to be taped. Note taking with pen and paper may be less distracting and should suffice. When taking written notes, you can write notes on one side of a page, reserving the other side for answers to follow-up questions or for your reflections on what has been said.

Also show respect by allowing the person to have his or her say, even when you disagree with what is being said. You can question specific statements, but do so with diplomacy and tact. Accurately record statements made during the interview. Repeat key phrases you wish to quote or if you need verification, and repeat paraphrased material to check your accuracy.

After the Interview. As soon as possible after the meeting, review and check your notes to make sure you recorded accurately the person's statements and her or his positions on given issues. Later, transfer the notes to note cards, or if you have a good set of notes from the interview, you may simply number each entry, articulate its idea on an individual note card, and then, in the content area of the card, designate the number of the entry in your interview notes.

Sometime soon after the interview, send a quick thank-you note to the person interviewed. If a secretary was involved in scheduling the appointment, be sure to praise her or him in the letter and send a personal thank-you to the secretary.

Conduct the interview following these steps:

Introduction. Be relaxed and friendly, and make good eye contact. Thank the interviewee for his or her time, and establish rapport by talking about your assignment, the weather (if it's unusual), or the reason you especially wanted to speak with him or her. State why you are there (unless already mentioned), how long you expect the interview to take, exactly what information you are looking for (if there are several areas, list them), and how the responses will be used.

Body. Here you ask the questions, which you have already planned. Write out your questions and bring them with you. Most interviewees will be more open and relaxed if you do not record the interview. Just listen carefully and take an occasional note to record an important fact, figure, or idea. Use mainly open-ended questions; they will elicit more information. Use probing questions like "Tell me more" or "What happened next?" to keep the interviewee talking. To make sure you haven't missed valuable information, end your questioning with "Is there

anything else you think I should know?"

Conclusion. Use this step to verify information and give closure to the interview. Begin with a brief summary of the main areas you covered in the interview (this allows both you and the interviewee to see if anything important was omitted). If you are planning to quote the interviewee directly, now is the time to review the quote for accuracy and ask for permission to use it in your speech. End by thanking the interviewee, shaking hands, and making a timely exit. As soon as you can, send the interviewee a thank-you note expressing the value of the information to you and your presentation.

Use the results of the interview carefully. Expand your notes as soon as you get back so that you won't forget or misrepresent the interviewee's information. In deciding what, if anything, to use in your speech, be sure to keep all matters confidential that you agreed not to reveal.

Now it's time to select specific pieces of the information you found during your research and use them to support the main points of your presentation.

Citing Sources During Your Presentation. To avoid plagiarism you must attribute any quoted or paraphrased material or ideas to their original source. When you cite sources during your presentation, you do not need to provide complete bibliographic information. Simply provide enough information to acquaint the audience with the source and whatever else seems important, such as the date or time of the information, for example, you could simply say, "Time magazine reported last month that..." or "In a recent interview, Attorney General John Ashcroft stated that . . . or "Dr. Robert Wharton, professor of entomology here at Texas A&M, recently informed me of new developments in...". You will then provide full bibliographic formation in your bibliography, and you should be ready to provide this information to anyone in your audience who might ask for it.

Revealing sources during your presentation does more than safeguard against plagiarism; it fulfills your ethical obligation and bolsters

your effectiveness. Ethical speakers recognize their duty to reveal the sources of the information and ideas that they have consulted and incorporated. Fairness requires that we recognize what others have contributed to our knowledge and ranking and that we give them rightful credit. In short, by citing your sources, you will meet your ethical responsibility, and you will impress the audience with how well you did your research and the quality of the material on which you have based your assertions. The audience will see that you were well prepared to speak.

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Identify the various stages you will go through when you are compiling speech materials.
2. What are the important do's and don't's in recording information?
3. Why is revision so important in speech preparation?
4. Describe at least three important library resources and explain how they could be helpful to you in preparing a speech.
5. How would you go about finding information using the World Wide Web?
6. List the factors used to evaluate internet sources and their importance?
7. How can email be useful to you when preparing a speech?
8. What is the role of interviewing in speech preparation?
 - a. How would you prepare for an interview?
 - b. What are the guidelines for conducting an interview?
 - c. How would you follow up an interview?
9. Summarize the steps recommended for conducting a personal interview.
10. Under what circumstances should you quote material in your speech?
11. Define the term *plagiarism*, and explain how to avoid it.
12. How should you cite sources as you deliver a speech, and why is it important to do so?

Practical assignments:

1. Think about the topic you will explore in a forthcoming speech and construct a tentative thesis. Then enter in one column the main areas you will research. In another column, identify where you need to fortify your knowledge and understanding.

2. Look over the plan for your forthcoming speech and the areas you intend to address. Should you interview someone? If so, whom? What helpful information and insights might he or she provide? List the possibilities.

CHAPTER 4: *Using Presentational Aids in Public Speaking*

Chapter survey:

1. Powerful impact of visual material.
2. The diversity of presentational options.
3. The basic guidelines for constructing and using presentational materials.
4. Preparing quality text visuals.

Visual material has a powerful impact on how we react to information. Everyone had heard of police brutality and was aware that it existed, but when people saw the videotapes of Ukrainian police beating Ukrainian students in December 2013, there was intense national indignation that is considered as a starting point of the Revolution of Dignity. This, of course, is very dramatic example. But the use of presentational aids can have an impact in less spectacular situations – such as in a public speaking classroom. Presentational aids are an important communication tool.

Presentational aids must be used carefully, however. Using presentational aids effectively calls for careful thinking, strategic planning, and rehearsal. There is nothing magical about presentational aids. They assist us only if they function as intended and if we are able to present them effectively.

Both speakers and listeners can benefit from the effective use of presentational aids. Presentational aids engage the senses (for most public speaking purposes, what we see and what we hear) and help clarify, support and strengthen the speech. From the speaker's perspective, such aids can

- help support and highlight key ideas;
- facilitate understanding;
- encourage emotional involvement;
- assist with delivery;

- enhance the speaker's ethos.

Listeners also benefit from the effective use of presentational aids.

From the listeners' perspective, presentational aids can

- help separate important from less important information;
- help emphasize;
- help the audience to understand complex ideas or processes;
- add interest and color;
- aid in comprehension and retention.

Presentational aids must be carefully planned and prepared for maximum impact. Just because a speaker commits to preparing and using presentational aids is no guarantee that such aids will contribute to his or her success. Presentation aids should help audiences more thoroughly understand a speaker's basic message. So, there are four basic reasons to use presentation aids. First, they increase audience understanding of a speaker's message. Second, they help audiences retain and recall a speaker's message after the fact. Third, they make a speech more interesting by adding variety. Lastly, by making a speaker's overall speech more polished, presentation aids can increase an audience's perception of the speaker's credibility.

The Diversity of Presentational Options. What kind of aid should you use? The answer to this question depends on many factors. What are your speech topic and purpose? What are the listeners' expectations? What equipment is available in the room?

Chalkboard or Whiteboard. The chalkboard (now commonly replaced by a whiteboard) remains a useful device for speakers who have no other option for displays or who wish to compile a list working cooperatively with the audience. Most obviously, the chalkboard allows the speaker to highlight information visually and to put terms, diagrams, or sketches on the board as an explanation unfolds or a list develops. In addition, moving to and from the board allows the speaker to be active in communicating his or her ideas and can also help the speaker channel nervous energy.

Of course, the chalkboard has its limitations. Because it is so familiar

to most audiences (including students), it may seem less interesting or original than other types of visuals. Poor handwriting and a tendency to look at the board rather than at the audience can also detract from effective communication. Even though you should make sure your handwriting or printing is legible, erase anything left on the board by the previous user, and practice using it in advance so that you do not lose contact with the audience when you write.

Poster Board Drawings. These common presentational aids can be conducted well in advance and can be either simple or sophisticated. They also can be colorful and engaging. The advantages end there, however. If you decide to use drawings, make sure to investigate and prepare adequately.

Handouts. Handouts are helpful if the audience needs to be able to recall information accurately for use at a later time, but they become more of a distraction than an aid when distributed during a speech. Tell the audience that you will be providing a comprehensive handout when you are finished speaking and that they need not write down detailed information during the speech. If you plan to distribute multiple handouts at the conclusion of your talk you may want to use different-colored paper so that listeners can easily find the information of interest to them.

Objects. Occasionally you will make a speech that involves the discussion of an object. Avoid small items that need to be passed around. Circulating something while you are talking can present problems. First, only one person will have the object while you are describing it; other listeners will be in the dark. Moreover, the act of passing something around will distract your listeners, taking their attention away from your speech.

Be mindful, too, of other items that would certainly be prohibited, such as firearms and illegal substances or materials.

Models. Some speeches call for a model as a visual aid. An architect, for example, will likely need to use a three-dimensional model of a proposed building so that the audience will have a precise understanding of the structure. Obviously, constructing a three-dimensional model

requires skill and effort.

Transparencies and Overhead Projectors. Overhead projectors, particularly those used to display transparencies, are very common in classrooms and meeting rooms. They allow a speaker to project lists, figures, charts, graphs, and other information onto a large screen in supersize form. A commonly used presentational aid is the overhead projector. Transparencies are easy to make and are inexpensive. They also serve as excellent backup if a speaker planning a more sophisticated presentation experiences unexpected technological problems.

As with other presentational aids, you should follow some basic guidelines when using an overhead projector and transparencies. First, avoid crowding too much information on a single transparency. It is better to have more transparencies and to keep each one clear and simple. Also, adjust the font or the size of the print so that it will be large enough for everyone in the room to read.

Avoid turning your back to the audience and talking to the screen, or staring down at the projector as you speak. Recognize that one great advantage of an overhead projector is its capacity for letting you never lose contact with the audience.

Remember that an overhead projector calls attention to whatever is projected. When you are finished commenting on a projected image and have begun to discuss other issues, turn off the projector. Otherwise, the audience may be distracted by the image and not pay attention to what you are saying.

When used appropriately, an overhead projector is one of the most effective presentational aids available to you.

Slides. When you use slides in a speech, you will be speaking in a room that is at least partially darkened. This situation provides special speaking challenges. First, you must be extremely well prepared, since you may not be able to see your notes at all or will see them only dimly. Perhaps the wisest course is to use the slides to guide your comments. As each new slide appears, it will help you recall the information you want to share.

In addition, even though the room is somewhat darkened, the audience will be able to see you, especially after their eyes have adjusted to the dim lighting. It's important, then, for you to maintain eye contact with the audience – to gesture and speak with them directly. There is a natural tendency to ignore the audience and speak only to the slides appearing on the screen. But once you've determined which slide is being projected, you should turn to your listeners and talk with them.

Finally, slide presentations often last longer than other speeches. Make sure you know what the anticipated time frame is.

Audio and Video Materials. Some topics cannot be explained by using only words. In an increasingly media-oriented society, many listeners are attracted to presentations that use audio and video support. These sensory experiences help generate interest and involvement. Using them successfully, though, requires careful planning and preparation. A speech that uses audio or video technology well can be extremely interesting and powerful. But if things go wrong – if pertinent clips cannot be located, the recorder malfunctions, or the tape breaks – the speaker may find it difficult to recover and achieve his or her purpose. Moreover, clips should be short, because they are illustrations of an idea. Showing a clip that takes up most of your speaking time is not using a presentational aid; it is substituting an audio-visual presentation for a major portion of your speech.

A great PowerPoint presentation can indeed brighten up a speech and shed light on concepts a speaker wishes the audience to grasp. But, if done poorly, PowerPoint can bring down an entire oral presentation, be fuddling listeners and distracting from a speaker's own voice and message. So, before assembling a list of slides to display alongside your speech, think twice about how you'd like PowerPoint to play a role in your presentation. There are some basic guidelines for constructing and using presentational materials:

- they should support the speech;
- they should be clear, attractive, and simple;
- they should be audience-centered;

- they should not distract the listeners' attention;
- they should be used ethically.

They should support the speech. Visual or other sensory support can contribute to the success of almost any speech. As you contemplate your speech, note places where a presentational aid would help the audience understand what you're trying to say, add appropriate emphasis, encourage interest and emotional involvement, or help the audience remember what you've said. If a presentational aid doesn't fulfill one of these functions, it won't contribute to your speech, and it may serve only to distract the audience. You, not your slides, should be the focal point of your presentation.

Clarity, attractiveness, and simplicity. Whether you use a visual or audio presentational aid, you will want it to be clear, attractive, and simple. Obviously, if visuals are to be reinforcing, they must be immediately intelligible and of impressive quality. If you are trying, for example, to show the audience the parts of an engine, your visual aid should be accurate and the parts recognizable, not poorly drawn on poster board. In addition any writing should be legible, neat, and, if appropriate, color-coded for clarity.

Simplicity is equally important. If you include a lot of complicated details in visual aids, they will only confuse the audience and obscure the point you are making. In general, it is best to show only the essentials and to illustrate only one idea in each chart, graph, or diagram. But avoid text-heavy slides that replicate the content of your speech. Give each concept its own real estate (one slide, one idea). Not only this will enable you to enlarge your fonts and images, it will also help you avoid overwhelming your audience.

It's important to define key terms throughout your presentation, especially when using acronyms or technical jargon specific to your discipline. If your language is particularly complex or unfamiliar to your audience, consider including brief definitions of key terms in your slides.

They should be audience-centered. Whenever you use a presentational aid, keep the audience in mind. To begin with, listeners

must be able to see a visual aid. It should be obvious that no matter how potentially clever, well constructed, or compelling a presentational aid might be, if the audience cannot see or hear it, it will have, at best, no impact or, at worst, a negative impact. Audience members who must squint to see the print on a transparency or strain to hear the words on a recording can easily become frustrated and simply tune out the speaker.

The effective public speaker uses presentational aids so that the audience knows what to focus on. It can be helpful to point to the part of the visual you are discussing without losing contact with the audience. If your visual has more than one part, you may need to direct the audience's attention to the part being discussed by pointing to it with your finger, a pencil, or a pointer. When using transparencies with a list, you might use a piece of paper to cover the part you are not yet ready to discuss. The goal is to think of how best to help the audience process the presentational aid in the manner intended. As you direct the audience's attention to your visual materials, maintain contact with the listeners by the way you talk, your eye contact, and your bodily movement.

Talk to your audience, not to the aid. Your effectiveness as a speaker depends on your connection with the audience. Resist the temptation to break this connection by turning to read from your PowerPoint slides! Instead, face the audience and make eye contact with as many people as you can. You might gesture briefly to your slides when you need to draw the audience's attention to a certain feature, but in general it's important to maintain a physical orientation toward your audience.

They should not distract the listeners' attention. Presentational aids attract attention. That's one reason you use them. But if you're not careful, they can take the audience's attention away from you and your ideas. If you set up a colorful poster board or an intriguing model at the beginning of your speech, many listeners will begin to focus on it right away, wondering what it is and how you are going to use it.

In general, the audience's attention will be drawn to visual images. This is wonderful news, as long as you keep the visuals out of sight until you are ready to refer to them. Similarly, as soon as you have finished

discussing them, put them away or cover them.

They should be used ethically. Speakers often create their own visuals. You might create a bulleted list of key words or a simple graph to illustrate a statistical trend. The words will likely be your own, but you will need to reveal the source of the statistics – orally and with a written acknowledgment on the visual aid for the audience to see. Cite the source on the display simply by noting, for instance, "Source: American Cancer Society, 2000," or "Source: Williard Jones, *Getting Ready for the SATs, 2001.*"

In any case, remember that citing the sources of presentational materials or of the content of aids you create is part of being an ethical public speaker.

You should also pay attention to the transitions. How do your slides relate to one another? Why are you presenting them in this order? Understand the order of your slides, and use verbal transitions between slides to highlight the overall reasoning and structure of your presentation. Try using transitional phrases containing internal previews and summaries. ("Now that we've looked at the history of home-schooling, I'd like to look at two key case studies.")

Deciding how many visuals to use. Creating visuals is so enjoyable that some speakers use too many visuals in their speeches. To keep your audience from experiencing visual overload, try this formula when deciding how many visuals to use: **length of speech/2 + 1 = maximum number of visuals**. For example, for a 6-minute speech, you would want approximately four visuals (6 divided by 2, plus 1); for a 10-minute speech, you would want approximately six visuals (10 divided by 2, plus 1). This formula is only a guide. Fewer visuals could certainly be used, but more visuals should be used with caution (Source: Cheril Hamilton. *Communicating for results*. Thomson Wadsworth, USA, 2008).

Preparing Quality Text Visuals. Remember, if visuals require effort to read, the audience is forced into a reading mode rather than a listening mode. They can't pay attention to what you are saying while they are reading your visual. Therefore, a good visual should make sense in 6 seconds or less. A good visual aid is "like a billboard on an interstate

highway that people can read going by at 65 mph” (Source: Cheril Hamilton. *Communicating for results*. Thomson Wadsworth, USA, 2008). Keep the following tips in mind when designing your text visuals:

Use no more than four to six lines of text. Not counting the title and subtitle(s), when a visual contains more than six lines of text, it takes too long for your audience to grasp. Of course, if the text is a list containing single words, seven or eight lines might be fine. In general, if you need more than six lines of text, you probably should split the information into two visuals or simplify your text.

Limit each line to 40 characters. If your text contains more than 40 characters per line (counting letters *and* spaces), you aren’t leaving enough white space (space that contains no text or graphics). White space is essential for fast comprehension and prevents your visual from looking cluttered.

Use phrases rather than sentences. Eliminate unnecessary words so listeners can grasp the content of your visual in 6 seconds or less.

Use upper- and lowercase type. Although speakers often put their titles and text into all capital letters because they think it will look larger and therefore be easier to read, research has shown that text in all caps is more difficult to read and to comprehend (Adams, Faux, & Rieber, 2001). Therefore, use all caps only for special emphasis.

Use a simple typeface. Script and fancy typefaces are difficult to read. The typefaces suggested earlier in this chapter have stood the test of time and are known to work for visual aids. Feel free to experiment, but don’t get carried away.

Allow the same space at the top of each visual. Many speakers incorrectly center the content on each of their visuals from top to bottom. This means that some visual aids have only a few lines in the middle of the page, while others utilize the entire page. As a result, each time you project a transparency or slide onto the screen or hold up a poster, the audience has to locate the title – this takes valuable time. Your visuals will look more professional if the text begins at the same place on each visual.

Use images, larger type, boldface, and color for emphasis. Clip art, photos, and freehand drawings add emphasis and anchor the content of your visual for your audience. Large-size type, boldface, and color are excellent ways to direct the eye to areas you wish to emphasize. The largest and boldest type will usually be noticed first unless you have also used color. If you want to direct your audience's attention to a portion of a complicated diagram, color is the way to do it. Even on a color visual, a bright, contrasting color will draw your audience's attention.

Avoiding Major Mistakes. A survey of people who view PowerPoint presentations on a regular basis (more than half observed 100 presentations per year) identified the following six things as those that annoy them the most: speakers who read off the slides (62 percent), text too small to read (47 percent), text color too difficult to read (43 percent), complete sentences used instead of phrases (39 percent), too much movement in text and graphics (25 percent), and charts too complex to decipher (22 percent). These annoyances (or poisons) are responsible for the dislike that many people have toward PowerPoint presentations (Source: Cheril Hamilton. *Communicating for results*. Thomson Wadsworth, USA, 2008).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Explain the importance of using presentational aids in public speaking.
2. Briefly describe the kinds of visual aids and list three of the greatest importance. Explain your choice.
3. Summarize basic guidelines for constructing and using presentational materials.
4. Summarize basic guidelines for preparing quality text visuals.

Practical assignment: Presentational slides from speeches are sometimes available online. Search for and evaluate three sets of presentation slides you find online. Identify three ways that the slides could be improved to be more effective presentation aids.

CHAPTER 5: *Effective Listening*

Chapter survey:

1. The importance of Effective Listening.
2. Understanding the Listening Process.
3. Causes of Poor Listening.
4. Guidelines for Improving Listening.
5. Helping the Audience Want to Listen.

Nearly every profession requires the ability to listen well. Those who listen well usually learn more, have better interpersonal relationships, more fully understand their own values, are better speakers, and are more likely to interact ethically with others than those whose listening skills are weak. Even so, effective listening remains a challenge. Most of us fall prey to varied listening problems at some time in our communicative exchanges with others.

Are you a good listener? Most of us assume we are. We take for granted that listening just comes naturally, when in fact effective listening requires as much skill as the other forms of communication: reading, writing, and speaking. But unlike writing, reading, and especially speaking, few overt motor skills are necessary to engage in listening. The effort involved in listening is primarily mental, and this may account for deceiving ourselves that listening is easy.

One reason effective listening is so important is that we do so much listening each day. According to research, we are listening during 80 percent of our waking hours (Powell, 1983). That makes it our most frequently used communication skill. The business world is certainly aware of the importance of listening. For example, one study estimated that 60 percent of worker errors is due to poor listening (Cooper, 1997). In another study, 80 percent of the executives ranked listening as the most important workplace skill. At the same time, 28 percent of them also ranked listening as the skill most lacking in the workplace (Salopek, 1999). In addition, studies confirm that good listeners make good managers (Penley, Alexander, Jernigan, & Henwood, 1991; Ramsey &

Sohi, 1997) and that good listening is essential for business success (Goby & Lewis, 2000). In a survey of industrial salespeople, failure to listen was cited as one of the main reasons salespeople are unsuccessful (Ingram, Schwepker, & Hutson, 1992). In a survey of customers, listening was rated as the most important skill a salesperson can possess (Boyle, 1999; Moore, Eckrich, & Carlson, 1986).

Indeed, most working professionals recognize that listening is a skill that can and should be improved. Only through knowledge and application can we become more effective listeners.

Most of us consider listening important when we know that the information we are receiving can benefit us in some way. At other times, we may feel that careful listening is a waste of time. But there is no guarantee that what we ignore is unimportant. How will we know unless we listen? An attitude of “I already know what they’re going to say” can make us miss important information.

Diverse Purposes for Listening. We may listen for several different reasons. For instance, we may **listen for appreciation** when we want to enjoy what we are listening to, such as good music. We don't expect to be analytical or critical; we are simply listening for enjoyment. On other occasions, we may engage in empathic listening when we listen to a friend in a supportive way. Here we are striving to understand the other person's point of view or to identify with the feeling level of what he or she is saying. Both of these are valuable reasons for listening, but in classroom settings and in business and professional life, we are more likely to engage in informational listening (in which we want to accurately record information and expand our knowledge about a subject) and critical listening (in which we analyze, assess, and evaluate ideas and information). In most public speaking situations, listeners are commonly involved in both informational and critical listening.

Understanding the Listening Process. Regardless of our goals as listeners, whether we are listening for information or analysis, we need to recognize that listening is a multi-step process that includes:

- *Hearing.* The first step in the listening process is hearing what the

speaker has said. This is the physiological part of listening. We hear more readily if the speaker's message is not impeded by competing sounds, such as a noisy air conditioner or chatting audience members. In addition, we can't hear the message if the speaker talks too softly or delivers the speech so rapidly that words and ideas are garbled. If hearing does not occur, listening is impossible.

- *Focusing.* Once we hear a message, our next task is focusing. When we focus on a speaker's message, we are able to concentrate on it, to filter out competing messages, and to attend to it in such a way that we begin to grapple with its meaning. It's usually easier for us to focus when we respect the speaker and view the message as important.

- *Understanding.* The next stage of the listening process is understanding. Sometimes we hear and are able to focus on a speaker's message. Yet we do not really comprehend the speaker's meaning – perhaps because the message is unclear or – we have gaps in our background experience and knowledge base. When we cannot understand and interpret what a speaker means or we misinterpret his or her intended meaning, we falter as listeners.

- *Responding.* When we understand the speaker's message, we will respond in some way. The response range is considerable, including disagreeing, agreeing, questioning, feeling impressed or unimpressed, remaining indifferent or undecided, and so forth.

All listeners respond internally, but each of us makes some choices about the kinds of *external responses* we make. We may respond nonverbally by smiling and nodding our heads in agreement, applauding with enthusiasm, or refusing to look at the speaker. We may respond verbally by asking questions, sharing our perspectives, or commenting on the speaker's interesting remarks.

- *Remembering.* Although we could complete the above steps and not recall much of what the speaker said a few days or weeks later, clearly the communication event will be viewed by both parties as more successful if, in the end, the listeners find some of the speaker's comments memorable. We may not remember the details, but hopefully

we will remember the most important ideas. We can help ourselves remember by taking notes and by doing all that we can to participate as a full partner in the speaking-listening transaction.

Positive Outcomes of Effective Listening. When we listen effectively, we increase our chances of experiencing positive outcomes, such as becoming well informed, maintaining good relationships with others, growing to better understand ourselves, improving our own speaking skills, and learning to participate ethically in the communication process.

- *Listening provides us with information.* Many of our ideas come from listening to others as we brainstorm, watching the news on television, and, of course, listening to formal presentations. Students who are good listeners usually perform better on classroom assignments.

- *Good listeners usually have better interpersonal relationships.* Listening to others, whether a friend or a public speaker, is an excellent way of showing we care about them – their problems, perspectives, and ideas. Furthermore listening is often reciprocated. Those to whom we listen are more inclined to listen to us.

- *Listening gives us a clearer sense of who we are and what we value.* Listening allows us to compare and contrast ourselves with others, helping us better understand our personal identity.

- *Those who listen are often better speakers.* By observing carefully, thoughtfully, and critically the way others communicate and what they say, we can gain some understanding of what they find tasteful, sound, strategic, and interesting. And, of course, one of the best ways to analyze any audience is to listen to what they say about themselves whenever we have the opportunity to interact with them before or after a speech.

- *Listening well is an ethical responsibility for each of us as we participate as partners in the communication process.* How can we react thoughtfully to an argument we haven't really heard? How can we demonstrate our conviction that other people's views are valuable if we refuse to listen to them? How can we communicate a desire for dialogue or collaboration if we do not listen to others who are speaking?

In short, effective listening is both a practical imperative and an ethical responsibility. In spite of the importance of listening, many of us fall short of being the ideal listener. Right after listening to a public speech, we typically recall only about half of what was said; within a few weeks, our recall is reduced to only 25 percent. This problem may be due in part to the fact that the average person speaks at a rate of about 125 words per minute, while our listening minds race on at a speed of 400 to 500 words per minute. As listeners, we must discipline ourselves to use this lag time effectively, or we will find our mind wandering.

Of course, general figures on listening can be misleading because we often listen much better under some circumstances than others. We listen more readily, for instance, to those whose views support our own. We listen better if we believe that the information the speaker is sharing is important. We listen more carefully if we know we are going to be evaluated on the basis of how well we have listened and how much we have learned. Any teacher knows that the best way to get students to listen is to utter the ominous words, "What I'm about to say *will be on the test!*" But often we do not have the luxury of listening under ideal conditions. We may not agree with the speaker, we may not see the relevance or usefulness of the information being presented, or we may be distracted by our own concerns.

Bad Listening Habits. Ralph Nichols, one of the first researchers to concentrate on listening, has identified several bad habits that people develop in their listening behavior (Ralph Nichols, 1957). Overcoming bad listening habits will take effort because habits are long-practiced, but it will make you a more valuable member of the organization.

The Ineffective Listener Assumes That the Topic Will Be Boring. Many poor listeners justify their inattention by declaring the speaker's topic uninteresting. Of course, not everything people need to know to perform their jobs effectively is necessarily interesting. Nevertheless, good listeners try to find some fact or idea that they can use in the future. Only after listening to the entire presentation can they justly say that it contained nothing of value or interest.

The Ineffective Listener Criticizes the Speaker's Delivery. Poor listeners make a game of criticizing speakers. The moment that a speaker begins to talk (if not sooner), poor listeners condemn the speaker's walk, clothes, mannerisms, voice, grammar, or dialect. Thus, poor listeners feel justified in not listening and begin to think about something else. In contrast, good listeners may notice the speaker's faults but concentrate on the message anyway. Listeners should remember that a speaker's message is much more important than the way it is presented.

The Ineffective Listener Interrupts to Disagree with the Speaker or Mentally Argues Against the Speaker's Ideas. Poor listeners are easily provoked to disagree. Instead of listening, they are planning a rebuttal. Good listeners pay attention to the entire idea before deciding whether they agree or disagree with the speaker. The pioneer of empathic listening, Carl Rogers (1961), said that "the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove the statement of the other person or the other group". Until listeners are sure that their facts are complete, they should withhold evaluation. In a conversation, it is also possible that interruptions occur because the parties have different ideas about how long a pause should be between responses.

The Ineffective Listener Listens Only for Facts. Isolated facts are difficult to remember. The best way to remember facts is to relate them to a theme, principle, or concept. Also, facts are often more meaningful when the feelings behind them are clear. Good listeners, therefore, make sure they understand not only the speaker's facts and feelings, but also any principles to which they relate.

The Ineffective Listener Takes Detailed Notes. Although taking notes does improve people's memory of content, trying to write down everything the speaker says has the opposite effect. Poor listeners become so involved in taking notes that they are not really listening, and they have to write so fast that their notes may be almost impossible to understand later. The best notes are brief key words and phrases that will later refresh the listener's mind. They do not have to be in outline form;

many speakers don't even follow an outline.

The Ineffective Listener Only Pretends to Listen to the Speaker.

Poor listeners have a habit of pretending to listen (by staring at the speaker and appropriately nodding from time to time) while really thinking about something else. Faking attention is a bad habit that can lead to communication breakdown. Speakers expect listeners to know the facts that were presented. For example, the corporate manager was late for the important meeting because he was thinking about something else when the meeting was announced.

The Ineffective Listener Tolerates or Creates Distractions. We have all been in meetings in which two or more people converse while a speaker is talking. Such behavior is very distracting to those sitting near the conversationalists and can be distracting to the speaker. Allowing these distractions to continue is just as bad as creating them. Either way, we miss the speaker's message. Good listeners will either ask the conversationalists to be quiet or ask the speaker to talk louder.

The Ineffective Listener Avoids Listening to Difficult Material.

When the topic is complicated or includes technical terms, many poor listeners immediately tune out. If listeners pay attention only to entertaining speakers, they will never improve their listening skills. Periodically, we all should attend professional training sessions or watch challenging TV programs to practice our listening skills.

The Ineffective Listener Reacts Emotionally to Some Messages by Tuning Out the Speaker. Sometimes a speaker will use a word that is emotionally charged for some listeners. For example, if a male speaker refers to his secretary as "my girl," the women in the audience might immediately consider him a male chauvinist. While they are mentally criticizing him, they miss everything else he has to say. Good listeners may not care for certain words, but they do not let their reactions block what the speaker is saying.

The Ineffective Listener Daydreams During Long Presentations.

Compared to our thinking speed (400 to 800 words a minute), most of us are slow to medium talkers (100 to 175 words a minute). This means that

listeners can follow everything the speaker says and still have time to think of other topics. Thinking of other topics is not such a bad habit as long as the listeners continue to monitor the speaker, but poor listeners become so engrossed in their own thoughts that they forget to tune in the speaker again. Good listeners use this “spare” time to ponder the speaker’s ideas, to evaluate the quality of evidence, and to commit important ideas to memory. In addition to improving your listening skills, another reason for studying bad listening habits is to know what to expect from an audience when you are speaking. Your audience will have many of these same listening problems. Understanding them will allow you to plan ways to minimize these problems. For example, you could avoid words that might trigger an emotional response from your audience, and you could use visual aids to maintain audience attention and interest.

Improving Listening Skills. Listening effectively requires considerable effort. We must also approach listening strategically, by thinking about our attitude as well as about some of the things we can do to increase our chances of listening well. We would be wise to consider our own identity as we listen to someone speak. At the same time, we should strive to listen purposefully, to understand the setting, to think about the speaker's intended audience and purpose, and to examine our own knowledge about the speaker. Above all, we must remind ourselves of the importance of listening, approach listening critically and constructively, and recognize and practice listening as an active process.

Understand Your Identity as a Listener. We all bring who we are to a speaking situation, and how we interact with the speaker and the speaking situation. For example, someone who thinks "It'll never happen to me," may not respond very well to fear appeals. Your background, your personal characteristics, and the roles you play in life all contribute to certain predispositions and biases that will influence your reactions. No one can totally eliminate bias, but you can, through self-analysis, discover some of the forces at work in yourself. Only by understanding your identity – what you bring to a speaking situation and who you are in a

relation to it – will you be able to listen in a realistic and fair-minded way.

Listen with a Purpose. The speaker has a purpose in getting up to talk, and, as audience members, we ought to have one as we sit and listen. Do you want simply to better understand an opposing point of view? Do you hope to learn something? Can you relate the topic to your life and decide what aspect of it will be useful to you? If so, your main purpose may be to identify the practical aspects of the speech that pertain to you. Your purpose may evolve as you listen. You may begin by thinking you just want information about a problem. But as you listen, you may decide that you want to get involved – to do something about the problem. By listening purposefully, you can take from and respond to the message on your own terms while still maintaining a healthy respect for the speaker's position and purpose.

Understand the Setting. The setting of a speech imposes restrictions and expectations on a speaker. A political candidate who has bought thirty seconds of radio time is very limited in what he or she can say. A speaker at an outdoor rally and one in a classroom will be working under different constraints. When you listen, being aware of the limitations and opportunities of the particular setting will help you respond more appropriately to the speaker's efforts. If the speaker is given little time to speak, for instance, you might be less critical if his or her main points are not fully developed. In contrast, a speaker with ample time has ample opportunity to explain key points fully. In this situation, the speaker who fails to do so will be judged accordingly.

Understand to Whom the Speaker Is Talking. Sometimes a speaker's words are aimed at more than one audience. For example, at a large state university, a series of racially motivated incidents resulted in several protest demonstrations and rallies on campus. At these rallies, students spoke to an audience of their peers – their immediate audience. However, these students knew that members of the press were present. Through the press, the speakers hoped to send powerful persuasive messages to a wider target audience composed of campus and community leaders. The types of appeals speakers make, the types of

arguments they use, and even the topics they select may be puzzling to a listener who does not understand that public communication can have wide ramifications.

Consider the Speaker's Purpose. Understanding what the speaker hopes to accomplish by speaking (that is, the speaker's purpose) prepares us to listen effectively. Speakers do not always make their purpose clear, and some may even intend to mislead the audience. If a speech is poorly structured, it may not be easy to identify the goal or purpose. Knowing something about the setting, the speaker, and the general nature of the topic may help us identify the speaker's goal. Once we think we discern the basic thrust of the speech, we should write it down. Armed with this understanding, we are better positioned to make judgments about the quality of the ideas and information that follow.

Examine Your Assessment of the Speaker. Often when we listen, we have some initial perceptions of the speaker's credibility. If we are not careful or honest with ourselves about these perceptions, we will find ourselves overly influenced by the person speaking rather than by the quality of the message. If, for example, you know the speaker is someone you don't like, then face up to that fact. You could fool yourself into believing that you won't take the desired action because it is too expensive, it isn't logical, or you are too busy. But the real reason might be that you just don't want to give the speaker satisfaction or pleasure by doing what he or she wants you to do. If the matter is not of vital importance, it may not make any difference whether you follow the course of action recommended. But suppose it is a very serious matter that could affect your health or well-being. Can you afford to base your decision on purely personal grounds? If you fool yourself, you will never even question whether you should act or not act solely on the basis of the credibility of the speaker. Thus you may lose the opportunity to listen effectively and, consequently, to act effectively.

Remind Yourself of the Importance of Listening. Because good listening does require effort, it's easy to become lazy and minimize its importance. So we may need to remind ourselves of how much we can

learn, how we will have a chance to clarify our own positions, and why listening is an ethical responsibility for all of us who seek to become good communicators.

Listen Critically. A speaker who is really trying to communicate is attempting to get the listener to respond to the message in a specific way. The speaker may want you to vote, to volunteer, to agree with a point of view, to understand a certain perspective on a community problem, or to feel inspired or motivated. It may or may not be in your best interest to respond as the speaker wishes. As a listener, your major responsibility to yourself is to respond as intelligently as possible. This means that you cannot jump to conclusions. Instead, you must suspend judgment until you are convinced that you are making the best choice. You must listen critically, defending yourself against the appeals and pressures put on you by the event.

When you listen critically, you work to uncover and evaluate the basis of your own responses. As a listener, you should understand *why* you are reacting in a certain way to a speech and then ask yourself whether the basis for your reaction is sensible.

In examining your own motives, you should try to uncover the extent to which you are acting on the basis of the image or reputation of the speaker. It is important to determine how you are responding to the ideas in the speech, asking yourself how clear they are and how well assertions are supported by hard evidence.

Certainly you should consider the extent to which you are responding on the basis of your feelings – for example, because you feel sympathetic, frightened, hostile, or loving. You must ask yourself whether the speaker is attempting to manipulate your response by appealing to your feelings. As a critical listener, you will constantly probe the kinds of appeals the speaker is using and carefully reflect on the motives and feelings you bring to the speech situation.

Helping the Audience Want to Listen. Speakers need to do all they can to help their audience listen. It is up to you as a speaker to increase your chances of being listened to by involving the audience, minimizing

and responding to distractions, stressing key ideas, and actively listening to the audience. As you prepare for and deliver your speech, place yourself in the listeners' shoes. Ask yourself what you might do to help the audience listen more effectively. What are some things you can do (or avoid doing) to contribute to a positive outcome for both you and your audience? Following are some basic principles to keep in mind as you approach the prospect of speaking in public.

Involve the Audience. Seek ways to involve your audience throughout the speech. Nearly everyone , knows that a good speaker needs to get the audience's attention during the speech's introduction, but sustaining attention presents an ongoing challenge. When the audience is intellectually and emotionally involved in your speech, they are more likely to be attentive. Sometimes you can involve the audience through your delivery – by showing your enthusiasm and involvement, your sincerity and commitment. You can speak to them with directness and earnestness so that they know you really care about child abuse, the burning of African American churches, the importance of exercise, the dangers of driving while intoxicated, or the need for long-range financial planning for retirement.

Beyond an engaging delivery, you will also need to present clear, forceful arguments, accompanied by compelling evidence and sound reasoning. Or if your purpose is informative, you will want to give your listeners information that is new, that offers a different perspective or fresh insights. You will need to convince them that they *need* to know the information you're presenting or that they or others they care about would benefit from the plan or course of action you are proposing. If you want to help the audience listen, you will need to keep asking yourself: Why should they want to listen to what I'm saying? How can I consistently remind them of the relevance, significance, and need for the information I'm sharing or the action I'm proposing?

Finally, you can involve listeners by using clear and compelling language. You connect with the audience when you use language that is understandable to them, and you gain and sustain their attention with

language that is vivid, dramatic, and memorable. Here is how Cesar Chavez used powerful language to involve listeners in his moving speech on the dangers of pesticides:

My friends, grapes are the most dangerous fruit in America. The pesticides sprayed on table grapes are killing America's children. These pesticides soak the fields, drift with the wind, pollute the water, and are eaten by unwitting consumers. These poisons are designed to kill life, and pose a very real threat to consumers and farm workers alike.

This is a very technical problem, with very human victims. One young boy, Felipe Franco, was born without arms or legs in the agricultural town of McFarland. His mother worked for the first three months of her pregnancy picking grapes in fields that were sprayed repeatedly with pesticides believed to cause birth defects.

The grape vineyards of California have become America's Killing Fields. These same pesticides can be found on the grapes you buy in the store.

Chavez's use of vivid language, metaphor, and narrative made this speech one of the most stirring speeches of the twentieth century.

Like Chavez, you will want to consider your audience while you prepare and deliver your speech – consistently looking for opportunities to engage their interest and commitment along the way. In this way, you will be more likely to realize your purpose and help your listeners want to listen to your ideas.

Minimize and Respond to Distractions. Whenever you speak, you will want to minimize anything that might distract the audience. Potential distractions will vary from one speech situation to another, but in most speech settings, you'll want to make sure that neither your physical appearance nor your delivery detracts from your speech.

Sometimes these can interact. One speaker chose to wear his baseball cap to deliver his final speech, a very serious persuasive speech on advancing funding for research on Alzheimer's disease. Not only did the cap give the speaker a casual air, but he fiddled with the cap as he

spoke, at times pulling it down so that the bill covered most of his eyebrows. A different speaker had her hair styled so that, during most of her speech, it covered almost half of her face. Not only was this a source of distraction for the audience, but it seemed to bother her, too, since she regularly brushed it aside, either with her hand or by tossing her head. In these examples, physical appearance contributed to distracting gestures and mannerisms that made it difficult for the listeners to focus on the information and ideas being advanced.

Some distractions may be introduced into the speaking environment through sources that are beyond the speaker's control. For instance, the microphone may die, your overhead projector may blow a bulb, or the room may be very hot. How you, as the speaker, react to these potential distractions is very important. You are, after all, the focus of attention and, for the moment, are responsible for creating a context in which you and your listeners can connect. To do this, you may need to stop for a few minutes and ask for assistance. The thermostat can be adjusted, windows opened, and spare bulbs found. Or you may need to abandon the podium and move closer to your listeners so that they can hear your message. You may need to use handouts rather than the overhead projector.

In managing distractions, three points are key. First, many distractions cannot be ignored. If the audience can't hear you speak, both you and your listeners are wasting your time. Second, the more you anticipate potential distractions, and the more flexible you are, the better are your chances of coping effectively when problems arise. For instance, if you have prepared and practiced your speech carefully, you can get by without using a podium. If you bring handouts as a backup, you can move forward without the benefit of an overhead projector. Finally, although you and your listeners share responsibility for the outcome of the speaking event, as the speaker, you are in a better position than the audience to ask for assistance or to take some corrective action. When you do so, both you and your listeners will benefit.

Stress Key Ideas. You can help the audience follow your speech by doing all you can to emphasize key ideas. A good introduction is essential – one in which you set forth your purpose and preview your main points. But you will also need to work on good transitions so that the audience can see the relationship between what you've just said and where you are heading. Internal summaries can help, and occasionally, when an idea is really important, you may want to repeat it, perhaps using slightly different words. To help the audience follow your organizational pattern, you may want to use signposts (words such as *first*, *second*, or *finally*) to show listeners where you are in your speech. You can also deliver main idea, looking directly into the eyes of the audience, or pausing after you've shared something really important.

You may want to use some presentational aids to reinforce key ideas. Listeners have become increasingly visual over the past few decades. Visually depicting a statistical trend, projecting main ideas onto a screen, or showing pictures or slides to emphasize the magnitude of the problem (such as the ravages of deforestation) can help the audience understand your points. In addition, using music, video clips, charts, or slides at strategic points during longer presentations will break up the material and help the audience refocus.

As you use presentational reinforcement (and deliver your comments effectively), you are also providing variety. When you walk to a screen or a flip chart to point to key ideas, you are moving and thus doing something a bit different. When you stop talking so that the audience can see a brief video clip or pause to let them listen to a bit of music, you have provided the kind of variety that can help them remain attentive during your entire speech. In many workshop and organizational settings in which professionals speak, presentational aids (increasingly including computer-generated graphics) are considered essential. They are part of audience expectations. By using them in this context, you are showing that you acknowledge and accept those expectations, and you are also showing the audience that you are well prepared.

Actively Listen to the Audience. In the long run, you will help the audience listen to you if you show your willingness to listen to them. You can listen in several ways. Question the person who invited you to speak. Ask about the audience's knowledge, values, needs, and expectations before you begin to work on your speech. In this way, you can begin to learn about and "listen to" the audience before you develop your speech. Continue to listen to those with whom you interact right before you make your speech – during the early parts of a meeting, during lunch, and so forth. You might learn a few last-minute tidbits that you can incorporate spontaneously into your presentation.

Equally important is being attentive to other parts of the program or meeting that surround your talk. Speakers who whisper to the person next to them while business is being conducted or who read through their notes and ignore everything else that is going on risk being seen as rude and disrespectful. You can show your interest in the audience and the occasion by active nonverbal listening – nodding, smiling, and establishing eye contact with others who are speaking. When it is your turn to speak, you can continue to "listen to" the audience carefully observing their nonverbal feedback. If they are bored, confused, amused, or exasperated, you can probably pick up on that by watching their facial expressions. In some cases, you can make adjustments in your delivery, style, or content. You might, for instance, use an extra example to help clarify a difficult concept. Or you might use a little more humor with listeners who have really warmed to you and who seem to enjoy humor.

Finally, you can listen very carefully to audience questions and comments after the speech is over. Listening with sensitivity and thoughtfulness and responding with candor and concern for audience view go a long way toward building your credibility and furthering the purpose of your speech. In essence, you are functioning as a role model for effective listening.

Strategies for Effective Listening for Speakers and Listeners

As a Speaker, You Will	As a Listener, You Will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to involve the audience • Show your own involvement • Minimize and respond to distractions • Emphasize key ideas by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Previewing</i> - <i>using internal summaries</i> - <i>using good transitions</i> - <i>signposting</i> - <i>stressing main points through delivery</i> - <i>using visual reinforcement</i> • Actively listen to the audience by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>learning about listeners in advance</i> - <i>showing attentiveness when others are speaking</i> - <i>watching for nonverbal feedback</i> - <i>being attentive and responsive to questions</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your identity as a listener • Listen with a purpose • Understand the setting • Think about the audience you're a part of by identifying the <i>immediate audience target audience</i> • Consider the speaker's purpose • Examine your assessment of the speaker • Remember the importance of listening • Listen critically • Practice listening as an active process by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>using nonverbal communication to show your involvement</i> - <i>taking notes as you listen</i> - <i>identifying main points</i> - <i>looking for evidence</i> - <i>examining the speaker's reasoning</i> - <i>minimizing distractions</i> - <i>suspending judgment</i>

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Why is listening important in any communication situation?
2. Describe several different reasons for listening. Give an example of each.
3. Name and explain the five steps in the listening process.
4. What are the main advantages of listening effectively?

5. Do people generally listen well? Why or why not?
6. Identify and briefly describe the signs of poor listening.
7. Describe your understanding of listening as an active process.
8. Name at least five problems that audience members often experience when listening to a public speech. Give an example of each.
9. List at least five tactics that should prove helpful for anyone wanting to improve his or her listening skills. Why is each important?
10. What are some ways that speakers can help audience members listen more effectively?

Practical assignments:

1. Identify two people with whom you enjoy talking and use each person's name to head up a column. List the specific listening characteristics of each person that you find desirable. Construct an inventory of general listening characteristics that others should find attractive.
2. In your past experiences as a listener (in your home, in the classroom, with your friends, and so on), what have been your greatest listening challenges? Provide examples of each.
3. In your opinion, is listening more or less difficult in a public speaking setting as opposed to an interpersonal or small-group setting? What are some similarities and differences?
4. List the 10 bad listening habits, and determine which of these habits cause you the most problems.

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Навчальне видання

PETRYNA Oksana

**PUBLIC SPEAKING
FUNDAMENTALS**

Навчальний посібник

В авторській редакції

Підп. до друку 03.01.2019 р. Формат 60x84_{/16}.
Гарнітура "Calibri". Ум. друк. арк. 4,1. Тираж 100 пр. **Зам. № .**

Видавець

Видавництво ДВНЗ "Прикарпатський національний університет
імені Василя Стефаника"

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Свідоцтво суб'єкта видавничої справи ДК № 2718 від 12.12.2006

Виготовлювач