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A White Paper for San Diego State University Instructors and Students, with practical advice on giving and assessing public speeches and presentations.

# COMMUNICATION PRESENTATIONS

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## Preface

*The discipline of communication traces its origins to The Rhetoric by Aristotle, who defined rhetoric essentially as the study of the available means of persuasion. For two millennia that was the primary province of communication scholars—the study of public presentations for the purpose of influencing audiences. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, saw a substantial evolution of the communication discipline. The discipline of communication, and its major affiliated professional associations (e.g., National Communication Association: <https://www.natcom.org/>; International Communication Association: <http://www.icahdq.org/>), now reveal an extensive array of scientific and humanistic interests in, and investigations of, communication, including interpersonal, relational, familial, organizational, group, mediated, and societal forms and contexts of communication.*

*Thus, the contents of this white paper represent only a fraction of what the communication discipline does, and only an introduction to some of the kinds of communication skills that students are exposed to in their COMM 103: Oral Communication course at S.D.S.U. The materials of this manual are intended to help instructors and professors who desire to provide students with an abbreviated resource that can refresh and reinforce presentational skills that students are exposed to in COMM 103. As such, it provides practical information for the student, and provides assessment instruments for instructors. It should not, however, be considered a comprehensive review of the kinds of skills and competencies students need to possess in their communication, nor a full representation of the facets of communication entailed in the COMM 103 course. Research consistently indicates that almost all career trajectories, whether in the private or public sector, place a very high expectation for student communication competence. This manual only scratches the surface of the full measure of the communication skills that students are capable of displaying and achieving, or that the School of Communication seeks to develop in its own majors. Communication competence needs ongoing practice, training, and opportunities for it to flourish. We hope that this manual can assist instructors in furthering their students' opportunities to develop their communication throughout the curriculum at SDSU. Finally, special thanks to Dr. Stephen Schellenberg, Associate Dean, Division of Undergraduate Studies, for initiating this project and lending his insights and inspiration throughout.*

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## Introduction and Summary

Success in the classroom and in the professional realm outside of the classroom will depend on your success in public presentations. For an audience of 5 or 50, presentational skills have been ranked year after year as one of employers' most sought-after skills in potential employees. Competent public speaking requires knowledge, skills, motivation, and experience. The motivation to become a better speaker is less easily taught, and experience will only come from practice and actual presentations. However, motivation to practice and actually present increases with more knowledge about the skills required. This paper is designed to provide a primer and refresher on the knowledge and skills required for effective oral presentations.

### Managing Communication Apprehension and Obstacles

One of the initial requirements of becoming a competent presenter involves learning to manage the inevitable anxiety that comes with public presentations. Whether you call it apprehension, anxiety, nerves, or butterflies, most of us feel some sort of unease before we give a public presentation. When it comes to speaking competently, our goal should not be to eliminate feelings of apprehension. They are a natural response to being evaluated. The most effective public speakers still get nervous. But they have learned how to manage their apprehension in a way that actually improves their performance. Below are several ways to better manage your communication apprehension.

**Be prepared** — The lowest level of apprehension occurs during the preparation stage of the speech. We tend to get especially nervous when the assignment is announced, and then again right before it is our turn to speak. We are not as nervous when we are researching or outlining our speech alone in our apartment. As such, you should put as much effort as you can into the preparation stage so that if you are overcome by debilitating levels of apprehension, you can use the hours you put into preparing for the speech as a default mode to fall back on. Research says that you want to simulate the environment you will be expected to perform as closely as possible (Ishak & Ballard, 2012). Stand up, as you would in a speech, film or voice-record yourself, practice in front of people you are slightly intimidated by, and try to practice at least once in the actual room you will be speaking.

DO: Put as much effort as you can into the preparation stage

DO: Simulate the actual speech environment when practicing your speech

DO: Deliver your speech aloud as you would during your actual presentation

DON'T: "Practice" by simply reading over your notecards sitting at your desk

DON'T: Avoid preparation by assuming that you will simply be inspired during the speech

**Fight perfection** — Set aside the goal of perfection. Gymnasts and figure skaters know this. They know that if perfection is their goal, and they make even a minor mistake (and they always do), their confidence and focus can be lost, triggering a cascade of additional

mistakes. Instead, they aim for *optimal performance*. You should do the same. It is not necessary to sound like a newscaster in front of our peers. The speaker who tries to memorize every word of her presentation will inevitably mess up one word, and like a train going off the tracks, the entire presentation can be derailed. Instead, practice saying the same passages, sentences, and phrases multiple ways so that you do not get stuck on trying to keep each word right.

DO: Practice delivering important words and passages  
DO: Aim for “optimal performance” rather than perfection  
DO: Speak extemporaneously from notes

DON'T: Try to memorize your speech  
DON'T: Expect perfection

**Visualize success** — Familiarity can limit debilitating levels of apprehension. Baseball players know this well. Many baseball players engage in a series of intense, therapeutic, visualization sessions before they play. Follow their lead: before your presentation, imagine what you will be wearing, see where your boss or teacher will be sitting, listen for the hum of the projector, feel how sweaty your palms will be, and visualize yourself performing optimally. Be ready for minor mistakes. You might say something out of order. You may have a few “um’s”. Your face may get a little red. And all that is okay. You still have something valuable to contribute to your audience, and they are lucky to hear it.

Now, think about the worst possible scenario that could happen during your speech: your mind goes blank? You pass out? Your bodily functions act up? But what is most likely to happen. Most of the people in the room probably have to speak. Your audience is probably rooting for you, including your teacher or boss. You may not give a perfect speech, but you probably won’t pass out. You won’t be perfect, but depending on how well you prepared you will do a solid job, you will finish, get an applause, sit down, exhale, and learn from the experience.

DO: Imagine yourself delivering your presentation  
DO: Imagine what you will see, hear, feel, and sense during your presentation  
DO: Imagine what might happen if you make minor mistakes  
DO: Imagine a worst-case scenario if you make a mistake  
DO: Imagine how you could response to such mistakes

DON'T: Expect the world will end because of a mistake you’ve made

**Organizing for an Effective Presentation** — As audience members, most of us are selfish. Think about how rare it is for an audience to care more about the subject matter of a speech than the speaker. There may be a few such occasions, but they are not very common, especially when we consider most of the presentations you have given in your classes or your workplace. If we begin from the premise that our audience is less interested in our subject matter than we are, we can begin to understanding why *organization* is so important. Any chance your audience has to think about something else, they will take it. A competent

public speaker will know that the audience may be apathetic, indifferent, and prone to distraction, and make adjustments accordingly.

The first adjustment should be to keep your presentation short. There are very few situations in which the audience will be disappointed that you ended early. The second adjustment concerns the WIIFM acronym: it stands for “what’s in it for me?” Competent speakers know the audience will constantly be asking that question. Be audience focused. Make sure your content addresses a genuine interest or need. If it does not, either reorganize it to make sure it does, or cut it out. Third, be thoughtful about how formatting can help the audience follow your message. Following the simple Introduction – Body – Conclusion organizational structure can help with that.

DO: Keep your presentations short

DO: Consider what your audience will get out of your speech

DO: Use organizational strategies to keep your audience involved in the speech

DON’T: Speak in a stream-of-consciousness fashion

DON’T: Underestimate the importance of organization on audience comprehension

## **Important Parts of Any Presentation**

### **Introduction**

1. Get their attention. The first ten seconds of your presentation are vital. Do something that will get them to lean forward in their seats and smile. Assure the audience that the next five, or ten, or twenty minutes of their life is not going to be wasted.
2. Establish your credibility and/or commitment. You may have a personal title that will gain the audience’s respect, or years of experience that can bolster your credentials as an expert. Mention how much research you have done to prepare for your presentation. Give your audience a reason to trust you.
3. Preview the rest of the speech. Set out a roadmap for your audience.

### **Body**

1. Provide specific answers to your central organizing question, and/or specific support for your thesis here.
2. Consider using one of the following organizational patterns:
  - Chronological (i.e., separation of the topic into beginning-to-middle-to-final steps, stages, dates, or processes);
  - Problem-Solution (i.e., articulation of the problem or need, and explication of the solution to the problem or need);
  - Cause-effect (i.e., identification of the problem, specification of its causes, and explication of the effects or outcomes of this problem);
  - Topical (i.e., identification of categories or classes of information important to understanding or thinking about the topic);

- Criterion-focused (i.e., articulating visions, goals, standards, or criteria by which any solution to a problem should be evaluated, and then establishing which solutions best fit those criteria).

For example, if the topic of your speech was violence in the media, each of these patterns of organization could be used. A *chronological* pattern might follow the historical timeline of media by organizing the topics of violence in newspapers, violence in movies, violence in broadcast television, and violence in new media such as social media. A *problem-solution* pattern might articulate statistics on the extent of violence in various media and its presumed effects on social behavior, and then propose approaches to managing or regulating such media content, such as software filters, censorship policies, and industry-wide agreements. A *cause-effect* pattern could examine the scientific evidence on the theories, experiments, and surveys that demonstrate the ways in which violence in the media do or do not reveal a causal relationship to violence in society. A *topical* pattern might seek major categories of concern in regard to the topic, such as: Historical trends in the prevalence of violent media content, major legislative and industry efforts to regulate violent content in media, scientific evidence regarding the relationship between media violence and societal ills; and proposed or potential approaches to regulating violent media content. A *criterion-focused* pattern might first argue for the importance of balancing the constitutional criteria of First Amendment freedoms (i.e., prohibiting “the making of any law ... abridging the freedom of speech, [or] infringing on the freedom of the press) against the social contract of the preamble (e.g., “to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare”). Given such criteria, the speech would then proceed to seek solutions that would provide a reasonable balance in protecting these criteria.

3. Consider the perspective of your audience, and try to organize this section in a way that will make listening easier for them.

## Conclusion

1. Remind the audience of your central question, thesis, and primary pieces of support. This is especially important for a longer presentation in which the audience has more time to get distracted.
2. Give your audience something to think about, or something specific to do. Should they change their behavior in some ways? Buy one product or boycott another? Write a letter to their local newspaper? Vote in a specific way? Think differently about an issue or idea? Answer the “So What?” question forcefully and clearly.
3. Consider how your last sentence or two can function as a bookend. Do this by reminding the audience of the story you told to initially get their attention.

## Delivering an Effective Presentation

Competent public speakers recognize they will be judged not just by their organizational strategies or the credibility of their citations, but also by how they sound (i.e., verbal delivery) and look (i.e., non-verbal delivery) when standing in front of the audience.



Although it is not always fair, audiences do use peripheral and superficial cues (like tone of voice and physical appearance) to evaluate the more substantive qualities of the speaker (like intelligence and character).

### **Verbal Delivery Tools:**

***Tone*** — Speak conversationally. Treat your speech as an interactive conversation in which your tone matches the expectations of the audience, your need to appear credible, and the seriousness of the subject matter.

***Rate*** — Research tells us that competent speakers tend to speak at a presentation rate (i.e., spoken words per minute) that is a little faster than typical conversational rates (Daly, 2011). As listeners, we tend to think those who speak quickly and efficiently must know what they are talking about. Most of us are nervous during our presentation and those nerves will naturally make us speak faster. Be aware of that. Also, speaking too fast the whole time will make it hard for your audience to track your message. Know that your audience can comprehend more words per minute than you can speak, so speaking too slowly can hurt your credibility making you appear to be unprepared and unintelligent. Work hard to find the right balance between speaking efficiently, and making sure you are clearly understood.

***Volume*** — We know we must be heard to impact an audience. The people in the back should not have to put forth much effort to hear you, but the people in the front should not feel over-powered by your volume. If you are not sure your volume is appropriate, pay attention to the audience's nonverbals to see if they look like they can hear you all right. It is also a good idea to mix up your volume to add a sense of dynamism to your verbal delivery. Such variation is wise with each of these verbal delivery components – we want to work hard to avoid sounding monotone (i.e., a voice that is unchanging in pitch and lacking intonation and expressiveness). The most competent speakers tend to be louder than average; they use their volume to show how enthusiastic they are about their topic. But they also know when to slow down, pause, and lower the volume. This type of strategic vocal variety should be used sparingly, but at times, it is effective to employ a higher-than-average volume to show passion and urgency, and then switch to a lower-than-average volume to make the audience think they are getting in on something special.

***Pauses*** — The most competent public speakers use silence to their rhetorical advantage. Integrating deliberate and intentional pauses into a presentation is an effective way to both transition from one point to another and add emphasis to what was just said. Be careful with the pauses, though, as too many can also impede the flow of your presentation and make you look unprepared.

***Punching*** — You all know how to italicize parts of a sentence when you are typing, *like this*. Punching refers to verbally italicizing important words or phrases. If you pause and punch properly, you can influence the audience's attention in a strategically

advantageous direction. If a speaker were to say, “We have to do this right now,” with a verbal emphasis placed on the *right*, that sentence can take on a totally different meaning than if the speaker punched the word *now*. The competent public speaker recognizes this, and deliberately punches important words or phrases during their presentation. Use this technique strategically and sparingly.

**Pitch** — Pitch refers to how high or low your voice is on the vocal scale. Research tells us that the lower your voice is on that scale, the more competent you will appear in the eyes of your audience (Kawasaki, 2010). Speakers with more bass in their voice are thought to be more credible and trustworthy than those whose voices fall higher on the vocal scale. Our biological evolution can explain why: a voice lower on the vocal scale functions as a shortcut to symbolize physical power. For the speaker, our pitch is primarily determined by our biology, so there is not a lot we can do about it. Even so, it is important for those of us with higher voices to be aware of how our chin placement influences where your voice falls on the vocal scale. In general, when your chin is pointing up, your pitch goes up. This is no reason to give our speeches with our chins stuck on our chest; just make sure you are never caught in a situation where you have to look up at a microphone or into a telephone. Looking up forces your chin up, and that will cause your pitch to go up and your credibility to go down.

**Disfluencies** — The most competent speakers avoid distracting the audience with too many verbal fillers. We call these disfluencies. For English speakers, the most common are “um” and “uh,” but words and phrases such as “like,” “actually,” “honestly,” and “you know” are also common. Spanish speakers are more likely to fill in the pauses between words or sentences with “esta”; Hawaiians use the phrase “da kine” for the same purpose; Mandarin speakers often use an English equivalent of this/that as a disfluency.

A few “um’s” or “uh’s” don’t matter that much. In fact, some disfluencies will actually make you sound more comfortable and conversational. Speakers without any disfluencies tend to seem robotic and mechanical. But on the other end of the continuum, many of you have likely been in a situation where you have kept a tally of a speaker’s disfluencies. One way to find out if you have too many disfluencies is to record yourself giving a presentation and count them. If you have less than ten a minute, you are probably okay. If you have many more than that, consider adjusting your preparation techniques so that you become more comfortable with silent pauses between words and sentences. The audience would prefer that over a deluge of filler words.

## **Nonverbal Delivery Tools:**

Along with being mindful of your verbal delivery, competent public speakers are also aware of how important nonverbals are to effective presentations. Just as we consider rate, pitch, and volume, we use nonverbal components like gestures, appearance, and movement as peripheral cues that lead to substantive evaluations of a speaker.

**Eye contact** — This is one of the most important dimensions on nonverbal delivery. Confident speakers look at their audience and engage their listeners with their eyes.

Research backs this up: more powerful people tend to make more eye contact, hold it longer, and determine when it should be ended (Daly, 2011). As a speaker, we must again internalize our content well enough so that we do not need to look at our speaking notes or at the PowerPoint. The most competent speakers know their material well enough and are confident enough in the value of their subject matter that they are willing to come out from behind the podium, make eye contact with everyone – including the front rows and the far sides of the room.

Eye contact can also be a useful way to figure out if your message is being heard and understood. Look for signs of confusion in the faces of the audience, or nods of affirmation when they are tracking with your message.

Finally, if you are really nervous, focus on the friendly faces in your audience; find a few people who are looking at you, smiling and nodding, and seem to be rooting for you. Speak specifically to those people as you begin (as opposed to the people who are falling asleep or texting under the table). Doing this – at least for a short period of time – can help you get comfortable being on stage, and build up some confidence before you turn your attention to the entire room.

***Physical appearance*** — The research on the effect of physical appearance and perceived levels of competence is stunning. Maybe it is not a total surprise that we like physically attractive people. We think they are smarter, kinder, stronger, friendlier and happier than less attractive people. We also think they are more honest, more sensitive, better organized, and even better romantic partners (Hamermesh, 2010).

In the classroom, physically attractive students receive more teacher attention, score higher grades on standardized tests, have higher positive academic expectancies, and are rated as more favorable by teachers. In the professional setting, managerial potential rating is significantly higher for attractive candidates than unattractive candidates. Physically attractive job applicants are rated by interviewers as possessing more sensitivity, organizational awareness, personal impact, leadership ability, and self-objectivity. On almost all dimensions except energy, less attractive people receive lower scores than attractive people.

As we discussed with pitch, much of our attractiveness is determined by our biology, and we can't do a lot about that. But as it applies to the public speaker setting, we can manipulate – to some degree – the aesthetic dimensions of our public presentation to help our audience perceive us more favorably. For example, because we use a speaker's grooming, trappings, clothing, and accessories as mental shortcuts to evaluate his or her intelligence, competent speakers use that to their advantage.

The most useful advice is to consider adopting aesthetic dimensions that put you *one level above* most everyone else in the room. Show your teachers and your employers how serious you take your presentations by dressing one level above your audience: if everyone is in shorts, wear pants, a skirt, or a dress; if everyone is in t-shirts, wear something nicer, such as something closer to business casual.

***Gestures*** — Avoid letting your hands betray your nervousness. Use your gestures to naturally accent and supplement your verbal message. Avoid putting your hands in your pockets, keeping them locked behind your back, and rigidly stuck together in front of you.

Notice how you gesture during a normal conversation you might have with a friend in a relaxed setting. Your hands probably accent your message in a natural and effortless way. We want our hands to function the same way when we are up on stage.

Second, have a *home base* where your hands go when they are not accenting your verbal message. Find a home that is comfortable for you. Don't keep your hands there the whole speech, of course. Use it as your default where you return to when not gesturing. Keep in mind, we don't want our gestures to be noticed. If you were to be complimented on our hand placement after a speech, you have done something wrong.

**Posture and stance** — Develop a *home base* for your posture and stance, as well. In general, if you can stand during your presentation, do so, and have your feet shoulder-width apart, keep your shoulders back, and your chest out. Don't slouch – that can make you look threatened and cowardly. Lean forward. Stay open and attentive. As with your tone, balance the gravity of the event with a sense of poise and confidence. Don't over-do it and stand like a drill sergeant, but at the same time, signify the importance of the moment by standing confidently.

**Movement** — Competent speakers move naturally and gracefully. Standing in one place the whole time can make you look rigid and uncomfortable. Standing totally still can also make the signals of adrenaline – like a shaky knee or a fidgety hand – more noticeable. Competent speakers move enough to stay loose keeping the audience on both sides of the room engaged and showing they are not afraid to be evaluated. So, move with purpose. Don't pace or rock back and forth. Be comfortable and active. Occupy space. Use the stage. Don't stay behind the podium. For a more formal presentation, consider planning deliberate and intentional movement within the first minute of your presentation as a way to ensure both your verbal and nonverbal impression appears poised and confident.

**Visual aids** — Many of the formal presentations you deliver will involve visual aids. Although you have many options – including the white board, document camera, objects, overheads, and handouts – the most common visual aid right now is PowerPoint, with Prezi being a rapidly growing alternative. But here is the problem: although it is widely used, nothing inhibits effective public speaking as much as PowerPoint or Prezi.

Competent speaking involves explanation, reasoning, questioning, and evidence. PowerPoint and Prezi too often involves none of these. The evidence indicates that PowerPoint and Prezi, compared to other common presentation tools, reduces the analytic quality of presentations, limits the thoughtful exchange of information, and distorts the transmission of complex content to your students (Reynolds, 2012; Tufte, 2006). However, PowerPoint or other presentation software is not at fault. We are. Like a hammer or a car, PowerPoint is a neutral tool that can be good or bad depending on how it is used. In this section, how PowerPoint is commonly used will be contrasted with how it *should* be used.

## Misuses of Visual Aid Software

**As a crutch** — Most visual aid software is presenter-oriented, not content or audience-oriented. This is one of the reasons it is so prevalent. It also helps lazy speakers

not have to put much effort into their preparation. It is not hard to copy and paste notes from a Word document onto some slides, and presto, an almost-instant presentation. You can imagine why reading to the audience off PowerPoint, for example, is so common: it is natural consequence of using PowerPoint as a crutch rather than doing the hard work of internalizing the content.

**As a sound bite** — Most visual aid software like PowerPoint and Prezi is not conducive to complex thought processes, pattern recognition, and narrative arc. PowerPoint presentations, because they are broken up into individual slides, constantly disrupt coherent strands of thought, forcing complex pieces of information into slide-conducive bite-sized chunks.

**As bullet points** — Most formal presentations require the speaker to place evidence within a context and extend the reach of memory beyond tiny clumps of data. PowerPoint has trouble with that. PowerPoint does lists well, and Prezi shows hierarchy and links well; but lists and linkages only communicate logical relationships of sequence, priority, and membership in a set (Tufte, 2006). Bullet points leave critical relationships unspecified forcing what is often an apathetic and uninformed audience to do the cognitively taxing job of connecting the dots.

**As entertainment** — Speakers often use visual aid software like PowerPoint or Prezi as way to spice up their presentation. Either through sound effects, animation, or cute pictures and images, the lazy speaker relies on PowerPoint or Prezi to do the hard work of keeping the audience engaged. But PowerPoint and Prezi are a cheap way to keep your audience's attention. Stimulate your audience with fascinating content, polished and passionate delivery, and compelling stories, not PowerPoint.

## **Effective Uses of Visual Aid Software**

On a more optimistic note, we also need to recognize the value presentation software brings. In today's 21<sup>st</sup> Century literacy, public presentations are as much about crafting compelling and eloquent visual narratives as well as establishing certain arguments or facts (Apperson, Laws, & Scepansky, 2008; Cyphert, 2007; Wake & Whittingham, 2013). Software like PowerPoint and Prezi can serve several important functions.

**Redundancy** — Visual aid software allows the speaker to connect to the audience on multiple channels. In addition to hearing the words of the speaker, echoing these important words or phrases in a visual format can increase comprehension and retention, especially for non-native English speakers.

**Efficiency** — It is much easier for the speaker to click a button on the presentation remote or keyboard, than write on the white board, or draw an image on the document camera. However, this efficiency can also lead to the visual overload – appreciate that your audience will likely be seeing your visuals for the first time, so keep them to the point and orient your audience as appropriate.

**Organization** — Research tells us that audiences perceive speakers who use PowerPoint as more organized than speakers who do not. The audience may be thinking,

“Well, I don’t know how much effort this guy put into this speech, but at least he prepared a PowerPoint deck.”

***Image appeal*** — We have a well-honed appreciation of the visual. PowerPoint can appeal to that. The most competent public speakers recognize that most audiences would rather look at pictures than words. PowerPoint and Prezi are therefore useful for displaying short words and phrases, and graphs, charts, and maps that would otherwise be cumbersome to display in another medium. PowerPoint is also an excellent tool for displaying pictures that can activate the appeal of the image (without diluting that appeal with words on the same slide).

### **Use Visual Aids Properly**

Make your slides simple, natural, and elegant. Follow the aesthetic models of Apple and Google: limit the number of different colors you use, and make sure they vividly contrast each other; recognize how much we appreciate blank space; avoid sound effects; limit transition animations between slides; include only critical information, and keep the number of words per slide below 30. It is better to have 20 slides that are simple, natural, and elegant than 10 slides that are overloaded, wordy, and cumbersome (Reynolds, 2012).

***Use as a persuasive device*** — Make the title to each slide an argument, not an overview. Assume your audience is only going to read the title. Feature your main conclusion there. Include citations on your slides. Let those citations build your credibility.

***Supplement with handouts*** — Handouts offer a permanent, high-resolution record; they allow audience members to take notes, contrast, contextualize, compare, narrate, and recast evidence within a common view. Supplementing PowerPoint or Prezi with a written document can make your audience smarter and more attentive.

### **Exceling in the Question-and-Answer Session**

What distinguishes a truly competent speaker from an average speaker is not how well they perform during the speech; true competency is often displayed in the question-and-answer session. While not all class presentations may include a question-and-answer session, below are some tips just in case you choose or are required to include questions from the audience at the end of your presentation.

#### **Recognize Face**

From an audience’s perspective, asking a question can be risky. We have probably all been in a situation where we have been made to feel stupid for asking a question, or at least we have seen that happen to someone else. The most competent speakers recognize the *face* of the audience member – the public image, who he or she wants to be seen as – and affirm their participation. If you want questions, reward the audience members that ask them. They are helping you out.

Use their names. Let them finish their question completely; fight the urge to cut them off and answer the question, even if you know what it is . . . you may have heard the question before and know *exactly* what they are going to ask. Bite your tongue anyway. They have probably never asked it before. Let them finish completely, thank them for the question, and then answer it as thoroughly but concisely as possible.

Your answer should not be seen as an opportunity to give another speech. If the questioner feels like your answer is too short or incomplete, he or she will probably ask a follow-up.

## **Handle Objections With Grace and Aplomb**

Although it is not common, you may have to deliver a presentation to a hostile audience. The question-and-answer session during this type of presentation can be challenging. Truly competent speakers excel even in this situation. If the questioner asks more than one question at once, answer the last question they asked first, and then ask them to rephrase the others for you. Try to take multiple questions one at a time.

If the question is complex or wordy, paraphrase it, and then offer it back to the questioner to make sure you understood it correctly. This will not only allow the questioner to possibly ask it in a simpler way, but will buy you some time to think about your answer.

Once you understand the question, you may realize that the questioner has tried to back you into a corner, or raised an objection that you did not consider. Keep your cool. Be ready to acknowledge minor imperfections in your arguments. Keep in mind that your content would not be interesting if it were completely agreeable. No one wants to listen to a speech about why we should wear our seatbelts or avoid cigarettes. Concede that there may be small cracks in your argument, but transcend those objections by bridging, or pivoting, back to your thesis.

Recognize also that in the classroom setting, sometimes students and teachers may ask questions not because they want an answer but because they want to be heard, and they want other people to acknowledge how insightful they are. We have all had classes with these know-it-all types. A competent speaker recognizes those situations, and affirms the questioner's need to feel heard. In some situations, it is appropriate to even give the question back to the person who asked it (that is often what the know-it-all wants all along).

When you are totally stumped, do not lie to your audience. If you are asked a question that you should know but don't, admit it, but don't leave it there – tell the questioner you will find out for them. Follow-up as quickly as possible. Get their contact information or talk to them in person the next time you can. That follow-up, even if the rest of the audience won't know about it, can go a long way in building rapport with someone who may potentially doubt your qualifications.

## **End On Your Terms**

Finally, do not let the last question-and-answer interaction be the final impression left in the audience's mind (especially if it was potentially damaging objection). When you have the power to manipulate the format, *end on your terms*. In other words, after the last question has been asked, take 30 seconds and reassert your thesis one final time. Remind

the audience of your main argument, key pieces of supporting evidence, and why it matters to them (despite the potential objections raised in the question-and-answer session). Address any new objections and let your audience know that you will be happy to continue the conversation once the formal presentation has ended.

## Conclusion

The fear of public speaking is one of the most prevalent phobias among the developed world, with about a fifth of adults currently experiencing it, and 51% to 83% of adults experiencing it sometime during their lifetime (Furmark et al., 1999; Iza et al., 2013; Ruscio et al., 2007). Meaningful percentages of freshmen (22%) and seniors (13%) in higher education view their own ability to give public speeches as “below average” or in the lowest 10% of their age peers (Franke et al., 2010). Indeed, the book *Drunk Tank Pink* (Alter, 2013) proposes that public speaking is most Americans number one fear. Death is a far second. It is for this reason that comedian Jerry Seinfeld famously remarked that when you attend a funeral, most people would rather be in the coffin than giving the eulogy. But as we have discussed in this chapter, public speaking is vital both for the health of our democracy and your own development.

Fortunately, competent public communication is a learned skill. Each of us, with enough of the right practice, can get better at it. Improvement may not come easy, especially for the many of you who consider yourselves introverted. Increasing our communication competence requires *deliberate practice*, which refers to a specific type of intentional and mindful presentation preparation where the speaker seeks out opportunities to expand his/her public communication skills by simulating the speaking environment while practicing, receiving immediate, critical, and expert feedback, and applying that feedback toward the goal of incremental improvement. Thus, we should not expect that simply reading over our note cards the night before a speech will improve our performance. Just like learning to play the violin or hitting a curve ball, if you truly desire to get better at public speaking, expect a little bit of pain. Put yourself into a context where your existing skill-set is stretched; don’t just practice in front of friends you are already comfortable with. Work on your weaknesses, not just your strengths. Aim to improve these weaknesses one at a time. Capture your presentations using a digital camera or laptop and, as painful as this may be, watch yourself and observe your strengths and weaknesses. Ask for critical feedback from people who slightly intimidate you. Expect to fail, but learn from that failure and *fail better* the next time. Keep an eye on experienced presenters, either in your classes, houses of worship, or on TV, and shamelessly steal their techniques.

Finally, put yourself out there. Expose yourself to opportunities to speak publicly. Join a Toastmaster’s public speaking group, volunteer to be the spokesperson during group projects in class, and ask for a leadership position in your social organization when you know giving public presentations is required.

Although these are challenging words for most of us, the effort will pay off. Being able to stand and deliver, to speak eloquently and cogently, to competently express yourself and your ideas offers us a uniquely powerful tool to shape our social world in a way that aligns with our interests. Hopefully this resource has offered some useful advice about how to do just that.



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[Key resources are in **bold**]

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### Other (Re)Sources of Interest:

- ❖ The AACU Oral Communication VALUE rubric:
  - <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/oral-communication>
- ❖ The National Communication Association "assessment" site:
  - <https://www.natcom.org/assessmentresources/>
- ❖ <http://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp/files/2013/04/ULO-2-Oral-Communication-Rubric.pdf>
- ❖ <http://isucomm.iastate.edu/orubric?page=1>
- ❖ <http://valenciacollege.edu/learningevidence/documents/rubrics.pdf>
- ❖ [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/seas/freeman/e3011/edit/readings/essential\\_skills.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/seas/freeman/e3011/edit/readings/essential_skills.pdf)
- ❖ [http://www.unk.edu/academic\\_affairs/\\_files/assessment/GS/oralcommrubric.pdf](http://www.unk.edu/academic_affairs/_files/assessment/GS/oralcommrubric.pdf)

## **Appendix on Assessment**

Note: This appendix represents some well-established assessments and their associated rubrics in the communication discipline. For instructors, they are included to provide potential instruments for assessing or grading student communication activities and performances. As public domain publications, instructors are encouraged to adapt these measures as needed to fit the particular expectations of particular assignments. Instructors can alter rating scales, intervals, items, and rubrics, as needed. For students, this appendix simply provides additional specificity of what kinds of behaviors might facilitate or improve your communication performances. There is no need to venture into the appendix, but for the truly motivated student, they may provide additional insight into the nature of competent communication.



## Potential Ordinal Anchor Rubric Labels

2-point									
Scant									Substantially Developed
3-point									
Knowledge & Comprehension				Application & Analysis					Synthesizing & Evaluating
4-point									
Beginner			Novice		Proficient				Advanced
Beginning			Developing		Competent				Accomplished
Beginning			Developing		Accomplished				Exemplary
Not Meeting			Approaching		Meeting				Exceeding
Ineffective			Adequate		Effective				Outstanding
Unacceptable			Acceptable		Good/Solid				Exemplary
Unacceptable			Needs Improvement		Meets Expectations				Exceeds Expectations
Novice			Apprentice		Proficient				Expert
Incomplete			Novice		Intermediate				Professional
No/Limited Proficiency			Some Proficiency		Proficient				High Proficiency
5-point									
Poor			Fair	Good	Very Good				Excellent
Deficient Performance			Minimally Acceptable Performance	Basic Performance	Proficient Performance				Advanced Achievement
6-point									
Incoherent	Rudimentary		Developing		Adequate	Still Impressive			Clearly Excellent
Basic			Beginning	Developing	Competent	Mature			Exemplary
7-point									
Poor Performance	Below Expectations		Basic	Proficient	Sophisticated	Outstanding			Masterful/Exceptional
Unscorable	Lacking		Limited	Approaching	Proficient	Above Average			Exemplary
Totally Unacceptable	Unacceptable		Slightly Unacceptable	Potentially Acceptable	Slightly Acceptable	Acceptable			Perfectly Acceptable
Below Expectations	Minimally Meets Expectations		Moderately Meets Expectations	Consistently Meets Expectations	Meets Or Occasionally Exceeds Expectations	Often Exceeds Expectations			Far Exceeds Expectations
10-point									
Inadequate/ Fails Assignment	Substantially Lacking In Competence	Very Limited Competence	Approaching Minimal Competence	Minimal Competence	Average Competence	Above Average Competence	Very Competent	Outstanding Competence	Professional Quality/ Mastery
Inadequate/ Fails Assignment	Substantially Lacking In Proficiency	Very Limited Proficiency	Approaching Minimal Proficiency	Minimal Proficiency	Average Proficiency	Above Average Proficiency	High Proficiency	Outstanding Proficiency	Exceptional Proficiency

## Assessment

Assessment refers generally to any procedure for assigning a quantitative or quantitatively-translatable value to a performance or text. There are several general approaches to the process of translating judgments of performance into numerical values:

- **Ranking:** An ordinal measurement dimension (e.g., the letter grade 'A' is known to be better than a 'B', but the exact amount of points that it is better may vary from one student's 'A' to another student's 'A', and an 'F' may be 1% or 59% lower than a 'D' grade). Ranking scales are useful for general divisions of quality judgments, such as "Excellent," "Very Good," "Good," "Satisfactory," and "Needs Significant Improvement."
- **Rating:** An interval measurement dimension (i.e., an integer-based assessment in which every point is an equal interval distance from those bordering it—e.g., a '92' is exactly the same amount of difference from a '91' as a '73' is from a '72'). Ratings are useful in segmenting an ordinal rating scale into discrete units, permitting very specific differentiation among performances, such as a 0-100 scale, or 0-10 scale.
- **Rubric:** A rubric is a set of descriptors or sentences specifying the features of a performance or text that justify a particular ranking or rating in an assessment instrument. On a typical 5-interval rating scale, each of the 5 grade intervals would describe the competencies or behaviors expected to merit that particular score.
- **Weighting:** A percentage or relative proportion of value, often designated as the percentage that a given instrument dimension is worth out of the total value of the assessment, or as a multiplier of that dimension's value. For example, some skills or competencies might be considered more important than others, such that "content" (e.g., evidence, argument validity, topicality) may be more important than "delivery style," in which case content could be weighted as 80% of the grade/scale, and delivery style as 20%). Weightings can also be formulated as subtractions—for example, the default scale may comprise 100% of the grade, but evidence of plagiarism might require automatic failure or deduction from this grade.

## Assessment Instruments

There are hundreds of approaches and instruments for assessing speeches and oral performances. The assessment instruments included herein represent a select few.

### Recommendations:

- **Adaptation:** Any assessment instrument is likely to require some adaptation in wording, formatting, or content, based on the specific requirements of the task or performance. In particular, one of the most straightforward and face-valid approaches is to:
  - **Clearly articulate the learning objectives of that assignment**, using action verbs and observable elements that will be apparent in the assignment performance.
  - **Translate those learning objectives into ordinal rubrics** (i.e., specify what characteristics of performance would constitute an F, a D, a C, a B, and an A

performance for that assignment or task, and then use those rubrics to fill the ordinal spots on an assessment instrument, or organize them according to dimensions (e.g., content/research, organization, writing formatting/style, etc.).

- **Reliability:** Assessments should demonstrate reliability. Reliability means a measure is consistent. There are various types of consistency (e.g., across items or dimensions, across assessors, across situations, across times, etc.):
  - **Instrument:** Any assessment system should render similar results, both within dimensions and for the accumulated instrument results, when applied by the same assessor to similar quality levels of performance. That is, a rater who assigns a 'B' to one essay using a given instrument should find that this same instrument results in a 'B' for other performances of similar quality or features. Students may vary over time and assignment, so assessment may or may not be consistent across assignments for a given student.
  - **Interrater:** An ideal instrument will render similar results across assessors. For example, if multiple GTAs are grading student performance, a reliable instrument will result in similar grades across these GTAs.
- **Validity:** Assessments should demonstrate validity. Validity means a measure measures what it is intended to measure. There are many approaches to demonstrating validity (e.g., predictive, construct, face, etc.). An instrument demonstrates correspondence with other measures known to represent the qualities being assessed. For example, a dimension assessing "argumentative competence" in a speech should show some correspondence with any other measure of argumentative quality (e.g., essay exam). Since they are different measures, correspondence will rarely be perfect, but there should be some general correlation that suggests that one measure of quality is related to other measures of that similar quality.

## Presentation Assessment of Speaker Skills (Pass) Rubrics

	DEFICIENT		BASIC		ADVANCED
<b>COMPETENCY 1: TOPIC. CHOOSES AND NARROWS A TOPIC APPROPRIATELY FOR THE AUDIENCE &amp; OCCASION</b>	The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are not appropriate for the purpose, time, the constraints or audience. [That is, the speaker's choice of topic is inconsistent with the purpose, the topic cannot be adequately treated in the time limitations of the speech, and there is little or no evidence of successful audience analysis.]	MINIMAL	The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, and audience. [That is, the speaker's choice of topic is generally consistent with the purpose, is a reasonable choice for the time limitations of the speech, and reflects appropriate analysis of a majority of the audience.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker presents a topic and a focus that are exceptionally appropriate for the purpose, time constraints, and audience. [That is, the speaker's choice of topic is clearly consistent with the purpose, is totally amenable to the time limitations of the speech, and reflects unusually insightful audience analysis.]
<b>COMPETENCY 2: PURPOSE. COMMUNICATES THE THESIS/SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE &amp; OCCASION</b>	The speaker does not communicate a clear and identifiable thesis/specific purpose. [That is, a majority of the audience may have difficulty understanding, within the opening few sentences of the speech, precisely what the specific purpose/thesis of the speech is.]	MINIMAL	The speaker communicates a thesis/specific purpose that is adequately clear and identifiable. [That is, at least a majority of the audience should understand clearly, within the opening few sentences of the speech, precisely what the specific purpose/thesis of the speech is.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker communicates a thesis/specific purpose that is exceptionally clear and identifiable. [That is, there is no question that all of the audience members should understand clearly, within the opening few sentences of the speech, precisely what the specific purpose/thesis of the speech is.]
<b>COMPETENCY 3: RESEARCH/DATA. PROVIDES SUPPORTING MATERIAL APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE &amp; OCCASION</b>	The speaker uses supporting material that is inappropriate in quality and variety. [That is, supporting material is only vaguely related to the thesis of the speech, and variety is either too great or too little to do anything but detract from the effectiveness of the speech.]	MINIMAL	The speaker uses supporting material that is appropriate in quality and variety. [That is, supporting material is logically linked to the thesis of the speech, and is of such quality that it adds a measurable level of interest to the speech.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker uses supporting material that is exceptional in quality and variety. [That is, supporting material is unarguably linked to the thesis of the speech, and further is of such quality that it decidedly enhances the credibility of the speaker and the clarity of the topic.]
<b>COMPETENCY 4: VISUAL AIDS. ELECTRONIC AND NON-ELECTRONIC PRESENTATIONAL AID(S) (ARTIFACTS, POSTERS, POWERPOINT, PREZI, ETC.) USED PROFESSIONALLY &amp; COMPETENTLY</b>	Visual aids distracted from, interfered with, or worked inconsistent with speaker intention(s), resulting in disruption of the presentation or communication of ideas. Use of aids appears to lack practice, proficiency, or familiarity.	MINIMAL	Visual aids are unproblematic, but add relatively little to the contents of the presentation—the ideas presented are minimally enhanced by the visual aid(s).	PROFICIENT	Visual aids reveal creativity and imagination, effort at integrating them appropriately in the presentation, and significantly enhance entertainment value, clarification of content, and audience retention, comprehension, and/or persuasion.
<b>COMPETENCY 5: ORGANIZATION. USES AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN APPROPRIATE TO THE TOPIC, AUDIENCE, OCCASION, &amp; PURPOSE</b>	The speaker fails to use an introduction or conclusion and fails to provide a reasonably clear and logical progression within and among ideas. [That is, the introduction fails to engage even a majority of the audience in an appropriate manner, the body of the speech reflects lack of clarity in organization, and the conclusion fails to reflect adequately the content of the speech and fails to leave even a majority of the audience with a clear message or call to action.]	MINIMAL	The speaker uses an appropriate introduction and conclusion and provides a reasonably clear and logical progression within and between ideas. [That is, the introduction clearly engages a majority of the audience in an appropriate manner, the body of the speech reflects adequate clarity in organization, and the conclusion reflects adequately the content of the speech and leaves a majority of the audience with a clear message or call to action.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker uses an exceptional introduction and conclusion and provides an exceptionally clear and logical progression within and between ideas. [That is, the introduction clearly engages the audience in an appropriate and creative manner, the body of the speech reflects superior clarity in organization, and the conclusion clearly reflects the CONTENT of the speech and leaves the audience with an undeniable message or call to action.]
<b>COMPETENCY 6: LANGUAGE. USES LANGUAGE APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE &amp; OCCASION</b>	The speaker uses unclear or inappropriate language. [That is, the speaker chooses inappropriate jargon or language which is sexist, racist, etc.]	MINIMAL	The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear, vivid, and appropriate. [That is, the speaker chooses language that is free of inappropriate jargon, is nonsexist, is nonracist, etc.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, and appropriate. [That is, the speaker chooses language that enhances audience comprehension and enthusiasm for the speech, while adding a measure of creativity that displays exceptional sensitivity by the speaker for the nuances and poetry of meaning.]
<b>COMPETENCY 7: NONVERBAL. USES VOCAL VARIETY IN RATE, PITCH, &amp; INTENSISTY (VOLUME) TO HEIGHTEN &amp; MAINTAIN INTEREST APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE &amp; OCCASION</b>	The speaker fails to use vocal variety and fails to speak in a conversational mode. [That is, the speaker shows frequent weakness in controlling and adapting pace, volume, pitch, etc., resulting in an overall detracton from the quality or impact of the speech.]	MINIMAL	The speaker makes acceptable use of vocal variety in a conversational mode. [That is, the speaker shows only occasional weakness in pace, volume, pitch, etc., thereby not detracting significantly from the overall quality or impact of the speech.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker makes exceptional use of vocal variety in a conversational mode. [That is, vocals are exceptionally and appropriately well-paced, easily heard by all audience members, and varied in pitch to enhance the message.]
<b>COMPETENCY 8: ARTICULATION. USES PRONUNCIATION, GRAMMAR, &amp; ARTICULATION APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE &amp; OCCASION</b>	The speaker fails to use acceptable articulation, pronunciation, and grammar. [That is, disfluencies and disfluencies interfere with the message, and frequent errors in pronunciation and grammar make it difficult for the audience to understand the message.]	MINIMAL	The speaker has acceptable articulation, with few pronunciation or grammatical errors. [That is, most sounds are properly formed, there are only minor vocalized disfluencies, and a few (1-2) minor errors in pronunciation and grammar.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker has exceptional articulation, pronunciation, and grammar. [That is, the speaker exhibits exceptional fluency, properly formed sounds which enhance the message, and no pronunciation or grammatical errors.]
<b>COMPETENCY 9: SYNCHRONY. USES PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT THE VERBAL MESSAGE</b>	The speaker fails to use acceptable posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and dress. [That is, kinesic (posture, gesture, facial expressions, eye contact) and proxemic (interpersonal distance and spatial arrangement) behaviors and dress are incongruent with the verbal intent and detract from the speaker's credibility with the audience as well as distracting the audience from the speaker's message.]	MINIMAL	The speaker demonstrates acceptable posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and use of dress. [That is, kinesic (posture, gesture, facial expressions, eye contact) and proxemic (interpersonal distance and spatial arrangement) behaviors and dress generally support the message, with minor inconsistencies that neither significantly distract from the speaker's credibility with the audience nor interfere with the message.]	PROFICIENT	The speaker demonstrates exceptional posture, gestures, bodily movement, facial expressions, eye contact, and use of dress. [That is, kinesic (posture, gesture, facial expressions, eye contact) and proxemic (interpersonal distance and spatial arrangement) behaviors and dress consistently support the verbal message and thereby enhance the speaker's credibility throughout the audience.]
<b>COMPETENCE 10: ADAPTATION. PRESENTATION REFLECTS AN APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE FIT TO THE RELEVANT AUDIENCE(S)</b>	Presentation is inappropriate to the audience or context, due to culture, religion, constraints of the physical environment, time available, relationship with the audience, technology, or purpose of the occasion, or otherwise offensive or contrary to audience values.	MINIMAL	Presentation meets the minimal expectations of the audience and context (culture, beliefs, values, relationship to audience, timing, or purpose of the presentation), but otherwise presentation does little to optimize the connection of the speaker(s) and topic to the audience (e.g., by persuasively articulating the relevance and/or importance of the presentation to the audience(s)).	PROFICIENT	Presentation provides creative connection(s) between the speaker(s), the presentation, and the audience. The connection, relevance and importance of the topic to the audience is explicated, illustrated, or otherwise demonstrated.

## PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT OF SPEAKER SKILLS (PASS)

<b>TOPIC:</b>						<b>STUDENT NAME:</b> _____ <b>RED ID:</b> _____ <b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> _____ <b>DATE:</b> /     /	
	<b>DEFIC IENT ( )</b>	<b>MINI MAL ( )</b>	<b>BASIC ( )</b>	<b>PROFI CIENT ( )</b>	<b>ADVA NCED ( )</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	<b>Score (Weight)</b>
COMPETENCY 1: TOPIC. CHOOSES AND NARROWS A TOPIC APPROPRIATELY FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION							(W)
COMPETENCY 2: PURPOSE. COMMUNICATES THE THESIS/SPECIFIC PURPOSE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION							(W)
COMPETENCY 3: RESEARCH/DATA. PROVIDES SUPPORTING MATERIAL APPROPRIATE FOR THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION							(W)
COMPETENCE 4: VISUAL AIDS. PRESENTATIONAL AID(S) (ARTIFACTS, POSTERS, POWERPOINT, PREZI, ETC.) USED PROFESSIONALLY & COMPETENTLY							(W)
COMPETENCY 5: ORGANIZATION. USES AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN APPROPRIATE TO THE TOPIC, AUDIENCE, OCCASION, & PURPOSE							(W)
COMPETENCY 6: LANGUAGE. USES LANGUAGE APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION							(W)
COMPETENCY 7: NONVERBAL. USES VOCAL VARIETY IN RATE, PITCH, & INTENSISTY (VOLUME) TO HEIGHTEN & MAINTAIN INTEREST APPROPRIATE TO THE CONTEXT							(W)
COMPETENCY 8: ARTICULATION. USES PRONUNCIATION, GRAMMAR, & ARTICULATION APPROPRIATE TO THE AUDIENCE & OCCASION							(W)
COMPETENCY 9: SYNCHRONY. USES PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT THE VERBAL MESSAGE							(W)
COMPETENCE 10: ADAPTATION. PRESENTATION REFLECTS AN APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE FIT TO THE RELEVANT AUDIENCE(S)							

**COMMENTS:**

**GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Pass Instructions:**

**Overview:** The Presentation Assessment of Speaker Skills is adapted from two well-validated assessments in the Communication Discipline (Morreale et al., 2007; Schreiber et al., 2012). It is designed to provide a flexible assessment rubric and rating scale for a wide variety of individual presentational activities. Group presentations typically can be rated along the same skills.

**Anchors:** The ordinal anchors of performance have been labeled as follow, and can generally be considered defined by the following features:

- ☑ DEFICIENT (presentation is lacking fundamental elements of performance to qualify it as acceptable or sufficient in the skill dimension being considered);
- ☑ MINIMAL (presentation is merely sufficient to meet the most essential elements of the skill dimension being considered);
- ☑ BASIC (presentation is an acceptable performance of the skill dimension being considered, but lacks any exceptional qualities);
- ☑ PROFICIENT (presentation meets and somewhat exceeds the essential performance expectations and qualities of the skill dimension being considered);
- ☑ ADVANCED (presentation demonstrates exceptional, creative, and professional-level performance of the skill dimension being considered).j

**Scoring:** The PASS consists of 10 skill competencies, but any may be deleted for a given assignment, and others added. Scoring can be adapted to the intervals as needed (e.g., 1-5 scale, 1-10 scale, or differentially weighted based on the points comprising the assignment). Weighting would involve a multiplier assigned to the (W) in the scoring column. For example, if research/data were considered far more important than nonverbal presentation style, then research could be given a weight of 2, and nonverbal a weight of .5, which would double and halve these ratings, respectively. The individual skill ratings would then be summed vertically to produce the total score for the presentation.

**Sources:** Adapted from:

Morreale, S. P., Moore, M. R., Surges-Tatum, D., & Webster, L. (2007). *"The competent speaker" speech evaluation form* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: National Communication Association. Retrieved from: [http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Teaching\\_and\\_Learning/Assessment\\_Resources/PDF-Competent\\_Speaker\\_Speech\\_Evaluation\\_Form\\_2ndEd.pdf](http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Teaching_and_Learning/Assessment_Resources/PDF-Competent_Speaker_Speech_Evaluation_Form_2ndEd.pdf)

Schreiber, L. M., Paul, G. D., & Shibley, L. R. (2012). The development and test of the public speaking competence rubric. *Communication Education*, 61, 205-233.

## INFORMATIVE SPEECH ASSESSMENT FORM (COMM 103)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

### **INDIVIDUAL POINTS:**

Unsatisfactory    Satisfactory    Excellent

#### **Gestures:**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Well Done

Too Much/Distracting

Need to Incorporate More Gestures

#### **Movement:**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Well Done

More Movement/Add in Movement

Do Not Pace; Move for a Purpose

#### **Voice:**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Well Done

Rate: too fast/too slow

Volume: too loud/too soft

Variety (more energy and emotion)

#### **Language:**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Well Done/Appropriate

Utilized Distracters: uh, um, like, you know, you guys

#### **Eye Contact:**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Well Done

Connect With the Whole Audience

More Eye Contact

Read Too Much

#### **Energy and Conviction:**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Appeared Relaxed and Comfortable

Maintained High Level of Professionalism

Demonstrated Confidence and Energy

**TOTAL: 60 POINTS**

**YOUR SCORE:**

## PERSUASIVE SPEECH ASSESSMENT FORM (COMM 103)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

### Introduction:

Uses An Effective Attention Gainer

Conveys Appropriate Reason to Listen

Explains Speaker Credibility

### **Communicates a Specific Thesis & Previews Main Points**

### Main Points:

Proper Use of Stock Issues

Established relevant problem, causes, & reasonable solution

Delivered a Competent Argument

Utilized Clear, Interesting, Effective, Creative Content

Effective Use of Presentation Aids

Utilizes Clear Transitions

### Persuasive Elements:

Utilized 1 Quote & 1 Statistic

Properly Cited 3 References During Speech

Incorporated Ethos, Pathos, or Logos

### Conclusion:

Restates Thesis & Reviews Main Points

Utilizes a Memorable Reason to Remember

### Movement:

More Movement/Add in Movement

Do Not Pace; Move for a Purpose

### Eye Contact:

Well Done

### **Connect With the Whole Audience**

More Eye Contact

Read Too Much

### Gestures:

Too Much/Distracting

Need to Incorporate More Gestures

### Voice:

Well Done

Rate: too fast/too slow

Volume: too loud/too soft

Variety (more energy and emotion)

### Language:

Well Done/Appropriate

Utilized Distracters: uh, um, like, you know, you guys

### Energy and Conviction:

Appeared Relaxed and Comfortable

Maintained High Level of Professionalism

Demonstrated Confidence and Energy

**TOTAL: 100 POINTS**

**YOUR SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_**



## COMPETENT GROUP COMMUNICATOR ASSESSMENT FORM (8/06)

Group Communication Competencies	Group Member _____	Group Member _____	Group Member _____	Group Member _____	Group Member _____	Overall Group Assessment
<b>Problem-Oriented Competencies</b>						
1. <b>Defined the problem</b> by identifying the obstacle(s) that prevent the group from achieving its goal; identified what the group wants more of or less of to achieve the goal.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
2. <b>Analyzed the problem</b> the group attempted to solve. Used relevant information or data, discussed the causes, history, symptoms, or significance of the problem.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
<b>Solution-Oriented Competencies</b>						
3. <b>Identified criteria</b> for an appropriate solution to the problem; developed standards for an acceptable solution; identified ideal outcomes of the solution.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
4. <b>Generated solutions</b> or strategies that would solve the problem the group identified.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
5. <b>Evaluated solution(s)</b> : Identified positive and/or negative consequences of the proposed solutions; considered the pros and cons of suggested solutions.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
<b>Discussion Management Competencies</b>						
6. <b>Maintained task focus</b> : Helped the group stay on or return to the task, issue, or agenda item the group was discussing.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
7. <b>Managed group interaction</b> : Appropriately initiated and ended discussion, contributed to the discussion, or invited others to contribute to the discussion.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
<b>Relational Competencies</b>						
8. <b>Managed conflict</b> : Appropriately and constructively helped the group to stay focused on issues rather than personalities when conflict occurred.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
9. <b>Maintained climate</b> : Offered positive verbal comments and/or nonverbal expressions to help maintain a positive group climate.	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3	NO YES 0 1 2 3
<b>Scoring</b>						
Problem-Oriented Competencies (0-9)						
Solution-Oriented Competencies (0-6)						
Discussion Management Competencies (0-6)						
Relational Competencies (0-6)						

Source: Beebe, S. A., Barge, J. K., Mottet, T. P., & Justl, C. (2006, November). *The competent group communicator: An instrument to assess small group problem solving discussion—Training materials & reliability test*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association Conference, San Antonio, TX.