The Eight Competencies of Public Speaking: Helpful Hints

Competency 1: Topic

An effective topic is clear, relevant to the audience, occasion, and purpose, and appropriately narrowed to time constraints.

Purpose of Specific Speech Types:
- **Narrative:** To tell your audience an engaging, true, and personal story, focusing on the who, what, when, where, and why
- **Demonstration:** To show your audience how to accomplish something
- **Special Occasion:** To honor someone, often impromptu, in a tone appropriate to the occasion (wedding, anniversary, birthday, funeral, etc.)
- **Informative:** To provide information or educate your audience but not persuade them to think differently, alter their beliefs, or take action
- **Problem/Cause/Solution (Persuasive):** To present a problem and its cause with the idea that you specifically favor one solution
- **Monroe's Motivated Sequence (Persuasive):** To persuade your audience to act or do something as a result of your speech

Competency 2: Thesis

The thesis (or preview) statement should be approximately one to two sentences long and should be located within your introduction, usually at the end of it. This statement serves to outline the direction of your speech and previews your main points.

Examples:
- **Demonstration:** "Today, I am going to show you step-by-step how to make chocolate."
- **Informative:** "Today, I am going to tell you about chocolate. I will discuss its history, its ingredients, and how it is made."
- **Problem/Cause/Solution:** "In my presentation, I will tell you about the problem of expensive parking at UCCS, the cause for this issue, and a solution to make parking more affordable and convenient for students."
- **Monroe's Motivated Sequence:** "Today, I will discuss the issue of obesity in America and what you can do to help create healthy choices that lower obesity rates."

Competency 3: Supporting Material

There are two main categories of supporting material within a speech: sources/research and visual aids. Both areas help increase your credibility and the quality of your speech.

Sources:
- Choose credible sources, such as scholarly articles and academic books. Also, make sure the information you select for your speech is the most recent, appropriate, and accurate information about the topic. The Kraemer Family Library OneSearch is a useful online tool for finding scholarly sources.
- Select objective sources that do not have a major bias towards the subject, or, when using a biased source, acknowledge that opinion and why the source is appropriate to include.

- Cite your sources verbally in your speech so your audience knows whom and when your research is from. For example, "According to a study conducted by Dr. Jane Sullivan and published in *The Journal of Psychology* in 2022…"

Visual Aids:
- Your visual aid should supplement your verbal message. It should not replace it or distract from it.
- Use high resolution images and modern slide designs.
- Avoid using slides with lots of words or flashy elements such as animations.
- Remember the SCRAP method when designing your visual aid: simplicity, contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity.

Competency 4: Organizational Pattern

Although your speech organization may vary depending on the speech's purpose, most speeches include an introduction, transitions, body points, and a conclusion. Even if you are not required to create an outline of your speech, it is always a good idea to do it anyway. It helps you arrange your speech logically.

Formatting:
- Use an outline template if your instructor has given you one.
- Adhere to the citation style guidelines of the assignment to properly cite your sources in your outline. This is usually APA style for communication classes. This helps you know when to verbally cite your sources during your speech delivery.

Introduction:
- A strong introduction includes an attention-getter (draw in the audience's attention through a quote, story, statistic, etc.); a credibility statement (state why you are credible to speak on the topic); a relevancy statement (state how the topic is relevant to the audience and why they should listen); and a thesis statement.

Transitions:
- Add transitions between the major portions of your speech (introduction, each main body point, and conclusion).
- Transition statements should recap where you just were in the speech and preview where you are going next. This helps the entire speech flow and helps your audience follow along.
- Avoid choppy, unoriginal statements such as, "And now I'm going to talk about…"

Body:
- The body of your speech should have a few main points (three main points are standard), and each main point should have subpoints explaining the main point in more detail (two subpoints are standard).
- Make each main point distinct. Do not try to cram several different topics into one main point.

Conclusion:
- A strong conclusion includes a summary statement (mirror your thesis statement); a response statement (state what the audience can do now that they know this information); and a "wow" statement (end your speech with impact).
- Instead of just ending with a "thank you," leave your audience with a positive, powerful, lasting statement and impression of you as the speaker.

Competency 5: Language

Your language choices determine if your message is clear, vivid, and appropriate. Choose your words based on the audience and occasion.

Examples of Casual vs. Academic Dialogue:
- **Casual:** "The problem with UCCS parking is that it is way too much money for kids who are broke."
- **Academic:** "One of the reasons the expensive parking passes at UCCS present a problem is the inability for low-income college students to afford them."

Competency 6: Vocalics

Public speaking is not just about what you say but also how you say it. Adjust your volume, pitch, tone, and rate to the topic and room to heighten and maintain audience interest.

Tips:
- Project your voice, but do not yell at your audience.
- Keep a steady pace. Do not speak too fast or slow.
- Match your tone to your message. For example, it might make sense to raise your voice to drive your point home or soften your voice when telling something unfortunate.

Competency 7: Pronunciation, Grammar, and Articulation

In addition to engaging your audience through word choice and vocal variety as discussed in the previous competencies, be sure to follow general mechanics and guidelines of language.

Tips:
- Practice the pronunciation of uncommon names or words.
- Articulate your words clearly so your audience understands you.
- Practice your speech delivery multiple times to solidify proper grammar and flow.
- Take deep breaths and intentional pauses to avoid filler words like "um," "like," and "so."

Competency 8: Physical Behaviors

Physical behaviors (eye contact, hand gestures, posture, stance, motivated movement, and physical appearance) can either support your message or distract from it. Use your physical behaviors as a tool to boost, and not retract from, your professionalism and engagement as a speaker.

Tips:
- Avoid pacing during your presentation. Keep your feet planted and your posture upright unless using motivated movement.
- Practice using motivated movement. During each transition, for example, you can move across the room to engage the audience and keep their attention.
- Do not talk with your hands during your entire speech. Gesture with a purpose, such as pointing something out, motioning to an audience member, or making an emphatic point. Otherwise, keep your hands at your sides or clasped.
- Generally, you should not memorize your speech entirely. This can sound robotic or cause confusion throughout your whole speech if you forget a portion. Instead, deliver your presentation extemporaneously, which means speaking to your audience conversationally and using brief notes/bullet points to cue your thought process.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience. Eye contact should be direct, but do not focus on one audience member for too long.

- Dress appropriately. What you wear to deliver a speech may depend on the audience/occasion, but when in doubt, dress how you would for a job interview. Build your credibility as a speaker by presenting yourself professionally.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!

Developed from: Morreale, S., Moore, M., Surges-Tatum, D., & Webster, L. (Eds.). (2007). *The competent speaker speech evaluation form* (2nd ed.). National Communication Association.