

CHAPTER 4

How You Say It: Delivering with Poise and Pizzazz



Coming Up!

Once you've planned a great speech, the next step is delivering it effectively. In this chapter, you'll learn about different speech delivery styles, tools for verbal and non-verbal communication, how to mask mistakes, and ways of adapting to your audience.

THE “WOW!” FACTOR

You’ve probably been told not to judge a book by its cover. Do you actually listen to that advice? More likely than not, you decide to purchase, borrow, or read a book after looking at the cover, scanning the table of contents, and flipping quickly through the rest of it.

The same idea holds true for speech and debate. Many students spend hours developing exceptional content, only to deliver their speeches without making an impact. Most people hear others talking for hours each day, whether it be teachers, parents, or students. Do you listen attentively every single time someone is speaking? Probably not. You’re naturally drawn toward clear, convincing, and interesting speakers. For these reasons, it’s well worth your while to learn and practice the tools for excellent speech delivery.

THE RIGHT WAY TO WRITE IT

How you write down your speech (if at all) will have a significant impact on how well you deliver it. We each have our own style and preferences, so there’s no ‘one size fits all’ method. However, there are clear advantages to selecting certain methods and disadvantages to going with others. Below is a discussion of the different ways to deliver a speech: *Outline*, *Script*, *Memorized*, and *Impromptu*.

Bare Bones: Outline Speaking

This type of speaking involves the use of an outline containing your main points. Although key phrases and parts of the introduction and conclusion may be written down word for word, the speaker must know all of the information well enough to speak naturally and clearly. Most successful speakers use an outline, because it allows for maximum fluency and ease of delivery.

Some speakers write down only five or six lines as reminders of their main points. Others include details under each point. Take a look at the speech outlines on the next page to get a feel for this method.

Success Tip!

Use an outline
rather than a script.



OUTLINE SPEAKING: STANDARD

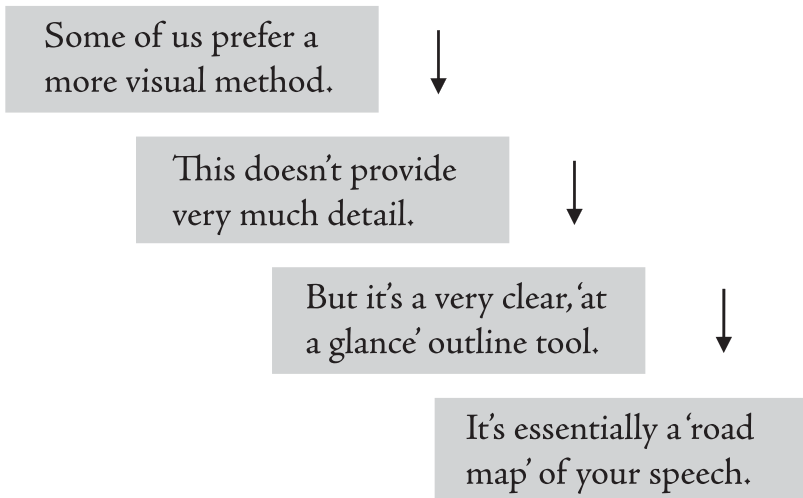
The most basic, easy to prepare method of speaking with an outline is to represent each point in with a single line:

1. This reminds you what to talk about next.
2. It allows you to maximize your eye contact.
3. It also helps you speak more freely and naturally.
4. And it shows you your speech's order 'at a glance'.

Of course, you could also go into more detail. For example:

1. This reminds you what to talk about next.
 - a. Most of us need these types of reminders.
 - b. A single line can help you recall several ideas.

OUTLINE SPEAKING: VISUAL



SCRIPT SPEAKING: STANDARD

If you're not looking to do anything too creative with your script, bolding the first few words of every sentence will help you see your next line quickly and easily. **And if you've practiced** your speech a number of times, you may know what the entire line is from glancing at the first few words, allowing you to maintain strong eye contact. **It's also a good idea** to '1.5 space' your writing so that it's even easier to find your place. **Below you'll see** a line that helps you transition to the next page without creating an awkward pause as you turn the page.

2 / *There is, though, a more creative ...*

SCRIPT SPEAKING: CREATIVE

There is, though, a more creative approach. It takes *longer to prepare* and involves *more page turning*, but it's a great way to make your delivery **expressive** and **engaging**.

You can bold the first words of every sentence to help you *find your place*, and **you can bold** some of the other key words to **signal** that they should be emphasized. *Italicizing select words* also adds emphasis.

Laying out your speech in this staggered way, *one sentence per paragraph*, helps you **find your place** even faster.

Put it on Paper: Script Speaking

If you're a beginner at speech and debate, or if it's essential that every phrase be very accurate, you may want to consider a script. In this style of speaking, you write down your entire speech word for word, and you use the script for delivery. You should try to make eye contact with the audience as much as possible. If you don't, it will seem like you're talking to the *paper* more than you're communicating and engaging with the *audience*. Although script speaking may initially seem easier, it's less effective in terms of fluency and audience interest. Try switching to the outline style as soon as possible.

If speaking with a script, '1.5 space' your writing so that it's easier to find your place as you present. Write down your most important phrases and main points in bold font, underlined, or italicized so that these key lines stand out. Take a look at the examples on the previous page to see two ways of writing down a speech word for word.

Keep it in Mind: Memorized Speaking

If you have a photographic memory or too much time on your hands, you may want to consider memorizing your speech. Don't meet any of the above criteria? You're not alone! Memorized speaking isn't recommended for most people. Not only is this method difficult, but it also makes you seem less natural and relaxed. Your audience will likely be able to tell that you're struggling to remember each exact word.

Although memorizing an entire speech is fraught with problems, you may want to memorize the most important lines. For instance, if you have a few lines that you hope will stand out, saying them by heart may help you focus on making a connection with your audience.

In an Instant: Impromptu Speaking

Whenever you're speaking on the spot or with less than five minutes of preparation time, you're speaking impromptu. Impromptu speaking skills will help you in debates, because you'll have to clash with your opponents' arguments without being able to anticipate exactly what they're going to say. Also, this type of speaking is a great skill to have for asking and answering questions, either after a speech or as part of a debate. If you practice impromptu speaking, you'll be able to communicate dynamically on short notice, or even no notice at all.

TOOLS FOR TOP-NOTCH DELIVERY

Your voice is a powerful instrument for communication, and using it correctly takes significant skill and practice. A musician uses a variety of techniques to create quality sound, just as a speaker uses the voice to express ideas clearly and effectively. But there isn't a single 'right' speaking style. Although there are general strategies for successful delivery, you must develop your own style. Here are some of the basics when it comes to maximizing your vocal effectiveness:

Success Tip!

When a speaker captures your interest, think about why.



Rate. For the speaker, who's much more familiar with the speech than the audience members, the content may seem easily understandable when spoken at a pace that would be used for everyday conversation. However, when speaking in public, your rate must be slow enough so that your audience can clearly understand your ideas. Be sure, though, to keep your presentation fluent and lively. Although there's no rigid rule for the ideal speaking rate, most speeches are delivered at 120 to 140 words per minute. Also, you generally don't want to keep a constant rate throughout your speech. Slow down at your key points, or when the content is more difficult for others to understand.

Did You Know?

The world's fastest talker speaks at over 650 words per minute.



Pitch. Although there's no optimal pitch for public speaking, variety is very important nonetheless. It's rather boring for the audience if you maintain a constant and monotonous pitch throughout. Raise or lower your pitch to add variety and emphasis. This pitch variety should come naturally if you're comfortable with your speech and if you speak either impromptu or using an outline.

Pauses. In addition to helping you find your place or gather your thoughts, pauses can be used strategically. It's important to pause briefly after each of your key points or after you deliver vital information, so that the audience members have an opportunity to absorb the content. Also, pauses can be used to create dramatic impact after the most memorable and important lines.

Tone. It's important that your speaking tone reflects the intent of your speech. For example, a humorous speech should have a lighter, more upbeat tone; a tribute to fallen soldiers should have a more solemn tone; and a speech to persuade the audience to take some sort of political action should be delivered with a lively and passionate tone. In speeches intended to inform, even though the exact tone is less important in terms of reflecting the content, you should still be fairly lively in order to maintain audience interest.

Volume. Make sure that you're speaking loud enough so that the audience members who are farthest away from you can hear you clearly. You should watch carefully for reaction from the audience to determine if anyone is having difficulty hearing your speech. Very few speakers are too loud, but make sure you don't seem to be 'shouting' at the audience. Also, you don't necessarily have to speak at the same volume throughout. Some degree of volume variety is an effective way to deliver your speech in a lively, interesting manner.

Emphasis. In addition to pausing, your tone and volume variety can be used to emphasize key words and phrases in your speech. Any change in tone and volume can make a line stand out, such as raising your voice or deepening your tone.

Clarity. How you articulate words is critical if you want your audience to understand fully what you're saying. Make sure that you aren't mumbling or slurring your words, and practice any difficult words beforehand so that they aren't mispronounced when you speak.

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

On September 26, 1960, the debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon for President of the United States marked the first time that millions of people watched such a contest on television. The debate was rich in substance, with both participants conveying key insights into their respective platforms. Radio listeners were almost evenly split on who won the debate, leaning slightly in favor of Nixon. The story was very different with television viewers. They favored Kennedy by a wide margin. His youthful and upbeat image trumped the more tired-looking and pale Nixon.

Yes, body language does matter. You may think it shouldn't—that we should be judged only according to what we say. If so, Greek philosopher Aristotle was probably in your camp when he wrote in *Rhetoric*, “The battle should be fought on the facts of the case alone.” Today, the fact is that people listen with their eyes as much as they listen with their ears. We usually think of audience members as ‘listeners’. Perhaps it's a good idea to think of them as ‘viewers’ as well.

Excellent speakers communicate their confidence with their posture and movement. They don't rock back and forth or from side to side, instead placing their feet firmly on the floor. But that's only when they're in one place. Often, they move around the front of the room, adding color and emphasis to their points. Never ones to slouch, they stand with confidence—and that's what the audience sees in them.

Strong communicators add emphasis and style using gestures. To allow their hands to move freely, they keep them out of their pockets and off the stand. Although everyone has a different natural style when gesturing, here are some strategies to consider:

Avoid pointing your finger. Nobody likes having a finger pointed at them. For many audience members, doing so will appear too forceful. What if gesturing with your finger is a habit that you've formed and is a natural part of your style? At least be sure that you don't jab your finger directly at others, but that you point up, down, or to the side.

Limit closed-fisted gestures. The ‘punching’ gesture, like the finger-pointing gesture, appears a tad too blunt for many people. Some speakers see it as a way to show strength and conviction. Unfortunately, it also makes you seem more tense and rigid, in contrast to the more expressive and lively image you may want to present.

Do a ‘360’ to expand your range. Most speakers restrict gestures to a very narrow range of motion. Their elbows stay right against their body, and their gestures are always in front of them or beside them. The best way to add variety to your gestures is to use the complete ‘360 degree’ range of motion. In particular, you can emphasize your most important points with strong gestures above your shoulders.

Use a variety of gestures. We all have particular types of gestures that we use more often than others. They're part of our own natural style. Unfortunately, it can also become very repetitive and stale in the eyes

of an audience member. If you have a chance to videotape yourself speaking, play your speech in fast-forward, and you'll notice this problem very quickly if it's the case with you. Do your best to use different gestures, so that your speech has more color and character.

Most importantly, be natural. Sounds contradictory, right? You've just heard several 'rules' for effective hand gestures, and now you're being told to be 'natural'. Undoubtedly, it's a tough balancing act. Your gestures are most expressive and effective when they come naturally, especially when your body is free of tension and stress. Try working within the framework of your natural style, but aim to enhance your performance on the dimensions mentioned previously.

Watch Out!

Don't 'plan' hand gestures into your speech.



DYNAMIC DEBATE DELIVERY

If you look at a debate score sheet, it's likely that no more than a quarter of the total marks are for delivery. Naturally, those who make excellent arguments but who are less comfortable with their delivery conclude that their speaking skills can't cost them any more than a fraction of the total score.

They're wrong. In an ideal world, this wouldn't be the case. We would judge debaters primarily by what they have to say. But each of us naturally makes subjective judgments. The impression you make as a speaker goes a long way in raising your score in all areas. People say to themselves, "That debater seems confident, and she really appears to have her head on her shoulders. So I guess her arguments are also quite strong, judging from how confidently she presents them."

In addition to the appearance of confidence, the range of speaking techniques discussed in this chapter applies to debate delivery. Several areas are particularly important:

Your use of variety and expressiveness. Even to the most interested listener, a debate can become dry if speech after speech is devoid of any passion. Make sure your style keeps the judges interested.

How clearly you present ideas. Judges have to grasp many distinct points, some of which may be rather sophisticated. It's important that

you explain ideas very clearly and precisely, including good articulation and, if necessary, slowing down your pace.

The way that you write down your speech. A debate speech written out word for word makes judges feel like they're at a public speaking competition. Use an outline to show that you're confident enough in your ideas to be able to explain them without reading from text.

MASKING MISTAKES

Nobody speaks perfectly—not even seasoned professionals. We all make errors, as speech and debate is more of an art than an exact science. Unfortunately, we often let the audience know that we've made a mistake through our words, expression, or body language. Without doing so, most people wouldn't have even noticed! There are a few tools of the trade that make it easy to mask mistakes:

Don't apologize! Saying, "Oh, sorry, what I meant to say was ..." not only shows uncertainty, but it's also completely unnecessary. Why should you apologize, when you're the one making the effort to deliver a speech? Your credibility as a speaker depends on your ability to project confidence. Never give the audience a reason to believe that you're stumbling. Most of the time, your mistake will be so minor, that it has no significant impact on your overall message.

Success Tip!

Pretend that the error never even happened.



Pause. Sometimes, the most effective recovery tool that a speaker can use is not to speak. Too often, we fill memory lapses or mistakes with "um's" and "ah's," revealing that we've made an error. Why not just pause for a split second and collect your thoughts?

Recall what you just said. If you're struggling to find where you should be going next, use different language to summarize the thought that you've just finished. For example, you could say, "Now that I have established why physical fitness is enjoyable, I want to move on to ..." This technique not only gives you a moment to collect yourself, it also serves as a great transition to a new point.

Smile. A glum, flustered look is a blatant giveaway that you're struggling. If you're smiling and projecting a positive image, you'll be going a long way in hiding any mistakes.

THE ART OF ADAPTING

As a speaker, you're a 'servant' to the audience. Therefore, you must be flexible enough to adapt to the audience's reaction. The best speakers will pay careful attention to the non-verbal signals that audience members send to them and will adapt their speaking style or content accordingly. Here are a few situations with suggested responses:

Success Tip!

Notice the audience members' facial expressions.



Problem #1: Countering confusion. Say your listeners' facial expressions suggest that they don't clearly understand your point. They've stopped writing anything down, aiming to understand you first.

Solution: Engaging explanations. There's nothing worse than continuing as planned when your audience doesn't get what you just said. In this situation, you should repeat or summarize your point, explaining why it matters to the issue at hand. When you do so, maintain engaging eye contact with the audience members who appear uncertain. Also, moving forward slightly suggests that you're trying your best to help them understand what you're saying.

Problem #2: They're bored. Let's face it, not everyone will be interested in what you're saying. Some people will have a rather disinterested expression, others will sit back and cross their arms, and yet others will start looking down, to the side, or even at their watches!

Solution: Get dynamic! The main reason why they aren't interested is probably because you don't seem interested. Vary your pitch, tone, expression, speed, movement, and gestures to create some interest. Don't just keep your eye contact with those who are listening. To the contrary, aim to make eye contact particularly with those who seem bored. Make them feel like they *should* be listening.

Problem #3: Opposite opinion. Not everyone will agree with your points. Everyone, of course, has opinions, and sometimes you can tell that some audience members don't share your views. They may turn

or shake their heads, or they may shift their posture. These signals reveal agitation or disagreement, and you must respond accordingly.

Solution: Decisive direction. You have two choices: defend your point assertively or focus primarily on other points. If you feel you have something more to say about your point that may convince the audience, don't stop with what you've planned. Be decisive in standing up for your argument, as those opposing you will either be convinced or at least acknowledge that you have sound basis for what you're saying. Another strategy is to play up other points and make them the main focus of your conclusion. In other words, if it seems like they don't agree with part of what you're saying, downplay these areas.

If you want to ensure that your speech content is delivered in an effective, high-impact way, be sure to practice the methods explained in this chapter. Great delivery leaves your audience with a favorable impression of both you and your speech.

Chapter 4: Keys to Success



✓ **Use an outline to deliver a speech.** Writing your speech down word for word makes it tough to have strong eye contact and engagement with the audience. Memorizing your speech makes your delivery seem unnatural, not to mention the extraordinary amount of time that you'll have to spend preparing. An outline with your key ideas provides helpful reminders as you go along, while allowing you to speak freely and naturally.

✓ **Practice effective speaking techniques.** A moderate pace with well-placed pauses makes it easy for the audience to follow your speech. Your expression, tone, and volume should reflect the purpose of the speech. Always make sure that your listeners can hear and understand what you're saying and that they get the desired meaning from the way you speak.

✓ **Enhance your speech with sound body language.** Your gestures help convey the tone and meaning of what you're trying to get across. In addition to making you *feel* more confident, a solid posture makes you *look* more confident. Remember that the audience members form much of their impression of you from what they see.

✓ **Don't make your mistakes obvious.** Apologizing shows weakness and uncertainty. Instead, pause briefly or refer back to what you've just said to help you recover.

✓ **Adapt constantly to your audience.** Pay attention to the body language and expression of the audience members to see if they're confused, bored, or in disagreement. Then, adjust your content and style accordingly. Your goal is to 'serve' your audience, and understanding your 'customers' is the first step to getting the job done right!