

CAA University Learning Goals Committee

Speaking and Listening

Information, Tips, and Assignments/Assessments Related to Speaking and Listening

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For more information and resources related to speaking and listening visit:

<http://www.eiu.edu/learninggoals/speaking.php>

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Speaking and Listening Introduction

Speaking and Listening: Revised Learning Goal

EIU graduates will prepare, deliver, and critically evaluate presentations and other formal speaking activities by:

1. Collecting, comprehending, analyzing, synthesizing and ethically incorporating source material.
2. Adapting formal and impromptu presentations, debates, and discussions to their audience and purpose.
3. Developing and organizing ideas and supporting them with appropriate details and evidence.
4. Using effective language skills adapted for oral delivery, including appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure.
5. Using effective vocal delivery skills, including volume, pitch, rate of speech, articulation, pronunciation, and fluency.
6. Employing effective physical delivery skills, including eye contact, gestures, and movement.
7. Using active and critical listening skills to understand and evaluate oral communication.

The learning goal was not modified significantly. The revisions add: ethics as a component of incorporating source material; impromptu, debate, and discussion as types of presentations that require adaptation; and listening and evaluation as components of oral communication. Speaking and writing were combined originally into one objective (Communication). They are now separate.

Key Components of Speaking and Listening:

The traits most commonly assessed in speaking include: organization, language, analysis, material, vocal delivery, and physical delivery. The traits most commonly assessed in listening include: active listening, critical listening, and feedback. Faculty will most likely need and benefit from professional development in the form of resources and workshops related to the instruction and assessment of the following four areas: adapting messages for oral delivery, adapting messages to specific audiences, critical listening, and providing constructive feedback on oral communication. The following packet includes key points and sample activities and assessments for the four areas just mentioned.

Learning Goals: Speaking and Listening: Audience Adaptation

Key Bullet Points:

- Audience adaptation is key for a speaker to achieve his or her speech goal.
- One of the first questions a speaker should ask is, “Who is my audience?”
- While there are some generalizations one can make about an audience, a competent speaker always assumes there is a diversity of opinion and background among his or her listeners.
- Speakers can analyze their audience based on demographics, psychological dispositions, and the context/occasion.
- There will be diverse demographics among audience members, so it would be unwise to focus solely on one group over another. Instead, speakers should be aware of diverse demographics in order to tailor and vary examples in order to appeal to different groups of people within one speech or presentation.
- Psychological audience analysis considers an audience’s psychological dispositions toward the topic, speaker, and occasion and how their attitudes, beliefs, and values inform those dispositions. Speakers should:
 - Adapt to the knowledge level of the audience.
 - Demonstrate credibility to form favorable impressions.
 - Consider the audience: Are people there voluntarily or are they required to attend? What do they like/dislike, believe/not believe, value/not value?
- Situational audience analysis considers the physical surroundings and setting of a speech. Speakers should:
 - Visit the speaking space ahead of time. Adapt the space as needed/possible.
 - Adapt message or speaking strategies as needed to accommodate a space, time of day, etc.

Audience Adaptation Activity

This audience analysis activity can be completed individually as homework, or in class in small groups. Assign one audience to each student or group and then lead a discussion comparing and contrasting the answers.

Instructions for students:

Imagine you are asked to deliver a speech about your college/university. You will be assigned one of the following audiences: Incoming first-year students, Parents, Alumni, Local Residents (non-students).

- Review the demographic characteristics discussed in the chapter. Which characteristic(s) do you think will be most salient for your speech? Why?
- What may be some shared/common values, beliefs, and attitudes of your audience?

Values:

Beliefs:

Attitudes:

- Brainstorm at least 5 potential main points.
- Narrow the list down to 3.
- For each main point, list some content/supporting material that you think your audience would want to hear.
- What size audience do you think you'll have?
- At what time of day will your speech be delivered?
- Will your audience be captive or voluntary?
- What will your physical environment be like?
- How might you, as a speaker, need to adapt to meet the situational characteristics you noted in the previous four questions?

Audience Adaptation Activity

Pitching a Product/Idea

This general exercise can be modified to be relevant to various disciplines and courses. Identify some aspect of persuasion/promotion that is relevant to your field or course and substitute it for the online advertisement example used here. The activity can be completed individually or in groups at the instructor's discretion.

Instructions for students:

In your small groups, decide what product, cause, organization, or issue you would like to promote. Compose a plan for two different online advertisements that will be featured on websites that you think people interested in your product/idea might visit. The two websites should differ in order to more specifically target two sub-sections of your potential audience.

In your proposal, answer the following questions:

1. What is your product/idea?
2. What general population should you target with your advertising?
3. Identify at least two subsets within the general population that may be interested in your product/idea.
4. Choose one website for each subset on which you will place your advertisement. Explain your choice.
5. How might the users for each website differ? Why?
6. How might the content of your advertisements differ? Why?

Learning Goals: Speaking and Listening: Adapting Messages for Oral Delivery

Key Bullet Points:

- Writing and speaking differ in many important ways. Although we have been taught for many years to write for a reading audience, we have not been taught to write for a listening audience.
- When a speaker does not adapt a message for oral delivery, he or she is more likely to have fluency hiccups (unintended pauses or verbal trip-ups) that will make the message difficult for the audience to receive and comprehend.
- Listenable messages are orally delivered messages that are tailored to be comprehended by a listener.
- Although we naturally speak in an “oral style” in everyday conversations, we stray from that style when we have to prepare a message in advance. Therefore, as speakers write a speech, they should imagine that they are conversing with their audience and write the speech as such.
- Practicing aloud is a key part of creating listenable messages. After drafting a section of a speech, read it aloud and notate any places where you have difficulty with verbal delivery. Then, edit that section to make it easier to deliver, and therefore more listenable. This process of translation is time consuming, so instructors should prepare students to budget time to adapt their messages for oral delivery.
- While readers can review a passage that was confusing or full of new information, listening audiences cannot. Therefore, speakers should include repetition and redundancy in their speeches. Include previews, reviews, transitions, and internal summaries to help make the content digestible.
- Additional tips for creating listenable messages include:
 - Use shorter, actively worded sentences
 - Use personal pronouns (I, you, we, us, our)
 - Use lists or other organizational constructions like problem-solution or compare-contrast
 - Use transitions and other markers that help a listener navigate your message (time markers like “today”; order indicators like “first, second, third”; previews like “I have two things I’d like to say about that”; and reviews like “So, basically I feel like we should vacation at the lake instead of the beach because...”).
 - Use examples relevant to you and your listener’s actual experiences.

Adapting Messages for Oral Delivery Activity

Evaluate a Speech to Determine the Quality of Listenable Messages:

Note to instructors: Instructors can adapt this activity to be more discipline specific by finding a speech on YouTube, or another source, that relates to your class content.

Overview: You could look at any sample speech to see how the speaker does or does not employ listenable messages. The sample speech I have included does a good job overall of making the content digestible and listenable.

As a reminder, here's what I mean by listenable messages: To create listenable messages, which are orally delivered messages tailored to be comprehended by a listener, avoid long, complex sentences; use personal pronouns; use lists or other organizational constructions; use transitions and other markers to help your listener navigate your message; and use relevant examples.

Informative Speech on Cancer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz9ncmAicGA> (Note: I am not endorsing this as an informative speech that students should model since the research is not clearly cited and some other features are weak, but it can still be used to illustrate listenable messages).

Avoid long complex sentences: Although a speech on cancer could get too jargon-filled for the lay listener to understand, the speaker does a good job of keeping the content simple but informative and speaks in a very conversational and extemporaneous manner.

Immediate language/Personal pronouns: "It's taking place in me right now, it's taking place in all of you right now."

Organizational constructions: The overall speech is organized into a list: three causes of cancer. The three ways are previewed at the end of the introduction and reviewed in the conclusion.

Relevant examples: the visual aid is simple but effective – without this visual component, the point being made about DNA mutation and how our body reads DNA would have been much more difficult to understand. He also defined UVB rays and briefly explained why our skin tans.

Adapting Messages for Oral Delivery Activity

Adapting Sentences for Oral Delivery:

Note to instructors: Instructors can adapt this activity to be more discipline-specific by including quotes from journal articles or other sources that are specific to your course content.

Instructions: Students often stumble over long or wordy sentences in presentations because they are not written with oral delivery in mind. Translate the following sentences into something more listenable.

Example:

Original: While researching this topic, my eyes were opened to how much an education can truly affect a prisoner, and given my desire to be a teacher, I want everyone, even if they are behind bars, to be able to learn.

Revised: During my research, I realized how much an education can truly affect a prisoner. And, as a future teacher, I want everyone to be able to learn, even if they are behind bars.

1. According to a 2012 article in the journal *Corrections Today* notes that most states have experienced an increase in incarceration rates and budgetary constraints over the past 10 years, which increases our need to reduce prison populations.

2. The self-reflection and critical thinking that come with getting an education can help prisoners reflect on how their actions affected themselves, their victims, and/or their communities, which may increase self-awareness and help them better re-connect with society and reestablish stronger community bonds.

Learning Goals: Speaking and Listening: Critical Listening

Key Bullet Points:

- The main purposes of listening are to:
 - Focus on messages sent by other people or noises coming from our surroundings,
 - Better our understanding of other people's communication
 - Critically evaluate other people's messages
 - Monitor nonverbal signals
 - Indicate that we are interested or paying attention
 - Empathize with others and show we care for them
 - Engage in negotiation, dialogue, or other exchanges that result in shared understanding of or agreement on an issue
- Critical listening refers to listening with the goal of analyzing or evaluating a message based on information presented verbally and information that can be inferred from context.
- Critical listening skills include the following:
 - Distinguishing between facts and inferences.
 - Evaluating supporting evidence.
 - Discovering your own biases.
 - Listening beyond the message.
- Tips for becoming a better critical listener:
 - Ask questions to help get more information and increase your critical awareness when you get answers like "because that's the way things are", "It's always been like that," or "Everyone believes that." These are not really answers that are useful in your critical evaluation and may be an indication that speakers do not really know why they reached the conclusion they did.
 - Be especially critical of speakers who set up "either/or" options, because they artificially limit an issue or situation to two options when there are always more. Also be aware of people who over generalize, especially when those generalizations are based on stereotypically or prejudiced views.
 - Evaluate the speaker's message instead of his or her appearance, personality, or other characteristics, and direct your criticism to the message.
 - Be aware that critical evaluation isn't always quick and easy. Sometimes you may have to withhold judgment because your evaluation will take more time. Also keep in mind your evaluation may not be final, and you should be open to critical reflection and possible revisions later.
 - Avoid mind reading. This leads to jumping to conclusions, which shortcuts the critical evaluation process.

Listening Activity

Critical Listening In Various Contexts:

Getting integrated: Identify how critical listening might be useful for you in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.

Answer: Answers will vary but may be similar to the ones below:

Academic: Critical listening allows me to “read between the lines” and evaluate what my professor and classmates say. For example, during a discussion about immigration reform, I might notice that someone doesn’t discuss the economic benefits that come from migrant workers, only the negatives.

Professional: In a meeting discussing possible reasons why profits are down I may notice that someone is confusing facts and inferences. As a critical listener I could stop and help unpack the specifics of what was said so that we don’t assume a cause where there isn’t one.

Personal: I have an uncle who is always talking about conspiracy theories. He is pretty convincing because he cites sources and seems to know what he’s talking about. As a critical listener, I can intervene and ask him to explain his sources more. It turns out that most of them are not credible websites, which then makes his argument less convincing.

Civic: I can listen for fallacies in political leaders’ comments. For example, they may present something as having only two options when there are actually more. Or they may make a hasty generalization such as, “You can’t trust the school board here, they are all in the pocket of the superintendent.”

Listening Activity

Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening:

Bad speakers and messages are a common barrier to effective listening. Describe a time recently when your ability to listen was impaired by the poor delivery and/or content of another person.

Answer: Answers will vary but may be similar to the one below.

I recently saw a panel discussion during a film festival. It was in a rather large room, and one of the speakers adapted her presentation to the large room by using good volume and hand gestures to make her content interesting. Another speaker leaned back slightly in her chair and spoke with little volume and no engaging gestures or facial expressions. Although she had good content, it was difficult to listen because it was frustrating to have to strain to hear. The third speaker was somewhat engaging, but didn't seem prepared to answer the questions that were posed. She would just kind of restate the question without adding much useful content.

Listening Activity

Effective Critical Listening:

Apply the strategies for effective critical listening to a political message (a search for “political speech” or “partisan speech” on YouTube should provide you with many options). As you analyze the speech, make sure to distinguish between facts and inferences, evaluate a speaker’s supporting evidence, discuss how your own biases may influence your evaluation, and think beyond the message.

Answer: Answers will vary, but here’s an example.

The following speech was delivered by Gary Johnson, who was nominated by the Libertarian party for president in 2012.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjvdOWji7ng&noredirect=1>

Facts/Inferences: I guess we are left to infer that the fact that he’s been “an athlete his whole life” means that he’d be a good president. He keeps noting that things he did had “never been done before,” which we are left to infer is a good thing, but just because something is new doesn’t mean it’s good. He also says, “There is only one choice, there is going to be a Libertarian for president,” which he states as a fact, but one that we all know isn’t true.

Supporting Evidence: He notes that he vetoed more legislation than all the previous governors combined. He also gave more evidence about his own record, but nothing else that he stated had any supporting evidence.

My Own Biases: Since I’m not familiar with this candidate, I do not really have a sense of trust for him or way to evaluate him based on other information. Since Libertarians are not really included in the national level of politics, I don’t have the same background knowledge about them, which I realize also means I don’t respect them as much—even though that isn’t a very good reason to feel that way.

Beyond the Message: People who are state employees, their families, or other people who receive government assistance or benefits don’t seem like they would have their needs met by his message.

Listening Activity

Listening Diagnostic:

This listening diagnostic can be assigned as homework, a journal prompt, or a discussion board prompt. I have found it useful for reviewing the key content from this chapter.

- Do you consider yourself a good listener? Why or why not?
- What type of listening is most important to you? (informational, critical, empathetic)
- What listening style best describes you? (people, action, content, time-oriented)
- What is most difficult barrier that you have to overcome?
- What are some steps you can take to be a better listener?

Learning Goals: Speaking and Listening: Feedback/Constructive Criticism

Key Bullet Points:

- Evaluating others' speaking and listening with constructive criticism can be difficult. When giving feedback to others:
 - Be specific.
 - Be descriptive.
 - Be positive.
 - Be constructive.
 - Be realistic.
 - Be relevant.
 - Be specific and descriptive in your criticism.
 - Use relevant and realistic suggestions for improvement.
 - Set goals for next time.
- Self-evaluation can be difficult because people may think their performance was effective and therefore doesn't need critique or they may become their own worst critic, which can negatively affect self-efficacy. When giving feedback to yourself:
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses.
 - Evaluate yourself within the context of the task or assignment guidelines.
 - Set goals for next time.
 - Revisit goals and assess progress at regular intervals.

Feedback/Constructive Criticism Activity

Self-Critique Assessment:

First, watch your recorded speech and take notes on your speech. Note what you did well, what you need to work on, and things you noticed while watching the tape that you did not know you did while presenting.

Then type a 1-page essay (not a list) addressing the following questions. Answer each question in a separate paragraph. Put some thought into this because this assignment is meant to improve your skills as a public speaker between each speech. Follow the guidelines for typed assignments that are listed in the syllabus or you will lose points for incorrect formatting. Do not exceed one page or you will lose points. If you find that you have more than a page, exercise your editing skills.

Paragraph 1: What did you do well?

Paragraph 2: What are some weaknesses you noticed?

Paragraph 3: What were you surprised by (something you didn't know you did, or thought you did better/worse)?

Paragraph 4: What are at least three goals you would like set for the next time?

Remember that public speaking is situational. Critique yourself based on the criteria on which you were required to present. Don't nit-pick and focus on one aspect of your delivery because that is not the most important thing. Content and overall performance are much more important.

Feedback/Constructive Criticism Activity

Peer Feedback:

You will be graded on the feedback you provide to your peers. Comments should be constructive, relevant, and appropriate.

Speaker: _____

Content: "Well Done!"

Content: "Needs Improvement"

Delivery "Well Done!"

Delivery: "Needs Improvement"

**Primary Trait Analysis for Speaking Matrix
for Assessment of Oral Presentations**

	4 Highly Competent	3 Competent	2 Minimally Competent	1 Not Competent
Organization	Arrangement of ideas clearly related to topic; well organized with introduction, body, conclusion; good transitions; introduction includes attention-getter, statement of thesis, credibility information; conclusion includes summary and closure.	Conveyed a central idea or topic; most information presented in logical structure; adequate introduction, body, conclusion; adequate transitions.	Attempted to focus on an idea or topic; ideas were loosely connected to topic; structure unclear; introduction, body, conclusion detectable but not comprehensive; transitions unclear.	Had little or no focus on central idea or topic; no apparent logical structure; introduction, body, or conclusion absent; lacked transitions.
Language	Appropriate standards of usage for situation and audience; consistently used varied sentence structure and word choice; evidence of precise and vivid language; unfamiliar terms defined.	Used some varied sentence structure and word choice; unfamiliar terms easily interpreted; adequate standards of usage employed.	Unfamiliar terms not easily interpreted; little varied sentence structure and word choice; minimal evidence of appropriate standards of usage.	Inadequate standards of usage; no varied sentence structure and word choice; unfamiliar terms not defined.
Material	Content highly specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; evidence supported topic; connection between support and main points is clear; content was appropriate to situation and audience; information source accurately cited.	Content adequately specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; lacked support for some points; partial audience adaptation of content; some information sources cited.	Content minimally specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; minimal support; few information sources cited; little audience adaptation of content.	Content not specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; ideas not supported; information sources not cited; lacks audience adaptation of content.
Analysis	Presentation clearly adapted to the audience and situation; approach and structure highly consistent with overall purpose; strong evidence of critical thinking.	Some evidence of adaptation to the audience and situation; approach and structure consistent with overall purpose; some evidence of critical thinking.	Inconsistent adaptation to audience and situation; approach and structure inconsistent with overall purpose; inconsistent evidence of critical thinking.	Limited adaptation to audience and situation; approach and structure not appropriate for the overall purpose; lacks evidence of critical thinking.
Nonverbal Delivery	Did not read from notes and/or audio visual materials; clearly engaged audience through consistent eye contact and gestures; responsive to audience reaction.	Referred occasionally to notes and/or audio visual materials; engaged audience through eye contact and gestures; aware of audience reaction.	Relied heavily on notes and/or audio visual materials; exhibited minimal awareness of audience; infrequent eye contact or gestures; some distracting mannerisms.	Read directly from notes and/or audio visual materials; exhibited little or no audience awareness, gestures, or eye contact; frequent, distracting mannerisms.
Verbal Delivery	Voice varied in pitch, volume, rate, and emphasis; appropriate enthusiasm; free of fillers (ahs, uhms, ers); highly effective articulation and pronunciation.	Some variation in pitch, volume, rate, and emphasis; some fillers (ahs, uhms, ers); effective articulation and pronunciation.	Limited variation in pitch, volume, rate, and emphasis; some distracting fillers (ahs, uhms, ers); minimally effective articulation and pronunciation.	No variation in pitch, volume, rate, or emphasis; fillers (ahs, uhms, ers) detract from the presentation; lack of clear articulation and pronunciation.

Accommodations will be made for persons with communication disabilities and / or differences.

**Modified Primary Trait Analysis for Speaking Matrix
for Assessment of Oral Presentations**

	Highly Competent	Competent	Minimally Competent	Not Competent
Organization	Main points are balanced, divided logically into sub-points, and clearly related to topic; well organized with introduction, body, conclusion; effective transitions are included between introduction and body, between the body and conclusion, and between the main points; introduction includes effective attention-getter, thesis, statement of credibility, statement of relevance; conclusion includes summary and closure.	Conveyed a central idea or topic; most information presented in logical structure; adequate introduction, body, conclusion; adequate transitions.	Attempted to focus on an idea or topic; ideas were loosely connected to topic; structure unclear; introduction, body, conclusion detectable but not comprehensive; transitions unclear.	Had little or no focus on central idea or topic; no apparent logical structure; introduction, body, or conclusion absent; lacked transitions.
Language	Language is conducive for oral presentation resulting in a fluent speech; consistently used creative and memorable sentence structure and word choice; concrete, descriptive language is used; vocabulary is appropriate, slang and jargon are avoided or defined.	Used some varied sentence structure and word choice; unfamiliar terms easily interpreted; adequate standards of usage employed; minor fluency hiccups due to language choice.	Unfamiliar terms not easily interpreted; little varied sentence structure and word choice; minimal evidence of appropriate standards of usage; fluency hiccups due to language choice distracted from content.	Inadequate standards of usage; no varied sentence structure and word choice; unfamiliar terms not defined.
Material	Clear, complete oral citations were included in the speech; content was specific to the topic, sources were credible, relevant, and interesting; sufficient material was cited to support each main point.	Oral citations were clearly present but may lack minor details; content adequately specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; lacked support for some minor points.	Some oral citations were missing or incomplete, content minimally specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; minimal support.	Sources were not orally cited; content not specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting; ideas not supported.

Analysis	Topic is made relevant to audience in the introduction and relevance is built throughout the body of the speech; Relevance is established for the specific audience; approach and structure highly consistent with overall purpose, logical progression and building of ideas; strong evidence of critical thinking.	Topic is made relevant to the audience in the introduction and in some other parts of the speech; relevance is established to a more general audience than the people present; approach and structure consistent with overall purpose; some evidence of critical thinking.	Attempt to establish relevance is made at one point in the speech; relevance is not established for a specific audience; approach and structure inconsistent with overall purpose; inconsistent evidence of critical thinking.	Limited adaptation to audience and situation; approach and structure not appropriate for the overall purpose; lacks evidence of critical thinking.
Nonverbal Delivery	Did not read from notes and/or audio visual materials; clearly engaged audience through sweeping, deliberate eye contact, purposeful gestures/movement, and facial expressions appropriate for content.	Referred occasionally to notes and/or audio visual materials; engaged audience through eye contact, gestures/movement, and facial expressions.	Relied heavily on notes and/or audio visual materials; exhibited minimal awareness of audience; infrequent eye contact or gestures; some distracting mannerisms.	Read directly from notes and/or audio visual materials; exhibited little or no audience awareness, gestures, or eye contact; frequent, distracting mannerisms.
Verbal Delivery	Voice varied in pitch, volume, rate, emphasis, inflection, and rhythm; appropriate enthusiasm; free of fillers (ahs, uhms, ers); highly effective articulation and pronunciation.	Some variation in pitch, volume, rate, and emphasis; minor fillers (ahs, uhms, ers); effective articulation and pronunciation.	Limited variation in pitch, volume, rate, and emphasis; some distracting fillers (ahs, uhms, ers); minimally effective articulation and pronunciation.	No variation in pitch, volume, rate, or emphasis; fillers (ahs, uhms, ers) detract from the presentation; lack of clear articulation and pronunciation.

Sample Speech Evaluation Form

E = Excellent, S = Satisfactory, N = Needs Improvement, U = Unsatisfactory

Category:	Comments:	E	S	N	U
Organization (20%) - Introduction - Main points - Conclusion - Transitions					
Language (10%) - Writing for speaking/fluency - Creative/memorable wording - Concrete/descriptive wording - Slang/jargon - Listenability of speech					
Material (20%) - Oral citations - Content relevance to topic - Source credibility - Novelty of sources - Balance of supporting material					
Analysis (15%) - Relevance in introduction - Relevance in body - Proximity of relevance - Progression of ideas					
Delivery (20%) Nonverbal - Eye contact - Gestures/movement - Facial expressions Verbal - Vocal variety - Verbal fillers - Articulation					
Time:	Outline (15%)	Total Grade:			

*Note: Find an editable version of this evaluation sheet at:
<http://www.eiu.edu/learninggoals/speaking.php>*