

**STRATEGY OPTIONS:
DESIGNING PERSUASIVE AND INFORMATIVE PRESENTATIONS
FOR PUBLIC POLICY DISCOURSE**

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HOW TO DESIGN A PERSUASIVE MESSAGE

Influence Task #1: Establish Credibility and Liking with your Audience

I. Assumptions

- A. Building credibility and liking are identity and interpersonal objectives always at work in communication situations.
- B. Building credibility and liking through communication involves learning workable strategies to create and manage trust.
- C. Identities are situated and socially constructed.
- D. Any persuasive strategy designed to create a positive identity has payoffs and tradeoffs.
- E. Effective persuaders devote some time to establish their credibility (their ethos) before, during, and after their presentations.

II. Strategies for Building Ethos

A. Demonstrate Propriety or Situational Appropriateness

- 1. Meet or exceed the other's expectations for you.
- 2. Show deference/avoid disrespect.
 - a. Avoid any implication that the audience deserves to be blamed.
 - b. Avoid a tone of moral superiority.
 - c. Avoid excessive pressure.
- 4. Convey respect.
 - a. Your tone could suggest joint inquiry.
 - b. Reveal an understanding of the audience's position, or desire to know more about their view.
 - c. Endorse views or values of the audience.

B. Establish expertise through self-descriptions.

- 1. Principle of articulation: Assert (directly or nonverbally) that one possesses particular characteristics:
 - a. Expertise
 - Education
 - Experience/Occupation
 - Intelligence/Knowledge
 - Helpfulness
 - Efficiency
 - b. Trust
 - Truthful, sincere
 - Responsible
 - Reliable
 - Trustworthy

2. Provide evidence for your self-descriptions.
 - b. Elaborate upon or specify past achievements or problem-solving ability.
 - c. Show uniqueness on important characteristics.
Display confidence.

C. Establish ethos through acclaiming. Acclaiming is stating that one is responsible for producing a positive event (Benoit & Benoit).

1. Entitling: Maximize one's responsibility for producing positive events.
2. Enhancements: Maximize the desirability of positive events that one is associated with.

Acclaims can be focused on:

- a. Policy issues
 1. past deeds
 2. future plans
 3. general goals
- b. People
 1. personal qualities
 2. leadership ability

Elaborating acclaims can occur by:

- a. Stressing the **extent** of one's accomplishments or proposals
- b. Stressing the **effects** of one's accomplishments on the audience
- c. Stressing the **persistence** of one's efforts
- d. Stressing the **consistency** of one's actions.

D. Express one's values. Values are abstract ideals, positive or negative, that represent a person's beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals (Rokeach).

1. Provide self-descriptions that utilize the audience's values.
e.g., the family, work ethic, peace, freedom
2. Expressions of values can occur in various ways:
 - a. Assertion of value-beliefs.
 - b. Self-disclosure narratives of personal/intimate information

E. Use Motrels (Motive Revelations) to help establish your trustworthiness. Convey that you are a reliable sincere person whose intentions are honorable.

1. Disclose your intentions:
 - a. Describe **purpose** of your presentation or interaction.
 - b. Describe the **process** you will take in your interaction.

c. Describe how both you and your audience might benefit.

2. Promote positive intentions/attitudes:

a. Promote equality—acknowledging their expertise, asking questions, “Would you mind if...”

b. Promote sharing of concerns, feelings” To tell you the truth, I have to admit that...”

c. Promote flexibility by offering options, making suggestions, checking for agreement: “Would it be better for you if...?”

d. Avoid superiority, indifference, or manipulation

F. Engage in Exemplification: Behave in ways consistent with one’s self-description.

1. Utilize relevant knowledge by citing evidence/evidence sources.

2. Demonstrate good judgment.

a. Show clear understanding of the options and their implications.

b. Remind the audience of past occasions on which the advocate has been correct.

c. Show understanding of the situation; invite discussion.

G. Use Nonverbal Signs of Authority

1. Titles

2. Clothes

3. Objects, Artifacts

4. Symbols

H. Engage in Empathy or Perspective-taking.

Example: The Ben Duffy Technique: anticipating and answering potential issues at the start

Since we haven’t met before I thought it might be helpful for you if I start off telling you a little about me, my background, and my experiences. So would it be OK if I start off that way?

As my card indicates, my name I is xxx, and my background is...I’ve been in the business of helping people....(see commonality at this point). I tend to ask a lot of questions because I feel it’s important to understand all the economics involved in any situation before I feel like I can propose a solution. What is important to most of my clients is that they get the most economical xxx and not just the cheapest. My company, ZZZ, is located in Columbus, OH. We are the only company that I know of in the ...business that can offer a business like yours....

I have not spoken with your company until now. Our files indicate that you use xxx exclusively.....

III. Build Liking with your Audience.

A. Demonstrate liking. Some strategies are to:

1. Indicate sincere interest in the other.
2. Give compliments; praise the audience.
To be understood, make sure the compliment is clear, specific, sincere, & discriminating.
3. Engage in contact. Spend time just talking with your audience before your presentation.
4. Engage in cooperative activities with the other, or give gifts.

B. Establish commonalities.

1. Point out (or ask about) areas of common interest. “Do you happen to know...?”
2. Indicate sincere interest in the topic.
3. Invite further discussion on area of interest.
4. OR create common experiences with your audience.

C. Demonstrate similarity.

1. Describe common background and interests.
2. State or show similar demographic characteristics: age, religion
3. Express similar values, attitudes.

D. Engage in self-disclosure. Tell your audience something more about your beliefs, views, or values.

IV. Manage Trust with your Audience.

These strategies are **only relevant** when you believe you have audience members who distrust you.

A. Demonstrate fairness.

- a. Acknowledge opposing views.
- b. Deal with limitations in the position being advanced.

B. Demonstrate that one is not motivated solely by self-interest.

1. Acknowledge the audience’s negative beliefs and refute them directly.
2. Argue that both are to gain from the persuader’s position.
3. Engage in humor or self-ridicule.
4. Show that one has endured personal sacrifice to advance a position.
5. Call for a fair hearing.

C. Reveal compatibility of your values with those of your audience. 1.

1. Indicate that the activities one engages in reflects values similar to the audience's.
2. Argue that one does not denigrate the values of the audience but in fact holds them as well.

D. Tell a story that presents you in a positive light.

E. Use dialogue motive revelations to help ensure that you are clear to your audience:

1. "I'm telling you the truth..."
2. "Here's what is important."
3. "Does that make sense?"

F. Facilitate certainty about yourself:

1. Stressing your consistency of behavior over time
2. Stressing that others have similar views about yourself
3. Stress your distinctiveness

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Influence Task #2 – Inquiry: The Process of Discovering and Talking about Audience Needs and Desires

- Called various things – the process of inquiry or exigency (rhetoric), process of discovering needs and desires (sales, business)
- Figuring out what to say about audience needs and desires is critical to persuasive success
- Not always an issue of controversy, but if you are not sure than you need to spend some time here.

I. Beginning Assumptions

- A. Motivations: People agree with us for their reasons, not ours.
Often these reasons are hidden
- A. Persuasion involves a deliberative process:
Helping the audience reason about solutions to their problems.
- B. The persuader’s task is to convince audience of an “exigency”
- C. The persuader’s task is to overcome the audience’s perception that they have “no needs”.

II. Thinking about Types of Needs in Commercial Persuasion Situations (Marketing, sales)

- A. Audiences have two types of needs:
- B. Task Needs
 1. more quality of ...
 2. more quantity of ...
 3. less cost or effort
- C. Personal Needs
 1. Respect – our expertise be thought well of
 2. Approval – we want to be liked
 3. Control – power
 4. Recognition – high status

III. Eliciting Information about Types of Needs

- A. The interactional structure of discovery calls for questioning & listening skills

	Have	Don't Have
Want	(e.g., clothes, car) The motivation is want more, to accumulate, help define who you are, to maintain or keep what have, allows you to do things	(e.g., degree, money, own home, better car, pet, boat) The motivation is identity building, about what is new and different, thinking about alternatives, have the

	Ask what you like about it	vision to think of a better way to live Ask why you want it
Don't Want	(e.g., debt, homework, hangovers, bad roommates, finals, love handles) The motivation is to minimize or get rid of these things, want to solve or change these situations Ask what you don't like about it **Most Persuasive Situations Fall in Here**	(e.g., children, disease, marriage) The motivation is to avoid/prevent Ask why you don't want these things

- Good sales people/marketers think and talk about their products in terms of Don't want/have and Don't have/don't want

IV. Behavioral Structure of Motivation

- We have what we want → No change
- We don't want what we have → Produces a problem that we desire to solve
- We want what we don't have → Produces a vision for something new/different
- We don't want what we don't have → Produces desire to avoid or prevent certain situations

V. Eliciting Information about the Other's Motivation; Lines of questioning for a target audience

- What do you like most about...? What else? What else?
- On the other hand, what do you like least? What else? What else?
- Just suppose.... What would you create/do? Why?
- From your past experiences, what would you avoid? What else? Why?

Below are lots of strategy options. These strategies come from effective persuasive presentations in business, political, and public affairs. Effective speakers often use one or more of them. Use other strategies if they are appropriate; select the fewest possible and best strategic ideas.

Constructing a Persuasive Message – from a *noncommercial* point of view

- Strategies for Demonstrating that a situation Requires Immediate Consideration
- Develop an analysis of the problem with the audience by selecting one of two approaches:

Approach #1: Focus on the Present Reality: Argue that the reality of the audience's present circumstances is intolerable.

A. Five issues need to be addressed; below are persuasive message strategies that can address these issues.

B. *Magnitude of the problem* - The problem with the audience is they don't think the problem is as big as the persuader thinks the problem is. Frequently the audience thinks that acting on a problem isn't important unless the problem is big.

Describe the magnitude of the problem

1. Overview the number of people affected or the extent of the threat
2. Indicate multiple implications of the problem
3. Show that the problem is more serious than others
4. Suggest that the problem's effects are enduring
5. Indicate that effects are yet to be determined

C. Impact of the problem – the effects of the problem, the consequences of the problem.

Demonstrate the impact of the problem

1. Precisely identify the ways individuals are affected by the situation
2. Show that central values are threatened
3. Show that things we take for granted are threatened
4. Show that those involved must endure a multitude of problems

Show the numerous consequences that the problem will lead to (e.g., getting a speeding ticket leads to fines, points on your license, possibly lose license, higher insurance rates)

D. Focus on those affected by the problem – zero in on who is affected by the problem. Your audience is either the people directly affected or the people the audience likes/cares for/loves.

Focus on those affected by the problem

1. Convey a sense of vulnerability
The audience will experience the problem.
2. Create concern for others
 - a. Show why those affected deserve concern
 - b. Argue that those suffering are not responsible
 - c. Argue that those suffering are seeking little
 - d. Argue that those suffering are not able to solve the problem

E. Present the Problem as an Obligation or an Opportunity or both

1. Develop a sense of obligation
 - a. Directly emphasize the audience's obligation
 - b. Show that actions of audience have the potential to affect others
 - c. Remind audience of those who have helped them
 - d. Show that audience possesses characteristics that make them ideally suited to perform the desired action
 - e. Show that others less able are willing to perform action
2. Develop a sense of opportunity
 - a. Argue that performing the action will increase the audience's sense of self-worth
 - b. Explain how good they would feel
 - c. Explain benefits that are unsuspected by the audience

F. Stress urgency

1. The remedy is easy to implement
2. The problem is particularly acute now
3. The situation is deteriorating
4. The time for action is limited

II. A Second Approach to Developing Audience Awareness about their Needs and Desires: Expand their Ideal

- A.** Not used as much because it takes some skill.
But works well when the idea is very foreign to the audience
- B.** Issues that need to be articulated in expanding the ideal
1. **A more nearly ideal state can be realized** – get people to think about and imagine different ways of being and thinking (e.g., Betty Ferdin's *The Feminine Mystique*, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.).
 2. **Help the audience visualize the better state.**
 3. **Argue that the new ideal is attainable**
 - a. We know that this rhetoric flops if audience thinks that the ideal sounds great but people don't know how to do this
 - b. The persuader has to act as a teacher and show them what to do, give guidance and exact suggestions

4. Argue that the new ideal is desirable – show that it will make the life better

What would be emotionally desirable?

What new situation would be desirable?

What new identity would be desirable?

OTHER IDEAS FOR HELPING THE AUDIENCE GRASP THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PROBLEMS

1. The problem is a source of danger, suffering or degradation to those who experience it.
 2. The problem indirectly or directly injures the audience.
 3. The problem has harmed or destroyed others like us in the past.
 4. The problem prevents the operation of an ideal or growth toward it.
 5. The problem is already great or is growing in importance.
 6. The problem is a fundamental one in that it causes other problems.
 7. The problem is recognized by others, such as experts, large numbers of people, admirable people, or a majority of citizens.
 8. The problem makes our society or its institutions operate ineffectively.
- Both of these ways of talking about problems or expanding the ideal is important
 - This moves us to the advocacy task. Now that I have shown you that there is a problem you will need to address how to fix the audience's problem/needs.

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Influence Task #3: Engage in ADVOCACY

- I. Assumptions about Advocacy
 - A. In advocacy, people don't agree with our ideas; they agree with only what they imagine our ideas will do for them.
 - B. There are 3 general approaches to take in advocacy; the situation will dictate which approach to take.
 - C. Advocacy strategies can overlap with Inquiry/Problem strategies.

THREE APPROACHES TO ADVOCACY

Approach #1: Give advice or Issue a Behavioral Directive

- A. Propose an action and say how it is the proper response to the situation.
Common example: giving advice
- A. Sources of directives
 - a. Habits – you should do this because it has worked for me
 - b. Social customs – you should do this because it is the morally correct thing to do
 - c. Regulations, laws – you should do this because that is the law
- B. Potential issues in applying behavioral directives – why people may not agree with your behavioral directive
 - a. We may disagree about the nature of a situation
 - b. We may disagree about the label applied to the situation
 - c. We may disagree as to whether a particular category implies an automatic course of action
- C. Strategies for defending behavioral directives.
 - a. Supply clear illustrations
 - b. Show that your definition is consistent with the views of others.

Approach #2: Give your proposal and predict its consequences.

This is the more common approach to advocacy

Doing each step helps increase likelihood audience will agree.

- A. Explicitly describe your proposal, or your idea**
 - 1. What costs, time, participants
 - 2. The more detailed the proposal the more likely the audience will agree because they have more information to help them understand
- B. Compared to alternative solutions, the proposed action yields the most desirable consequences.**
 - 1. We always have alternative solutions in our mind so a fundamental practice is to compare the solution to the other alternatives

2. Even if the audience hasn't thought of the alternatives if your solution is well reasoned the presentation of alternatives will only increase likelihood that the audience will agree with you
- C. Strategies for defending consequences
1. Show that the proposal is the best solution to the problem
Solvency: Why will your idea solve the problem or meet your need?
 2. Show that the proposal will relieve the distress caused by the problem
 3. Show why the proposal is preferable to other alternatives
- D. **Show that additional consequences are desirable**– to be effective with a wide number of people you need to do more than say that your idea will meet solve public needs. Some effective strategies are:
1. Immediate effects of solving the problem lead to additional desirable consequences.
 2. Benefits of the proposal are enduring
 3. The proposal satisfies a central human need.
 4. The proposal is likely to yield additional benefits.
 5. The proposal may avoid disadvantages that are likely to occur with other alternatives.
- E. **Show that disadvantages of your proposal are few or tolerable** – if we ignore the disadvantages of our ideas we will lose audience members, as they know that there is no perfect idea. So acknowledge any disadvantages and refute them by using these strategies:
1. Disadvantages are unlikely to occur
 2. The proposal will not produce an intolerable situation
 3. The disadvantages would be inevitable with any alternative
 4. We currently endure worse circumstances for less gain
 5. What the audience considers a disadvantage is not viewed as such by those who are affected
- F. **Show that your proposal is consistent with your audience's values or identity.**
1. Articulate the values of your proposal,
 2. Show that your ideas are connected to something that the audience values.
- H. **Explain the Personal BENEFITS of your proposal.**
BENEFIT: How does it result in a feeling of satisfaction?
Use personal appeals:
1. POWER appeals:
Increased control of people, time, information, procedures
Desired results
Increased effectiveness
 2. RECOGNITION appeals:
Leadership/hero

- Being first
- Uniqueness/originality
- Visibility
- Chance to make it big
- Setting example for others
- Enhanced self-esteem
- 3. APPROVAL appeals:
 - popular idea
 - protection of reputation
- 4. RESPECT appeals
 - recognition as an expert
 - solid ideas, plans
 - show skill

IV. Tips on Disagreements over Consequences and ways of Talking about Consequences

A. Types of Disagreements

1. Your audience may disagree that a particular consequence is likely to occur.
2. Your audience may disagree may disagree about the desirability of those consequences.
3. Your audience may disagree regarding evaluation of a complete set of consequence of a course of action. That is because the audience has differing priorities.

B. Two Ways of Talking about Consequences: Gain-Framed and Lose-Framed Messages

1. **Gain-Framed Message:** If you do X, you will have desirable consequences.
2. **Loss-Framed Message:** If you don't do X, you will have undesirable consequences.

O'Keefe (2006) finds no differences in persuasiveness between these two types of message forms.

Approach #3: Create a Meaningful Experience for your audience with your proposal.

The Evolution of Innovation in Consumer Message Design:

1. 1900's Product Focus

1. functional features and benefits
 2. economic benefits
- B. 1950's Brand Focus
1. Identity and status benefits
 2. Emotional benefits
- C. 2000 Experience Focus
1. Meaning benefits

Help the audience see that your ideas will result in a meaningful experience.

Experiences with Global Appeal

Accomplishment-a sense of satisfaction that can result from focus, productivity

Beauty-appreciation of qualities that given pleasure to the senses or spirit

Creation—the sense of having produced something new and original

Community—a sense of unity with others around us

Duty—The willing application of oneself to a responsibility

Enlightenment—clear understanding

Freedom—the sense of living without unwanted constraints

Harmony—The balanced and pleasing relationship of parts to a whole

Justice—the assurance of equitable and unbiased treatment

Oneness-A sense of unity with everything around us

Redemption-Atonement from past failure or decline

Security-The freedom from worry about loss

Truth-A commitment to honesty and integrity

Validation-The recognition of oneself as a valued individual worthy of respect.

Wonder-Awe in the presence of a creation beyond one's understanding.

Diller, S., Shedroff, N., Rhea, D. (2006). Making meaning: How successful businesses deliver meaningful customer experiences. Berkeley Press, CA: New Riders Press.

HOW TO DESIGN A PERSUASIVE MESSAGE

Influence Task #4

Make Your Message Believable: Use Arguments and/or Narrative

I. Assumptions about Message Believability

- A. Focus on overcoming the state of “I just don’t believe what you’re saying.”
- B. All message strategies address audience beliefs
All messages are judged by audience members as being believable or not believable.

II. Two Approaches to Making Persuasive Messages Believable

A. Use Narrative

- 1. Common forms:
 - a. Stories
 - b. Testimonials
- 2. Criteria for narrative effectiveness
 - a. Narrative coherence: Does the story make sense to your audience?
 - b. Narrative fidelity: Does the story fit the facts?
 - c. Absorption: Is the story interesting?
- 3. Distinct capabilities of narrative

Overcoming resistance
Facilitating information processing
Providing social connections
Addressing emotional and existential issues

B. Use Arguments

- 1. Arguments consist of evidence and reasoning
 - a. Evidence is the foundation for arguments
 - b. Aristotle classified evidence as inartistic proof (i.e., objects, bring in proof that you can see and experience, demonstrations, visual aids) and artistic proof (i.e., verbal reasoning, further arguments)
- 2. Evidence – common forms of evidence
 - a. Facts
 - b. Statistics
 - c. Opinion evidence – someone else’s opinion, typically from an authority on the subject
 - d. Examples – single cases or stories

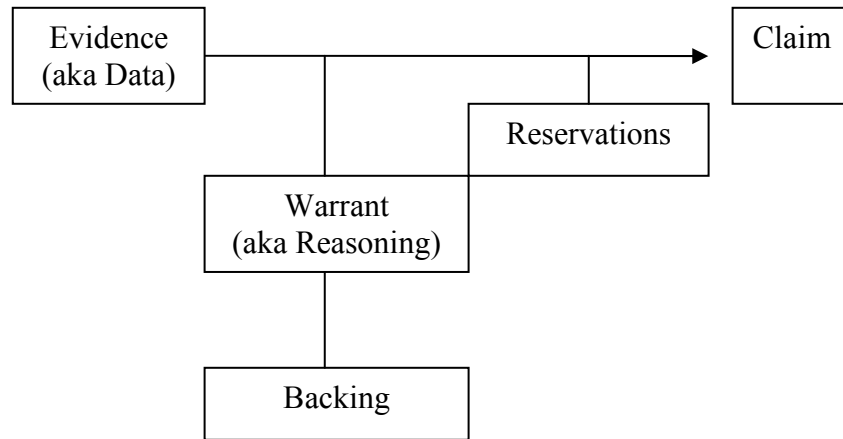
G. Criteria for Testing Evidence – How do you evaluate evidence? What is good evidence? Here are some basic criteria:

- A. External consistency
 - 1. Is the evidence consistent with other known knowledge?
 - 2. Judge evidence as being better if it is consistent with other evidence forms
- B. Internal consistency
 - 1. Is the evidence clear? Does the evidence make sense?
 - 2. Is the evidence consistent within itself?
- C. Accessibility
 - 1. Is the evidence verifiable?
 - 2. If we can verify the evidence that means it is accessible
- D. Source Credibility
 - 1. Is the source competent?
 - 2. Is the source unprejudiced and reliable?
- E. Sufficiency and Recency
 - 1. Is there enough evidence?
 - 2. Is the evidence the most recent available?
 - 3. Multiple forms of evidence are often seen as more persuasive
- F. Relevance
 - 1. Is the evidence actually relevant to the claim?
 - 2. How does the evidence pertain to the topic?
 - 3. This is a common problem
- G. Additional criteria for evaluating testimony
 - 1. Is the authority really an authority?
 - 2. Are the authority's qualifications self-evident to receivers?
 - 3. Is the authority acceptable to the receivers?
- H. Additional criteria for evaluating examples or case studies:
 - 1. Does the example actually illustrate your point?
 - 2. Is the example too lengthy to the point of the audience forgetting about the original point to be made?
 - 3. Would a hypothetical example clarify better than a real example?
- I. Additional criteria for evaluating statistics
 - 1. Are they accurate?
 - 2. Are you aware of counter statistics that the audience should know?
 - 3. Have you sufficiently simplified the statistics for clarity, yet retained necessary data?
 - 4. Do you need a visual aid to clarify and add impact to the statistics?
 - 5. Statistics are easy to use and easy to mislead.

III. The Toulmin Model

- A. Steven Toulmin argued that any argument has basic components:
 - (E) Evidence – informative statements used as support for other statements.
 - 1. These must be believed by the listener before they can function as evidence.
 - (W) Warrant – statements that justify the movement from evidence to claim.
 - 2. They state the reasoning involved in moving from evidence to claim
 - 3. Warrants tend to be unstated and assumed
 - (C) Claim – statement that the arguer seeks to establish in a unit of proof.

4. The product of evidence and warrant
 5. Statements of what we believe
- (B) Backing – general body of knowledge presupposed by the warrant
6. evidence that supports your reasoning
- (R) Reservations – limit the claim’s applicability by specifying circumstances when the claim will not hold true.



IV. Common Types of Reasoning and Criteria for Assessing Reasoning

- A. According to Toulmin we tend to use 4-6 forms of reasoning in everyday argument
- B. *Reasoning from Testimony or Authority*: may come from an expert or an observer
 1. Example: Mayor Coleman said that there is inadequate parking in downtown Columbus (Data/Evidence). So I believe that there is inadequate parking in downtown Columbus (Claim).
 - a. What is the warrant for this argument? Reasoning from testimony or authority, the mayor said it so it must be true.
 - b. Is this a good argument?- can be decided by whether the mayor is knowledgeable about the issue and whether we have reasons to trust/believe him?
 2. Tests of Authoritative reasoning:
 - a. Is the source that is giving the evidence knowledgeable about the topic?
 - b. Do we have reasons to trust the source, to think the source is believable?
 - c. Is there a time when the source has been wrong?
- C. *Argument from Generalization*: use of specific instances to prove a generality
 1. Example: John, who sat in the front, studied hard in 628 last quarter and got an A (Evidence). Mary, who sat next to John, studied hard in 628 and got an A (Evidence). Tom, who sat in the back, also studied hard and got

an A (Evidence). Therefore, if you study hard in 628 you will get an A (Claim).

a. Reasoning here is from generalizations

2. Tests for Generalizations:

a. Are enough instances given to justify the conclusion? (e.g., this is only 3 students there are hundreds that take 628 each year) –

b. Are the instances representative or typical? (e.g., But John, Mary and Tom are all honors students)

c. Are there any negative instances? (e.g., What about Bob who studied hard but got an E)

d. Are the instances actually true?

e. Tests for generalization also apply to statistics.

D. *Argument from Analogy* - since two things are alike in all essential respects, one or more additional respects belonging to the first will also belong to the second; argument by comparison

1. Example: Oregon tightened up its drivers' license regulations and the rate of accidents dropped (evidence). We should do the same thing Ohio to lower the number of accidents (Claim).

a. Warrant – reasoning from analogy

2. Tests of Analogies:

a. Do the objects differ in any significant aspects? (e.g., Oregon has very different geographic features, they have mountains)

b. Are the listed similarities really significant?

c. Are the facts upon which the analogy is based really reliable?

E. *Argument from Causation* - argument from causes to effect, effect to cause, or even effect to effect; something produces some effect.

1. Example: The price of raw steel is increasing (Evidence). I predict that the prices of products made from steel will also go up (claim)

2. Tests for argument from causation:

a. Is the cause adequate to produce the effect?

b. Could some other cause produce the effect?

c. Are there other causes that could influence this relationship? (e.g., gas prices are going up also)

F. *Argument from Sign* – using a symptom or outward mark as evidence of the presence of some state or condition that can't be directly observed in itself

1. The street is wet this morning. We must have had rain last night

2. Tests for argument from sign:

a. How frequently do these conditions occur together?

b. Is the relationship reciprocal?

c. Do other signs corroborate?

G. *Deductive arguments*

V. Evaluating Extended Arguments: Use the Reasonableness Standard

1. Normative Clarity – Does the persuader explicitly state his/her assumptions?
2. Situation – Does the persuader consider the specific features of the situation?
3. Consequences – Does the persuader consider the concrete implications of their views?
4. Individual Persons – Does the persuader consider the interests and concerns of the specific audience?
5. Precedent – Does the persuader consider relevant precedents?
6. Adequacy of Specific Arguments using Standards – Does the persuader advance logical arguments?

VI. When Arguments Go Wrong: Fallacies

- A. A fallacy is an argument that is flawed by irrelevant or inadequate evidence, erroneous reasoning, or improper expression
- B. Nature of fallacies
 1. Fallacies are appealing, deceptive, and hard to recognize

VII. Categories of Fallacies

- A. Fallacies of faulty reasoning – arguments fail to meet appropriate tests of reasoning.
 1. False analogy – compares two things that are not alike in significant respects or that have critical points of difference.
 - a. The success of the 40 hour work week in making corporate America efficient and productive suggests that we should use it on farms as well.
 2. Hasty Generalization – Draws a conclusion about a class based on too few or on an atypical example.
 - a. I owned two MG's – a midget and an MGB – and they gave me nothing but trouble. The choke and the batteries froze up on the "B" and the clutches went out on both cars. They were always in the shop. MG's are poorly constructed and I think they should be avoided.
 3. False Cause
 - a. Post hoc – mistakes temporal succession for causal sequence. It is assumed that because two events are associated in time, one event must have caused the other.
 - A. John Hinckley shot President Reagan after seeing violent acts on TV. Therefore, violence on TV must have influenced his behavior.
 - b. Single Cause – occurs when an advocate attributes only one cause to a complex problem
 - A. Poor communication is the reason for the high American divorce rate.

- B. Fallacies of argument – appeal to audience prejudices rather than substantive evidence or sound reasoning
1. Ad Hominem – “to the person,” an irrelevant attack on the person or the source originating an argument instead of responding to substantial issues raised in the argument
 - a. George: I think the draft is a vital part of our national defense and helps our people develop a sense of discipline and responsibility.
James: Your favor reinstating the draft because you are too old to serve. If you were 18, I bet you would be the first to say the draft is an unfair form of government control.
 2. Ad Populum – “to the people,” occurs when the substance of an argument is avoided and the advocate appeals instead to popular opinion as a justification for the claim
 - a. 85% of those polled believe fluoride in water causes cancer. Therefore, we should ban fluoride from our water supplies because of its consequences.
 3. Ad Vereundiam – “appeal to authority,” appeals to an unqualified, unidentified, or biased source to support a claim
 - a. I heard the other day that an article in a medical journal questioned the safety of NutraSweet, so I am going to stop buying NutraSweet products.
 4. Appeal to tradition – when someone claims that we should continue to do things the way we have always done them simply because we have always done them that way.
 - a. Prof Jones: “Why should we change our grading system? We’ve had simple letter grades without plus or minus distinctions in this college for over ten years and it’s worked fine.”
- C. Fallacies of language use
1. Equivocation – exploits the multiple meanings of a word to lead to a false conclusion
 - a. You shouldn’t take that course in reasoning because it is supposed to improve your ability to argue; you argue too much with your friends now!
 2. Emotive language – manipulates the connotative meaning of words to establish a claim without proof
 - a. Once in a generation there’s a breakthrough so revolutionary it can change forever the way people tan.
- D. Other fallacies lacking data or premises that appropriately support the claim
1. Begging the question – assumes a premise as evidence for an argument the very claim or point that is in question.
 - a. The soul is immortal because it lives forever.
 2. Non sequiter – contains a claim that is irrelevant to or unsupported by the evidence or premises purportedly supporting it.
 3. Straw man – attacks a weakened form of an opponent’s argument or an argument the opponent did not advance.

- a. “With AIDS being the problem it is, I think this country is going to have to get tough. I think that within the next decade we’re going to have to enforce mandatory AIDS testing for everyone. Harry: What a bad idea. This country would never have the ability to pay for testing. If we can’t afford it, we shouldn’t do it.
- 4. Slippery slope – assumes, without evidence, that a given event is the first in a series of steps that will lead inevitably to some outcome.
 - a. Afghanistan...has the dubious distinction of being the third nation contiguous to the USSR to have been invaded by Soviet troops in the past forty years, following Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. If the Soviets succeed in subverting the Afghan people, which nation – adjacent or otherwise – will be next on their list?

VI. REASONING THROUGH DIALOGUE

1. *Mutual Knowledge*: try to find common ground through initial explanations.
Initiate new perspectives/viewpoints.
Elicit information from each other and from others.
2. Extend each other’s ideas.
Convergence: add to mutual knowledge by finding out how ideas are related.
3. *Coherence*: How well do explanations make sense?
Commitment to frame questions and claims in ways that allow evidence to be brought to bear on them.
Commitment to expand collectively valid statements.
Commitment to allow any belief to be subjected to criticism if it will advance the discourse.

HOW TO DESIGN A PERSUASIVE MESSAGE

Influence Task #5: Make your Message Memorable.

Make your ideas sticky!

- I. Assumptions about making messages impressive and memorable
 - A. The task is to overcome the case of “I’ve forgotten.”
 - B. That is, the task is to overcome message decay.

- II. **General Strategies for Developing Memorable Messages**
 - A. **Be concrete**
 - 1. Use materials that utilize more than one of our senses
 - 2. Specify concrete implications of general assertions
 - 3. Use vivid description

 - B. **Relate contentions to concepts already understood by the audience**
 - 1. Provide a familiar framework
 - 2. Simplify numerical information
 - 3. Utilize the audience’s experiences

 - C. **Emphasize implications of your ideas in terms of the audience’s values.**
 - 1. Indicate how audience members are affected
 - 2. Indicate how other people are affected
 - 3. Indicate how specific individuals are involved
 - 4. Indicate implications for other objects of concern

 - D. **Encourage audience participation.**
 - 1. Use rhetorical questions
 - 2. Encourage the audience to provide supporting examples
 - 3. Use suspense
 - 4. Use sentence structure to invite participation, like parallel sentences

- III. **General Dimensions of Communicative Style**
 - A. Conversational versus Formal Style
 - B. Vividness: Imagery & Detail
 - C. Person-centeredness
 - D. Story-telling
 - E. Rhythmic synchrony, repetition
 - F. Vocal and/or visual emphasis
 - G. Variety of Communication Genres,
such as stories, arguments, questions, information-giving
 - H. Speech Accommodation: Use style shifting & code shifting
 - 1. Ability to shift from one style of message to another within one message.

- 2. Code shifting – going from one language to another (e.g., English to German) within the same message
 - 3. Style shifting – going from one style to another (e.g., formal to conversational) within the same message
- Speakers that code- and style-shift are often viewed as more effective.
- I. Use “figures of speech,” such as parallelism, or metaphors.
 - J. Consider using humor (but only if you’re good at it!).

**IV. What makes ideas stick?
What makes ideas be understood, remembered and have lasting impact?**

Six Principles

1. Simple

- a. Find the essential core of one’s idea
- b. Express it in a compact way
- c. Keep the profound; eliminate nonessential information

Examples: proverbs, the Golden Rule
Simplicity = core + compact

2. Unexpected

- a. Get your audience’s attention
 - 1) Sticky ideas propose surprising “facts”.
 - 2) Sticky ideas are interesting!
- b. Keep the audience’s attention
 - 1) Create a mystery for your ideas that need closure
 - 2) Arouse curiosity by pointing out a gap in the audience’s knowledge.

3. Concrete

- a) Concrete language helps people understand new and/or difficult ideas.
- b) Concrete is memorable.

4. Credibility

- c) Tell a personal story
- d) The power of details
- e) Contextualize statistics to make them more human, more everyday

1. Emotional

Mother Teresa: “If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will.”

- a) Associate with ideas that already exist in audience’s mind.
- b) Appeal to self-interest
- c) Ask people to imagine the benefits
- d) Figure out what’s really meaningful to your audience, and appeal to their identities.

2. Stories

- a) Stories are mentally stimulating
- b) Stories provide knowledge about how to act
- c) Stories provide inspiration (motivation to act)

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. New York: Random House.

HOW TO DESIGN A PERSUASIVE MESSAGE

Influence Task #6: Mobilizing Commitment

I. Assumptions about Facilitating Commitment

- A. Facilitating audience commitment is about overcoming the case of “I’m in no hurry.”
- B. These strategies are needed when your audience raises objections about you or your proposal.
Use when the audience is resistant to your proposal
- C. These strategies are also needed when your audience remains uncertain.

II. Causes of the “I’m in No Hurry Response” or Obstacles to Commitment

A. Typology of Objections

- 1. Frequently it can be hard to find out what the real objections are
- 2. The other challenge is that most persuaders are not very good at detecting the reasons for objections; it is a skill that improves over time
- 3. You can use this chart to think about your audience’s possible objections to your ideas

Proposal Features	Costs	Benefit
Size/Impact	Too much	Too little
Time	Immediate	Delayed
Risk	Certain	Gamble

- 3. Examples of perceived obstacles to commitment:
 - a. Too much change too fast
 - b. No real gain soon
 - c. Too risky
 - d. Unmet interests

B. Relationship or Identity Objectives may not be satisfied – these may underlie the situation and create an objection from your audience

- 1. It doesn’t have to do with the ideas that you are promoting but it could have to do with relationship or identity objectives
 - a. Relationships examples: Important stakeholder relationships could be sabotaged or strained if the audience supports your ideas
 - b. Identity: It would make the audience look foolish, or the proposal doesn’t express the audience’s values and beliefs
- 2. No increased power for the audience
- 3. No increased recognition for the audience
- 4. Examples of obstacles to personal commitment:
 - a. Fear of losing face – if I think I am going to be embarrassed, I wouldn’t be comfortable

- b. The idea didn't come from the audience.

III. Understanding and Handling Objections

- A. Use Two-Sided Messages – an overall solution to these issues
 - 1. Argue for your perspective and refute in some way others' objections
 - 2. This strategy (Two-sided message) is a powerful motivational persuasive strategy.
- B. Provide Reassurance – very important in business and sales; can't just reject their objection out of hand because that criticizes your audience. This strategy helps you to reframe their objections and lets the audience think about your ideas in a different way
 - 1. Example Script of how to display reassurance:
 - a. Listen to the other's objection
 - b. Show understanding of the other's objection.
 - c. Clarify the real issue involved with the objection.
 - i. Restate the objection in a way that it can be answered.
 - d. Present your answer in terms of ideas, options or possible solutions.
 - e. Invite action.
- C. Help the audience reason through their decision to change their viewpoint or actions (from the business literature).
 - 1. Clearly define the pros and cons of the decision (e.g., on a website).
 - 2. Share the risk by offering to help the other implement the decision.

IV. Using Heuristics to Facilitate Commitment

- A. In many situations we are dealing with audiences that really aren't highly involved in the issue being discussed.
 - 1. In these contexts heuristics, or short cut rules for managing these situations, are very common
- B. Examples of Heuristics
 - 1. Scarcity-support the proposal because of decreasing supply
 - 2. Consensus-support the proposal because everyone else is
 - 3. Reciprocity-support the proposal because I've done you a favor
 - 4. Liking – support the proposal because you like me
 - 5. Authority – support the proposal because you think highly of me.

V. The Reciprocity Rule

- A. Gouldner (1960) proposed a universal human expectation: the felt obligation to repay favors
- B. The rule creates interdependencies and perceived future obligations
- C. This becomes a heuristic to help motivate others to act (e.g., giving free samples)

VI. Effects of the Reciprocity Rule

- A. Produces compliant behaviors

1. Dan Regan's painting study had students come in and rate a bunch of paintings
 - a. Done with another person who is a confederate in the study
 - b. The confederate leaves the room and comes back with 2 Cokes and you finish rating the paintings
 - c. After rating the paintings the confederate tries to sell the student a raffle tickets
 - d. In some conditions the confederate did not give the student a Coke
 - e. More raffle tickets were sold to people who were given a Coke
- B. Rule overpowers other beliefs
 1. Regan study: those who disliked persuader bought just as many tickets.
- C. Widely employed behavioral strategy: free samples, exchanging favors

VII. The commitment/consistency heuristic: The desire to be and appear to be Consistent

- A. Consistency is valued and adaptive
- B. Researched by L. Festinger in cognitive dissonance theory
- C. Just consider one's preceding value, behavior, attitude or behavior.

With heuristics we make such quick decisions we frequently look to what we have done in the past

VIII. Utilize the commitment heuristic

- A. Urge audience to take a stand, go on record with a promise, or take a small action.
 1. Need to get people to do something initially, once they do that you can use the consistency/commitment heuristic
 2. Examples: get ok on paper, get \$ up front, volunteering, ask people to go on record
- B. Urge audience to make a declaration – ask them what they really believe and then say how what you are argue for is consistent with what they already believe
- C. Role of the Public Eye: Public commitments tend to be more lasting

Making a declaration is even more powerful if done in front of other people

IX. Consider using the Scarcity Principle

- A. Opportunities seem more valuable when they are less available.
- B. Interesting heuristic because it gets at underlying perceptions that something is more valued if it is less available
- C. Strategies to employ the scarcity heuristic in messages
 1. Imagining losses brings forward stronger emotions than imagining gains
 2. Stating that numbers are limited, or time to act is limited.
- D. The Dave Worchel cookie study (1970s)
 1. Had students come in for a consumer preference study
 2. Brought some students in to rate chocolate chip cookies
 3. In one condition there were only 2 cookies in the other condition there were 10 cookies
 4. When there were only 2 cookies they were rated higher than when there were 10.

X. Psychological reactance

- A. Related to the scarcity principle
- B. Argues that if you feel that whatever you want is decreasing in value or availability you can feel that your freedom is constrained and you react by wanting the item even more than we did before
- C. One source of power within the scarcity principle is our desire not to lose freedoms we already have.
- D. Reactance has been studied in children and adults:
 - 1. Ex. Banning detergents with phosphates enticed Miami citizens to want them more

XI. Motivational Appeals

- A. In a lot of situations (e.g., social issues) we do want people to think about the situation
 - 1. when we persuade in these situations we want people thinking, involved, and be reflective of their decisions
- B. People do things for their reasons, their immediate and certain reasons.
- C. Therefore, the best motivational appeals are
 - 1. Stress the consequences and benefits of your proposal are PERSONAL, not impersonal.
 - 2. Stress that the consequences and benefits of your proposal will be IMMEDIATE, not delayed.
 - 3. Stress that the consequences and benefits of your proposal will be CERTAIN, not a gamble.
 - 4. Use Identity Appeals; connect your proposal to the audience's values.
 - a. Very powerful
 - b. Burke argues that the key persuasion is identification, helping the audience identify with the ideas by seeing them as being in sync with their lives, help the audience see that they can be the people that they want to be by following these ideas
 - c. Need to show how the proposal links to ideals and values

XII. Select carefully the actions you want your audience to engage in.

- A. These five strategies are important when selecting the action that you want the audience to do.
 - 1. Select an action, not a goal – if we can tell people precisely what to do you are more likely to have results
 - a. Speakers who give people concrete actions are more likely to get the audience to do at least one as compared to speakers who give a general plan
 - 2. Select a realistic action
 - 3. Select an action for the near future – more likely to behave in the way want to if you can get them to act immediately, the bigger the gap between the message and when they can act the less likely they are to do it
 - 4. Select continuing actions – can do the thing more than once

5. Select an action that is easy to execute – break it down if it is a larger action

XIII. Facilitate your audience to Act: Use motivational strategies

- A. Make the action socially pleasant – if with other people, social context and activities make it more likely to occur
- B. Help the audience visualize the action (from the coaching and education literature)
 1. Specify a plan for executing the behavior.
 2. Provide information about how to perform the action.
 3. Provide direct assistance
 4. Rehearse the behavior, even mentally.
 5. Provide models performing the action successfully.
- C. Help your audience recall the action at a later time – a lot of people forget the action that we want them to engage in so use a linguistic technique to help them remember what want them to do
- D. Urge a specific commitment to act – more likely to be effective if go on record and asking for action rather than being indirect
- E. Invite your audience to think about how they will feel after they act – help the audience see how good they will feel after they engage in the action, need continued messages to help a person continue to perform the behavior or create a habit
- F. Given your audience an opportunity to try out the behavior – people don't do a lot of behaviors because they don't have a safe space to do that behavior
- G. Provide simple encouragement: “You can do it!” – giving encouragement motivates people to at least try it out
- H. Remind the audience that they have performed the behavior before – if they have tried it before and had a good experience then reminding is helpful

DEVELOP A POLISHED PRESENTATION WITH AN EFFECTIVE BEGINNING AND ENDING

Develop a Compelling Beginning to your Message

Generally, you can't persuade others unless you have their attention. So developing an effective persuasive message includes gaining **your audience's attention** during the first few moments of speaking to them. By demonstrating how interesting and important the topic is that you want to talk about, you can develop your listeners' interest in what you have to say.

Here are some common ways to gain your listeners' attention when you first start talking:

Refer to the subject or occasion, or ask a question: "I'd like to talk with you about the need to exercise."

Use a personal reference or greeting: "It means so much to me to see you."

Tell a humorous anecdote or a story: "There is a famous story, famous at any rate along the Upper Mississippi River," which has to do with a"

In addition to gaining the attention of your listener or listeners, you should also:

State the importance of the topic and your key idea

Most effective speakers state their key idea or thesis up front so that their listener/audience can start thinking about it. Or they make clear statements about the importance of the topic, so their audience will know why they should listen: "I think this is important for us to talk about..."

If you are giving a more formal persuasive talk, you might also:

Share your expertise

To establish your credibility, you might tell your personal experience with the topic, refer to your background or accomplishments, or just show your confidence.

State what is to come.

Sometimes it's also a good idea in a formal talk to give your audience a brief overview of your main points. By just mentioning your main points, you will help your listeners remember your overall message.

It's important for introductions to be brief, consisting only 10-15 percent of your total persuasive or message.

Advice for Concluding Your Message

The function of this last step is to further motivate your audience to act. In some cases your primary purpose for talking is to get your listener to engage in some form of overt action. Effective speakers typically use one or two of these methods:

Select an action for the audience to engage in that is specific, realistic, and easy to execute. Emphasize what you want your listener/audience to do: “Let’s just try walking together next week.”

Stress that the benefits of acting are personal, immediate, and certain: “If we walk every day, I know you’ll feel better by the end of next week.”

Openly ask for support or action: “Are you willing to start?”

There are several other things effective speakers often do at the end of their messages. You might consider one of the following:

Convey a sense of finality through using structural cues like “In sum,” or “in conclusion, then,” or just by making sure you have spoken about everything you have told your audience that you would cover, as in “So I’ve told you the three reasons why I think we should exercise more.”

Provide a sense of cohesiveness by referring back to something introduced earlier in the message or conversation. So if you made a particular point at the start, you could repeat it at the end.

Crystallize the central focus of your message by summarizing your main points and thesis. Effective speakers typically repeat their main points at the end of their presentations.

In other instances you may want to **create a particular mood** in your listener, such as feeling inspired to act. Quoting from eloquent speakers or writers, for instance, may generate an appropriate mood for the people you are talking with.

Or you could **openly ask for support or action**, by challenging your listener(s) to visualize how much better a situation might be, or challenging them to perform a specific action, or stating your personal intention to act, such as:

“Why don’t you make a promise to yourself right now...to walk, starting today, 3 times a week for about an hour.”

“Ok, I’m going to start walking today at lunch. Anyone care to join me?”

Any one of these strategies could be used to conclude a persuasive message.

For further reading and practice:

Weblinks:

To learn the importance of main points, go to <http://www.clug-md.org/SpeakerTips/775.html>, and read “Three main points...”

To learn about the role of connective phrases to helping you move smoothly from one idea to the next, consult http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_transition.html.

To learn how to talk about statistics, you might consult: <http://www.statsoftinc.com/textbook/stathome.html>.

For a detailed summary and examples of the Monroe’s motivated sequence, go to http://www.ridgeweb1.mnscu.edu/~keith_g/121/monroes.htm.

Some guidelines on the use of inclusive language can be found on www.hcc.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidbk/teachtip/inclusiv.htm

Further Reading

There are many easy-to-read books on persuasion and public speaking. Most of these books are focused on giving more formal talks—Since we are likely to give a talk even in front of a small group, it’s useful to have a handbook of speaking as a reference book. Here are several that were used in this lesson:

Clark, R. A. (1984). *Persuasive messages*. New York: Harper & Row.

Griffin, Cindy L. (2004). *Invitation to public speaking*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth-Thomson.

O’Hair, D., Rubenstein, H., & Stewart, R. (2004). *A pocket guide to public speaking*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.

Sprague, J., & Stuart, D. (2005). *The speaker’s handbook, 7th Ed.* Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

SPEAKING TO INFORM

One of the most common kinds of speaking that we do is to inform others, to express knowledge of some kind to others. We may need to explain an idea that we have, or tell news we have heard, or instruct someone on how to do something. In these cases, we are using communication to inform. The goal is that our listener will understand, remember and learn from what we have said.

The purpose of this handout is to review ways to communicate your ideas clearly. By its end you'll know about

- general principles of informative communication
- strategies for helping listeners understand and remember your ideas

PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication scholars Stewart and Logan give the story of this effective informative message:

"A heart surgeon told a friend of ours about a problem he was having in trying to get a patient to understand his upcoming heart bypass surgery. The patient was scared, naturally, and couldn't understand what the doctor was actually going to do between the time he cut him open and the time he sewed him up again. After several fruitless attempts to explain, the doctor said, "You're a mechanic, right?" When the patient said, "Yes," the doctor asked, "What do you do with a truck that has a clogged fuel line?" "I try to clean it out" was the reply. "And what if you can't clean it out?" "I make another one—get some copper tubing and run a new line from the tank to the fuel injector pump." "That's exactly what I'm going to do—get a vein from your leg and run a new line from one side of your heart to the other." "Oh!" the mechanic said. "Why didn't you say so in the first place? Let's get on with it!" An [analogy] was all it took to clarify the procedure."¹

There are three basic principles of informative communication:

- I. Your job as an informative speaker is to help your listener understand new ideas. You can **help your listener grasp new ideas by linking them to ideas already familiar to your listener**. Effective speakers use familiar structures for organizing and illustrating their ideas.
- II. To understand and remember important points, listeners need to focus their attention on these points. Effective speakers **help their listeners focus their attention on the important or key ideas to remember**.
- III. Finally, as a speaker you want to help your listener see how your ideas are personally relevant, interesting, and useful for them to know about. So you want to **tailor and personalize your message to help your listeners think about your ideas and relate them to their lives**.

Each of these principles is taken up in the next three sections.

I. HOW TO ORGANIZE AND ILLUSTRATE YOUR IDEAS

Organize your Informative Message

As already been mentioned, the main task of informing is to express your ideas so that your listener can understand them.

Have you ever tried to put together a jigsaw puzzle without looking at the picture on the box? What you have is a jumble of unrelated pieces. Once you see the big picture, you have some idea of how things are supposed to fit together. This is the same principle you can employ in crafting an informative message.

The key is to give your listeners a framework for organizing information before plunging directly into the specifics of your topic.²

There are four or five structures we typically use to organize our ideas:

1. Time sequence—divides a topic according to chronological order, e.g., you would use this pattern to talk about the history of your home town
2. Spatial sequence—divides a topic according to different places or spaces, e.g., You could use this pattern to give directions or to describe, as for instance:

Thesis: El Morro National Monument in New Mexico, US, is captivating.

- I. Visitors first come upon desert plant life.
- II. Then visitors come upon an old watering hole.
- III. Beyond that are the famous cliff carvings.
- IV. Beyond that is the ancient ruins of a pueblo dwelling.³

2. Cause-effect sequence—divides a topic into its underlying conditions or causes that produce particular effects or consequences. You might use this pattern to talk about the reasons for high credit card debt, or for explaining why students drop out of college:
 - I. Cause 1 (not enough money)
 - II. Cause 2 (poor grades)
 - III. Effect (drop out of college)
3. Topical pattern—divides the topic into various factors that make up a greater whole. For a message explaining why New York, US, is a good place to start a career:
 - I. Has good public transportation
 - II. Has good sports teams, museums, and theatre
 - III. Has job opportunities

5. Narrative pattern—divides the topic into a story or series of short stories. To speak about the injustices of a law, for instance, you could tell stories of several people who were unfairly treated by the law.

The nature of your ideas will determine which organizational pattern would be most helpful.

Illustrate your Ideas

The way you develop your ideas can also help your listeners understand them. You can communicate your ideas more clearly if you elaborate and support them with (1) examples or stories, (2) analogy and contrast, (3) statistics, (4) facts or (5) visual aids. The goal is to select supporting materials that will best clarify your points for your listener(s).

1. Use examples to help the listener grasp details and an image of what you're discussing. Good examples are specific, directly relevant to your point, and vivid. Examples clarify your ideas when they provide a point of contact between your new ideas and what is familiar to your listener.⁴ So, for instance, I might want to tell you about my rural childhood life by talking about the two-room country school I attended, and my first grade teacher who made me handwrite all year with my right hand, because she believed that writing with one's left hand was evil.

You can also use stories to personalize your points and draw your listener in emotionally. Stories can help you illustrate and elaborate your ideas.

2. Use analogy and contrast to compare ideas, comparing the known to the unknown. So, for instance, we might compare and contrast different ways of preparing pizza to try to understand what New Haven pizza is like (prepared in coal fired brick ovens). Analogies help the listener grasp new ideas by using their own knowledge.
3. Use statistics when your ideas could be clearer by using numbers to count, measure, compare, or give percentages.⁵ Statistics are useful for clarifying ideas because they give the listener a sense of size and proportion. For instance, if I wanted to talk places I've lived, I could say I lived on a farm not far from a town with 934 people. Now I live in a city with over a million people.
4. Use facts or observations when descriptions of your own experience can develop details in an interesting way. So, for instance, describing your trip to the Grand Canyon might help me imagine what it is like to look at the Canyon, and my description of Mt. Rainier may help you imagine what it is like to walk through an alpine meadow filled with flowers.

5. Use visual or aural aids to help us see or hear your ideas or topic. If the point is important or difficult to grasp, try using at least one other channel besides spoken words to get it across.⁶

In sum, using organizational patterns and supporting materials enable you to develop your informative message.

II. HOW TO HELP LISTENERS FOCUS ATTENTION ON KEY IDEAS

Now that we've talked about using familiar organizing frameworks, let's turn to the ways we can help listeners learn your ideas more quickly.

Use Language to Focus Attention

Sometimes our task is to provide details that paint a mental picture of your ideas. In these cases, the language you use can help your listener understand you:

1. Try to use simple sentences. Try to say what you mean in short, concise sentences. So for instance, instead of saying "I am so happy to be here, say, I'm happy to be here."⁷
2. Choose concrete words and vivid imagery. Appeal to the senses of taste, smell, hearing, sight and touch to create mental pictures. You could, for instance, not say "summer," but "sweltering heat"; not "He was unhappy" but "he was miserable"; not "blue sky" but "dark blue sky."
3. Choose language that helps you compare ideas already familiar to your listener with the new ideas you want to talk about. You can use analogies, metaphors, or similes, such as: "He works like a dog"; "Life is like a parade"; "Love is like a sweet rose."
4. Choose language that creates a lasting impression.
Repeat key words and phrases to create a distinct rhythm and implant important ideas in the listener's mind.
Choose words that repeat the same sounds to create a musical rhythm.
To emphasize important ideas, use parallelism by arranging your words in similar form. Here are some famous examples:
"...of the people, by the people, and for the people." Abraham Lincoln
"To err is human, to forgive divine." Alexander Pope, 1711⁸

Create Emphasis

"If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time—a tremendous whack." Winston Churchill

Effective informative speakers highlight their most important concepts which then helps the listener focus their efforts in understanding and remembering the information.

There are several ways you can emphasize your key ideas:

1. **Repetition.** An age-old rule of learning is that we are more likely to remember information that is stated more than once. Repeat the important points you want your listener to remember, in different ways, two to four times. Effective speakers often state their key points early on, and then restate them as they finish talking.⁹
2. **Use organizing cues.** One type of organizer is signposts, words and phrases that tell the listener where they have been and where they are going, such as numbering, e.g. “There are 3 reasons I want to talk about.”

After discussing each reason, you can remind the listener with an internal summary, as in “Ok, now that I’ve talked about the first reason, here’s my second reason.” That way the listener knows where you’ve been, and where you’re going.

Slogans or memorable phrases also give your listener a framework for remembering your points, e.g., “Try to do something decisive with each piece of mail as you open it. Apply the “four D’s”; Drop the item, Delay the item, Delegate the item, or Do the item.”

3. **Use emphasis cues.** Highlight key points with words or phrases that emphasize the importance of what you are saying, like, “this is very important” or “Now listen to this.” Or you can use your voice or facial expressions to tell your listener that a point is important.¹⁰
4. Limit the amount of information you present. It’s usually a good idea to limit your discussion to 3-5 main ideas that you develop fully.

Using language wisely and emphasis are the ways to help focus your listener’s attention on your key ideas in an informative message.

III. HOW TO TAILOR EXPLANATIONS FOR YOUR LISTENER

Our final principle, tailoring, can be accomplished in two ways.

Relate your new ideas to what listeners already desire or believe

This strategy can occur in a number of ways.¹¹

1. Create information hunger. You might start your message by giving a reason for your listener to listen to you. You might relate your topic or ideas to what your listeners need or want, as in telling you about a new hobby you might try.
2. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Anyone can learn about any subject if you start where your listener is and move along at the proper rate. Adjust what you have to say to a point just beyond the current knowledge level of your listener. Then use the experiences of your particular listeners to talk about your new ideas.
3. Present new and interesting information. Try to present fresh ideas that you're listeners they haven't heard but would appreciate knowing once they hear it. For instance, what is a topic that you would be interested about from someone?
4. Move from the simple to the complex. Layout the most basic concepts first, and later introduce qualifiers and interesting tangents. "Think of each listener as the newcomer to town who wants to know the route from home to work...and only later want to learn about scenic detours. This principle really works; anyone can be led to understand pretty complex concepts, if you begin with simple ones first.
5. Make explicit statements about how your ideas relate to your listeners, how they can use the ideas or benefit from them, how they are similar to your listener's values or beliefs, or how they help the listener accomplish their goals, e.g., "You can use what I've said to pick out the best type of towels and sheets to buy."
6. Finally, you can use audience involvement. Have your listener participate by asking or inviting questions, or inviting the listener to try out what you're saying, or to think about your topic in a certain way (e.g., "Do you have a hobby? Would you like another hobby?").

Relating to listeners' needs, values and desires are excellent ways of tailoring your informative message.

RECAP SUMMARY

Here's a Summary Checklist for Clearly Communicating your Informative Messages¹²

1. Define a specific informative purpose for talking.
2. Create information hunger by mentioning the topic's usefulness to your listeners at the beginning
3. Use a clear organization
 - a. have a beginning, middle, and end.
 - b. use an organizational pattern for your main points

4. Use supporting materials effectively. Select examples, stories, facts, or statistics that will help illustrate your ideas.
5. Use clear language: concise, concrete, vivid
6. Make it easy to listen.
 - a. use the familiar to lead to unfamiliar
 - b. use simple to lead to complex
7. Introduce concepts that may be new to your listener by relating them to something with which listeners are already familiar.
8. Emphasize important points.
 - a. repetition
 - b. emphasis of key phrases .
9. Consider how visual aids can reinforce your ideas.
10. Involve your listener.
 - a. personalize your message.
 - b. Involve your listener through inviting questions, contributions

SPECIAL TYPES OF INFORMATIVE MESSAGES

Sometimes our informative communication may involve a number of more specific tasks. We may need to define, describe, instruct, or explain. The following section gives you specific suggestions for defining, describing, instructing, and explaining.

Defining: Sometimes we need to identify the essential qualities or meaning of something. For instance, you might want to define a concept for someone, e.g., what is fantasy baseball? There are five specific strategies that you can use to define your ideas more clearly:¹³

1. Say what your idea does, or its purpose: “A computer is something that processes information.”
1. Define your idea by explaining what it is not: “Courage is not the absence of fear.”
2. Provide several concrete examples of your idea: “Health professionals include doctors, nurses, EMTs, and ambulance drivers.”
3. Compare your idea with something similar: “A friend is a buddy.”
4. Give the history of your idea and its terms: “The word rival, derives from the Latin meaning of ‘one using the same stream.’”

Describing objects, people, or events: Other times our job is to describe an object, person, or event. For instance, you might want to describe a recent magazine article you read, or a trip you took. Here are some suggestions for describing:¹⁴

1. Select an appropriate organizational pattern. Consider using a spatial or topic to describe objects and people, and a temporary pattern for history, or events.

2. Use a variety of descriptive categories: What color, how big, what does it weigh, how is it shaped, how attractive is it, how long or high? What are its personal characteristics (e.g., friendly/unfriendly, aggressive/meek, rich/poor)?
3. Consider who, what, where, when, and why. These categories are useful for describing events or processes. For instance, if you want to describe how to buy a house, you might want to tell about the people involved (who?), the steps involved (what?), the places you'll need to go (where?), the timing of each step (when?), and the advantages and disadvantages of buying the house (why?).

Describing processes, or Instructing: Finally, sometimes our job is to explain how something works. Your job is to describe the series of steps that lead to a finished product or end result. In these messages typically you talk about how something is done, how it is made, or how it works, like how to make a scrapbook, or how to prepare a particular recipe.¹⁵ Here are some strategies that are effective for describing a process:

1. Provide an overall pattern for the procedure you want to talk about.
2. State steps and specific actions for each step.
3. If needed, supply the purpose or meaning for immediately preceding or subsequent actions or
4. State the requisite conditions to take the next step, or conditions for recycling styles, or conditional steps
5. If needed, supply logical connections between steps and outcomes

Listener-centered explanations. Sometimes listeners just have a hard time understanding the meaning of certain terms, or visualizing complex structures, or understanding the concepts you're talking about. In this case effective speakers try to be listener-centered and figure a way to help listeners discern the meaning or interpretation they have in mind.¹⁶

1. If your listener is confused about the meaning of a concept, give examples that point to its critical features. Tell us what the concept is, and what it is not, e.g., "Nona's chocolate chip cookies are loaded with big chips, and are chewy, rather than crisp."
2. If your listener finds it hard to visualize your ideas, then point out main features and explain their importance:
3. Finally, if your listener finds your idea difficult to understand, it may be because he or she has their own theory or explanation that is different than yours. In this case what you have to do is to
 - a. state what you think your listener's theory is
 - b. show how the listener's theory isn't a good way to think about things

- c. give your explanation
- d. show how your explanation is better than the listener's they for explaining what you're talking about.

For instance, "To back Nona's chocolate chip cookies, you need to remove the cookies from the oven when they don't look fully baked. If you don't you'll have cookies that turn too crisp because they harden after they're removed from the oven. If you pull them when they look light tan, they'll harden just a bit as they cool, and you'll have chewy cookies."

This kind of explaining is difficult to do, but is very effective in helping listeners learn new ways of thinking.

INTERESTED IN READING MORE?

Learn more about describing processes at <http://www.wadsworth.com/product/griffin>; activity 15.2.

Learn more about types of informative messages at www.ablongman.com/devito.

Learn more about writing and speaking on technical matters at <http://www.stc-va.org>.

Notes

¹John Stewart and Carole Logan, *Together: Communicating Interpersonally*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1998), p. 237.

²Jo Sprague and Douglas Stuart. *The Speaker's Handbook*, 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2005), p. 282.

³Examples in this section adapted from Dan O'Hair, Rob Stewart, and Hannah Rubenstein, *A Speaker's Guidebook*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins, 2004), p.182-4.

⁴Cindy L. Griffin, *Invitation to Public Speaking*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth-Thomson, 2004), p. 158.

⁵Thomas H. Olbricht, *Informative Speaking* (Glenview, IL: Scot, Foresman, 1968), pp. 78-9.

⁶Sprague and Stuart, p. 286.

⁷Examples from this section adapted from O'Hair et al., p. 228-232.

⁸Ibid, p. 237.

⁹Adapted from Ronald B. Adler and George Rodman, *Understanding Human Communication*, 8th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 404.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Section adapted from Sprague and Stuart, Griffin, Adler and Rodman, Olbricht, O'Hair et al.

¹²O'Hair et al., p. 342.

¹³Adapted from Ibid, pp. 333-4.

¹⁴Adapted from Joseph A. Devito, *Human Communication: The Basic Course*, 9th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2003), p. 375.

¹⁵D. Wieringa, C. Moore, and V. Barnes, V., *Procedure Writing: Principles and Practices*. (Columbus: Battelle Press, 1992).

¹⁶Katherin E. Rowan, "Explanatory Skills." In A.L. Vangelisti, J.A. Daly & G.W. Friedrich, eds. *Teaching communication: Theory, research, and methods*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum 1999).