If all my possessions were taken from me with one exception, I would choose to keep the power of speech, for by it I would soon regain all the rest.

—Daniel Webster

In this often quoted observation, Daniel Webster (1782–1852), senator, political leader, and renowned orator of the period, states the significance of competence in public speaking, an assumption this text echoes throughout its twelve chapters. This text and this course in public speaking will give you practice and empowering skills that you'll use throughout your college and professional life. In this introductory chapter, you'll learn

◆ what public speaking is and the benefits you'll receive from mastering it
◆ to understand the fear of public speaking and how to manage it to make yourself a more effective speaker
◆ ten steps to prepare and deliver a public speech
STUDYING PUBLIC SPEAKING

Before beginning to read about public speaking, examine your own beliefs about public speaking by taking the accompanying self-test, “What do you believe about public speaking?”

TEST YOURSELF

What Do You Believe about Public Speaking?

For each of the following statements, respond with T if the statement is a generally accurate reflection of your thinking about public speaking or with F if the statement is a generally inaccurate reflection.

___ 1. Good public speakers are born, not made.
___ 2. The more speeches you give, the better you’ll become at it.
___ 3. You’ll never be a good public speaker if you’re afraid to give a speech.
___ 4. It’s best to memorize your speech, especially if you’re fearful.
___ 5. If you’re a good writer, you’ll be a good public speaker; a poor writer, a poor speaker.
___ 6. The skills of public speaking are similar throughout the world.

How did you do? All six of these statements are (generally) false and, as you’ll see throughout this book, each can get in the way of learning the skills of public speaking. Here are the reasons why each of the statements is generally false. These reasons will be explained in more detail throughout the rest of the text.

1. Effective public speaking is a learned skill; although some people are born brighter or more extroverted, all can improve their abilities and become more effective public speakers.
2. If you practice bad habits, you’re more likely to grow less effective than more effective; consequently, it’s important to learn and follow all of the principles of effectiveness.
3. Most speakers are nervous; managing, not eliminating, the fear will enable you to become effective regardless of your current level of fear.
4. Memorizing your speech is one of the worse things you can do; there are easier ways to deal with fear.
5. Speaking and writing are really two different processes; poor writers can be great speakers and great writers can be poor speakers. However, speaking and writing do share many skills; for example, breadth of knowledge, diligence, and a desire to communicate will be assets to both speaker and writer.
6. The techniques of public speaking are actually culture specific; speakers in Asian cultures, for example, would be advised to appear modest while speakers in the United States would be advised to appear confident, competent, and authoritative.
This is perhaps, then, a good place to start practicing the critical thinking skill of questioning commonly held assumptions about public speaking and about you as a public speaker. What other beliefs do you hold about public speaking and about yourself as a public speaker? How do these beliefs influence your behaviors?

The Benefits of Public Speaking

Public speaking will provide you with training in a variety of personal and social competencies. For example, in the pages that follow you’ll cover such skills as self-awareness, self-confidence, and dealing with the fear of communicating. These are skills that you’ll apply in public speaking, but they will also prove valuable in all of your social and professional interactions (Chalmers, 1998; Cohn, 1999). It’s relevant to note that students from varied cultures studying in the United States see public speaking as a method for climbing up the socioeconomic ladder (Collier & Powell, 1990).

As you learn public speaking, you’ll also learn a wide variety of academic and career skills. Among these are how to conduct research efficiently and effectively, explain complex concepts clearly, support an argument with all the available means of persuasion, organize messages for clarity and persuasiveness, present yourself to others with confidence and self-assurance, and analyze and evaluate the validity of persuasive appeals.

Public speaking will also help you refine your general communication abilities—for example, your style of communicating, your ability to adjust messages to your listeners, your facility in using logical and emotional appeals to persuade others, your effectiveness in giving and responding to criticism, your ability to convince listeners of your credibility, your skills as a listener, and your ability to deliver a speech with confidence and impact.

Speakers aren’t born effective; they make themselves effective. Through instruction, exposure to different speeches, feedback, and individual learning experiences, you can become an effective speaker. Regardless of your present level of competence, you can improve through proper training—hence this course and this book.

The Essential Elements of Public Speaking

In public speaking a speaker presents a relatively continuous message to a relatively large audience in a unique context (see Figure 1.1 on page 4). Like all communication, public speaking is a transactional process, a process whose elements are interdependent, (Watzlawick, 1978; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Each element in the public speaking process depends on and interacts with all other elements. For example, the way in which you organize a speech will depend on such factors as your speech topic, your audience, the purpose you hope to achieve, and a host of other variables—all of which are explained in the remainder of this chapter and in the chapters to follow.
Especially important to appreciate is the mutual interaction and influence between speaker and audience. True, when you give a public speech you do most of the speaking and the audience does most of the listening. The audience, however, also sends messages in the form of feedback such as applause, bored looks, nods of agreement or disagreement, and attentive glances. The audience also influences how you’ll prepare and present your speech. It influences your arguments, language, method of organization, and, in fact, every choice you make. You would not, for example, present the same speech on saving money to high school students as you would to senior citizens. You may wish to continue this look at public speaking as an area of study by examining the “Historical Roots of Public Speaking” and the “Growth and Development of Public Speaking” at www.ablongman.com/devito.

**Speaker** In conversation the speaker’s role occurs in short spurts; Pat says something to which Chris replies to which Pat responds and so on. In public speaking you deliver a relatively long speech and are usually not interrupted. As the public speaker you’re the center of the transaction; you and your speech are the reason for the gathering.

**Message** In both conversation and public speaking your message has a purpose. For example, in conversation you might want to tell a friend about what
happened at a recent basketball game. In this case your purpose is to inform. Or you might want to convince a coworker to switch vacation schedules with you. Here your purpose is to persuade. In public speaking, you also communicate with a purpose.

Generally in conversation you don’t give any real thought to how you’re going to organize your message. In public speaking, however, organization is crucial because it adds clarity to your message and therefore makes it easier for listeners to understand and to remember what you’re saying.

In conversation you vary your language on the basis of the person with whom you’re speaking, the topic you’re talking about, and where you are. When talking with children, for example, you might use easier words and shorter sentences than you would with classmates. In public speaking you also adjust your language to your audience, the topic, and the situation.

Channels The channel is the medium that carries the message signals from sender to receiver. Both the auditory and the visual channels are significant in public speaking. Through the auditory channel, you send spoken messages—your words and your sentences. Through the visual channel—eye contact (or the lack of it), body movement, hand and facial gestures, and clothing—you send visual messages. Increasingly, public speaking is mediated; public speeches are frequently delivered in a television studio and heard by millions in their own living rooms. Similarly, speeches are digitally recorded and made available day and night to millions of Internet users. As video and sound capabilities become more universal, public speaking on the Net is likely to increase dramatically in frequency and in cultural significance.

Noise Noise is anything that distorts the message and prevents the listeners from receiving your message as you intended it to be received. Noise may be physical (others talking loudly, cars honking, illegible handwriting, “garbage” on your computer screen), physiological (hearing or visual impairment, articulation disorders), psychological (preconceived ideas, wandering thoughts), or semantic (misunderstood meanings).

Public speaking involves visual as well as spoken messages and so it’s important to realize that noise may also be visual. The sunglasses that prevent someone from seeing the nonverbal messages from your eyes would be considered noise as would dark print on a dark background in your slides.

All public speaking situations involve noise. You won’t be able to totally eliminate it, but you can try to reduce its effects. Making your language more precise, organizing your thoughts more logically, and reinforcing your ideas with visual aids are some ways to combat the influence of noise. For a somewhat different perspective on noise see “Signal-to-Noise Ratio” at www.ablongman.com/devito.

Audience In conversation the “audience” is often one listener or perhaps a few. The audience in public speaking is relatively “large,” from groups of perhaps 10 or 12 to hundreds of thousands, even millions.

In some public speaking situations—say, you’re addressing work colleagues—you may know your audience quite well. In other situations, however, you would not know your audience quite so well and would have to analyze them, to discover what they already know (so you don’t repeat old news), what their attitudes are (so you don’t waste time persuading them of something they already believe), and so on.
But public speaking isn’t just the art of adjusting messages to listeners, it also involves active involvement by the listeners. The listener plays a role in encouraging or discouraging the speaker, in offering constructive criticism, in evaluating public messages, and in performing a wide variety of other functions. Because listening is so important (and so often neglected) in public speaking, it is covered in two ways. First, a complete discussion of listening (see Chapter 2) explains the nature of listening, the forms of listening, and suggestions for improving your listening effectiveness. Second, a series of “Critical Listening/Thinking Link” boxes are distributed throughout the text. These boxes relate critical listening and thinking to the topic of the chapter and serve as frequent reminders that listening and thinking critically are essential parts of the public speaking act.

Context Speaker and listeners operate in a physical, socio-psychological, temporal, and cultural context. The context influences you as the speaker, the audience, the speech, and the effects of the speech. The physical context is the actual place in which you give your speech (the room, hallway, park, or auditorium). A presentation in a small intimate room needs to be very different from one in a sports arena.

The socio-psychological context includes, for example, the relationship between speaker and audience: Is it a supervisor speaking to workers or a worker speaking to supervisors? A principal addressing teachers or a parent addressing principals? This socio-psychological context also includes the audience’s attitudes toward and knowledge of you and your subject. Influencing a supportive audience will require you to use very different strategies than you would use in front of a hostile audience.

The temporal context includes, for example, the time of day and more importantly where your speech fits into the sequence of events. For example, does your speech follow one that has taken an opposing position? Is your speech the sixth in a series exploring the same topic?

The cultural context refers to the beliefs, lifestyles, values, and behaviors that the speaker and the audience bring with them and that bear on the topic and purpose of the speech. Appealing to “competitive spirit” and “financial gain” may prove effective with Wall Street executives but ineffective with those who are more comfortable with socialist or communist economic systems and beliefs.

Delivery In conversation you normally don’t think of how you’d deliver or present your message; you don’t concern yourself with how to stand or gesture or how to raise or lower your vocal volume. In public speaking, the situation is different. Because public speaking is a relatively new experience and you’ll probably feel uncomfortable and self-conscious at first, you may wonder what to do with your hands or whether or not you should move about. With time and experience, you’ll find that your delivery will follow naturally from what you’re saying, just as it does in conversation. Perhaps the best advice to give you at this time is to view public speaking as “enlarged” conversation and not to worry about delivery just yet. In your early efforts, it’s better to concentrate on content; as you gain confidence you can direct your attention to refining and polishing your delivery skills.

Ethics Because your speech will have an effect on your audience, you have an obligation to consider the moral implication of your message. When you develop your topic, present your research, create the persuasive appeals, and do any of the other tasks related to public speaking, there are ethical issues to be considered (Bok,
Research in Public Speaking

Research in public speaking serves two major purposes. First, it enables you to discover the information you need to construct your speech—for example, to discover the relevant facts, to amplify and explain your thoughts, and to provide evidence to support a particular point of view. Second, however, the research serves a persuasive function. For one thing, it makes you appear more believable; if your listeners feel you’ve examined lots of research, they’ll be more apt to see you as competent and knowledgeable and therefore are more apt to believe what you say. Another value of including research in your speech is that research itself is convincing. The college environment trains students to consult the available research before reaching conclusions or making decisions. When you present research to your listeners, you give them the very reasons they need to draw conclusions or decide on a course of action. Because of the role research plays in public speaking, it’s crucial for you to conduct and critically evaluate research on your speech topic and to integrate this research into your speeches.

Begin by learning about the available research facilities and sources. An excellent starting place is to take the tutorial from the University of Minnesota’s QuickStudy: Library Research Guide website at [http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/](http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/) (see accompanying website). It will help you answer lots of questions you probably have about research. Another useful site is Academic Information at [www.academicinfo.net](http://www.academicinfo.net). Addressed to college students, this site will alert you to a multitude of available research sources and explain how you can access the information you need.

Because research is so important in public speaking (as well as in your other courses and in your professional career) and because research methods are changing so rapidly, “Research Link” boxes are distributed throughout the text to provide guidelines for doing all kinds of research. As you conduct your research keep in mind that it will prove most effective if it’s clearly integrated into your speeches and communicated to your listeners. Two guides to accomplishing this task are provided in this text. First, the speeches included in every chapter are models of effectively integrating research into the speech. As you read these speeches, make mental note of how the speakers integrated research into their speeches. Second, Research Links 8.1, “Integrating Research into Your Speeches,” and 8.2, “Citing Research Sources,” provide specific guides to effectively communicating your research discoveries to your listeners.
1978; Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994; Johannesen, 1990; Thompson, 2000). You also have ethical obligations in your roles as listener and as critic. Because of the central importance of ethics, each chapter contains “A Case of Ethics” box that presents a specific situation that raises an ethical issue and asks how you would respond.

Culture, Gender, and Public Speaking

A walk through any large city, many small towns, and just about any college campus will convince you that the United States is largely a collection of different cultures, co-existing somewhat separately but also influencing each other. As demonstrated throughout this text, cultural differences span the entire public speaking spectrum—from the way you use eye contact to the way you develop an argument or present criticism (Chang & Holt, 1996).

Culture is the collection of beliefs, attitudes, values, and ways of behaving shared by a group of people and passed down from one generation to the next through communication rather than through genes. Thus, culture does not refer to genetic traits such as color of skin or shape of eyes; culture does refer to beliefs in a supreme being, to attitudes toward family, and to the values placed on friendship or money.

Culture is not synonymous with race or nationality although members of a particular race are often enculturated into a similar set of beliefs, attitudes, and values. Similarly, members living in the same country are often taught similar beliefs, attitudes, and values. And this similarity makes it possible for us to speak of “Hispanic culture” or “African American culture.” But lest we be guilty of stereotyping, we need to recognize that within any large culture—especially a culture based on race or nationality—there will be enormous differences. The Kansas farmer may in some ways be closer to the Chinese farmer than to the Wall Street executive. Further, as an individual born into a particular race and nationality you don’t necessarily have to adopt the attitudes, beliefs, and values that may be dominant among the people of that race and nationality.

In a similar way, gender can be considered a cultural variable largely because cultures teach boys and girls different attitudes, beliefs, values, and ways of communicating and relating to one another. So, you act like a man or a woman in part because of what your culture has taught you about how men and women should act. This does not, of course, deny that biological differences also play a role in the differences between male and female behavior. In fact, recent research continues to uncover biological roots of behavior once thought entirely learned, such as happiness and shyness.
There are lots of reasons for the cultural emphasis you’ll find in this book, and probably in all your textbooks. Most prevalent, perhaps, are the vast demographic changes taking place throughout the United States. Whereas at one time the United States was largely a country populated by Europeans, it’s now a country greatly influenced by the enormous number of new citizens from South and Central America, Africa, and Asia. And the same is true on college and university campuses throughout the United States. With these changes come different communication customs and the need to understand and adapt to these new ways of looking at communication generally and public speaking specifically.

The principles for communicating information and for persuasion differ from one culture to another. If you’re to understand public speaking, then you need to know how its principles vary on the basis of culture. Success in public speaking—at your job and in your social life—will depend in great part on your ability to communicate effectively with persons who may have different cultural perspectives.

Now that the essential elements of public speaking have been explained, let’s turn attention to what is probably your major concern: fear, or what’s called “communication apprehension.”

**MANAGING YOUR APPREHENSION**

Apprehension in public speaking is normal. Everyone experiences some degree of fear in the relatively formal public speaking situation. After all, in public speaking you’re the sole focus of attention and are usually being evaluated for your performance. Experiencing fear or anxiety isn’t strange or unique.

Although you may at first view apprehension as harmful, it’s not necessarily so. In fact, apprehension can work for you. Fear can energize you. It may motivate you to work a little harder to produce a speech that will be better than it might have been. Further, the audience cannot see the apprehension that you might be experiencing. Even though you may think that the audience can hear your heart beat faster and faster, they can’t. They can’t see your knees tremble. They can’t sense your dry throat—at least not most of the time.

You may wish to pause here and take the accompanying apprehension test to measure your own level of fear of public speaking.

**TEST YOURSELF**

**How Apprehensive Are You in Public Speaking?**

This questionnaire consists of six statements concerning your feelings about public speaking. Indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Don’t be concerned that some of the statements are similar to others. Work quickly; just record your first impression.

____ 1. I have no fear of giving a speech.

____ 2. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.

____ 3. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.

**Using Technology**

Visit the Gallup Organization’s website at [http://www.gallup.com/](http://www.gallup.com/) and look for information on common fears that people have. Where does public speaking rank?
4. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
5. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
6. While giving a speech, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.

**How did you do?** To obtain your public speaking apprehension score, begin with the number 18 (selected so that you won't wind up with negative numbers) and add to it the scores for items 1, 3, and 5. Then, from this total, subtract the scores from items 2, 4, and 6. A score above 18 shows some degree of apprehension. Most people score above 18, so if you scored relatively high, you’re among the vast majority of people. You may find it interesting to compare this score with your scores on other apprehension tests. A self-test for measuring “How Apprehensive You Are in Conversations” may be found at [www.ablongman.com/devito](http://www.ablongman.com/devito).

**What will you do?** As you read the suggestions for reducing apprehension in the text, consider what you can do to incorporate these into your own public speaking experiences. Consider how these suggestions might be useful in reducing apprehension more generally—for example, in social situations and in small groups and meetings. An extremely thorough discussion of communication apprehension may be found in Richmond and McCroskey (1998), *Communication Apprehension*. Briefer discussions may be found at [www.ablongman.com/devito](http://www.ablongman.com/devito); look for “general and specific apprehension,” “degrees of apprehension,” “positive and normal apprehension,” and “culture and communication apprehension.” You may find it useful to supplement these discussions of apprehension with suggestions for “Developing Confidence” at [www.ablongman.com/devito](http://www.ablongman.com/devito).


There are several ways you can deal with your own public speaking apprehension: (1) reverse the factors that cause apprehension, (2) practice performance visualization, and (3) systematically desensitize yourself.

**Reduce Apprehension by Reversing the Factors That Cause Apprehension**

Five factors contribute heavily to apprehension; if you can reverse these factors or lessen their impact, you’ll be able to reduce your apprehension. These five factors are: the new and the different, subordinate status, conspicuousness, lack of similarity, and prior history (Beatty 1988, Caducci & Zimbardo, 1995; Richmond & McCroskey, 1998; Watson & Dodd, 1984).

*New and different situations* will make you anxious. So, gaining as much experience in public speaking as you can (making it less new and different) will lessen your anxiety. Learning to speak in public is similar to learning to drive a car or ski down a mountain. With experience the initial fears and anxieties give way to feelings of control, comfort, and pleasure. Experience will prove to you that a public speech can be effective despite your fears and anxieties. It will show you that feelings of accomplishment in public speaking are rewarding and will outweigh any initial anxiety.
Try to reduce the newness of the situation by familiarizing yourself with the public speaking context. For example, try to rehearse in the room in which you will give your speech. Or stand in the front of the room before the actual presentation, as if you were giving your speech.

When you see yourself as having subordinate status, such as when you feel that others are better speakers or that they know more than you do, your anxiety increases. Thinking positively about yourself and being thorough in your preparation reduces this particular cause of anxiety. At the same time, put your apprehension in perspective. Fear increases when you feel that the audience’s expectations are very high (Ayres, 1986). Maintain realistic expectations. Compete with yourself. Your second speech does not have to be better than that of the previous speaker, but it should be better than your own first one. Your audience does not expect perfection, either.

When you’re the center of attention, as you normally are in public speaking, you feel conspicuous and your anxiety increases. Therefore, try thinking of public speaking as a type of conversation (some theorists call it “enlarged conversation”). Avoid the temptation to use chemicals as tension relievers; this will only make you feel more conspicuous and will thus increase your anxiety. Unless prescribed by a physician, avoid any chemical means for reducing apprehension such as tranquilizers, marijuana, alcohol, or artificial stimulants. Chemicals may also impair other functions. For example, they may interfere with your ability to remember the parts of your speech, to accurately read audience feedback, and to regulate the timing of your speech.

When you feel you lack similarity with your audience, you may feel that your audience doesn’t empathize with you and so you may become anxious. Try emphasizing the commonalities you share with your listeners as you plan your speech as well as during the actual presentation.

If you have a prior history of apprehension, you’re more likely to dwell on such past experiences and become even more anxious. Your positive public speaking experiences in this class will help reduce this cause of anxiety.

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**Reduce Apprehension with Performance Visualization**

Performance visualization is designed specifically to reduce the outward signs of apprehension and also to reduce the negative thinking that often creates anxiety (Ayres & Hopf, 1992, 1993; Ayres, Hopf, & Ayres, 1994).

First, develop a positive attitude and a positive self-perception. Visualize yourself in the role of the effective public speaker. Visualize yourself walking to the front of the room—fully and totally confident, fully in control of the situation. The audience is in rapt attention and, as you finish, bursts into wild applause. Throughout this visualization, avoid all negative thoughts. As you visualize yourself as this effective speaker, take note of how you walk, look at your listeners, handle your notes, and respond to questions; and, especially, think about how you feel about the public speaking experience.
Second, model your performance on that of an especially effective speaker. View a particularly competent public speaker on video, for example, and make a mental movie of it. As you review the actual and mental movie, shift yourself into the role of speaker; become this speaker.

Reduce Apprehension by Systematically Desensitizing Yourself

Systematic desensitization is a technique for dealing with a variety of fears including those involved in public speaking (Goss, Thompson, & Olds, 1978; Richmond & McCroskey, 1998; Wolpe, 1957). The general idea is to create a hierarchy of behaviors leading up to the desired but feared behavior (say, speaking before an audience). One specific hierarchy might look like this:

5. Giving a speech in class
4. Introducing another speaker to the class
3. Speaking in a group in front of the class
2. Answering a question in class
1. Asking a question in class

You’d begin at the bottom of this hierarchy and rehearse this behavior mentally over a period of days until you can clearly visualize asking a question in class without any uncomfortable anxiety. Once you can accomplish this, move to the second level. Here you visualize a somewhat more threatening behavior, say, answering a question. Once you can do this, move to the third level, and so on until you get to the desired behavior.

In creating your hierarchy, use small steps to help you get from one step to the next more easily. Each success will make the next step easier. You might then go on to engage in the actual behaviors after you have comfortably visualized them: ask a question, answer a question, and so on.

Self-affirming statements are positive and supportive. Use them to remind yourself of your successes, strengths, and virtues. Concentrate on your potential, not your limitations, and use such self-affirmations as these: I’m friendly and can communicate this in my speeches. I can learn the techniques for controlling my fear. I’m a competent person and have the potential to be an effective speaker. I’m a good team player. I don’t have to repeat my past failures. I’m flexible and can adjust to different communication situations.

Listen critically when you talk to yourself, listen carefully for self-destructive statements that you’ll want to avoid and for self-affirming statements that you’ll want to internalize.

Self-destructive statements damage the way you feel about yourself: “I’m a poor speaker,” “I’m boring,” “The audience won’t like me.” Recognizing that you may have internalized such beliefs is your first step in eliminating them. Your second step involves recognizing that these beliefs are unrealistic and self-defeating, which you can do by understanding why these beliefs are unrealistic. Your third step is to substitute more realistic beliefs. Try to substitute the unrealistic belief that audiences won’t like you with the more realistic belief that most listeners are much like yourself and are supportive of other speakers.
This section answers the FAQs you’re likely to be wondering about by providing a brief overview of the public speaking process. By following the ten steps outlined in this chapter, you’ll be able to prepare and present an effective first speech almost immediately. The remainder of the text elaborates on these steps and will help you fine-tune your public speaking skills.

**Select Your Topic and Purpose**

The first step in preparing a speech is to select the topic (or subject) and the purpose you hope to achieve. Let’s look first at the topic. For your classroom speeches—where the objective is to learn the skills of public speaking—there are thousands of suitable topics. Suggestions may be found everywhere and anywhere. Take a look at the “Dictionary of Topics” on the accompanying CD-ROM; it lists hundreds of suitable topics from abortion, academic freedom, and acupuncture to women, words, youth, and zodiac. Additional suggestions also appear in the Practically Speaking exercises at the end of this chapter.

The topics of a public speech should be **worthwhile**; they should address issues that have significant implications for the audience.

Topics should also be **appropriate** to both you as the speaker and to your audience. Try not to select a topic just because it will fulfill the requirements of an assignment. Instead, select a topic about which you know something and would like to learn more.

Topics should also be **culturally sensitive**. Culture plays an extremely important role in determining what people consider appropriate or worthwhile. For example, it would be considered inappropriate for an American businessperson in Pakistan to speak of politics or in Nigeria of religion or in Mexico of illegal aliens.
(Axtell, 1993). Because you’re a college student, you can assume, to some extent, that the topics you’re interested in will also prove interesting to your classmates.

Topics must also be limited in scope. Probably the major problem for beginning speakers is that they attempt to cover a huge topic in five minutes: the history of Egypt, why our tax structure should be changed, or the sociology of film. Such topics are too broad and causes the speaker to try to cover too much. In these cases, all the speaker succeeds in doing is telling the audience what it already knows.

Once you have your general topic, consider your purpose. Generally, public speeches are designed to inform, to persuade, and to serve some ceremonial or special occasion function:

- The informative speech seeks to create understanding; you’d clarify, enlighten, correct misunderstandings, or demonstrate how something works.
- The persuasive speech seeks to influence attitudes or behaviors; you’d strengthen or change audience attitudes or inspire them to take some specific action.
- The special occasion speech, containing elements of information and persuasion, serves to introduce another speaker or a group of speakers, present a tribute, secure the goodwill of the listeners, or entertain the audience.

Your speech will also have a specific purpose. For example, specific informative purposes might include: to inform the audience of the proposed education budget or the way a television pilot is audience tested. Specific persuasive purposes might include: to persuade my audience to support the proposed budget or to vote for Smith. Specific purposes for special occasion speeches might include introducing the Nobel Prize winner who will speak on advances in nuclear physics or celebrating Veteran’s Day.

**Analyze Your Audience**

In public speaking your audience is central to your topic and purpose. In most cases, and especially in a public speaking class, you’ll be thinking of both your audience and your topic at the same time; in fact, it’s difficult to focus on one without also focusing on the other. Your success in informing or persuading an audience rests largely on the extent to which you know them and the extent to which you’ve adapted your speech to them. Ask yourself, Who are they? What do they already know? What would they want to know more about? What special interests do they have? What opinions, attitudes, and beliefs do they have? Where do they stand on the issues you wish to address? What needs do they have?

For example, if you’re going to speak on social security and health care for the elderly or the importance of the job interview, it’s obvious that the age of your listeners should influence how you develop your speech. Similarly, men and women often view topics differently. For example, if you plan to speak on caring for a newborn baby, you’d have to approach an audience of men very differently from an audience of women. With an audience of women, you could probably assume a much greater knowledge of the subject and a greater degree of comfort in dealing with it. With an audience of men, you might have to cover such elementary topics as the type of powder to use, how to test the temperature of a bottle, and the way to prepare a bottle of formula.
Research Your Topic

If the speech is to be worthwhile and if both you and the audience are to profit from it, you need to research the topic. First, read some general source—an encyclopedia article or a general article in a magazine or on the Web. You might pursue some of the references in the article or seek out a book or two in the library. For some topics, you might want to consult individuals; professors, politicians, physicians, or people with specialized information are useful sources and are now easy to reach through e-mail. Or, you might begin with accessing a database, assembling a bibliography, and reading the most general source first and continuing with increasingly specific articles.

Develop Your Thesis and Major Propositions

What do you want your audience to get out of your speech? What single idea do you want them to retain? This single idea is the thesis of your speech. It’s the essence of what you want your audience to get out of your speech. If your speech is an informative one, then your thesis is the main idea that you want your audience to understand, for example, “Human blood consists of four major elements.” If your speech is a persuasive one, then your thesis is the central idea that you wish your audience to accept or act on, for example, “We should adopt the new e-mail system.”

Once you word your thesis, you can identify its major propositions by asking certain questions. For an informative speech, the most helpful questions are “What?” or “How?” For example, the answer to the question, “What are the major elements of human blood?” in the form of a brief speech outline, would look like this:

Thesis: “There are four major elements in human blood.” (What are they?)
I. Plasma
II. Red blood cells (erythrocytes)
III. White blood cells (leukocytes)
IV. Platelets (thrombocytes)

In a persuasive speech, the question you’d ask of your thesis is often “Why?” For example, if your thesis is “We should adopt the new e-mail system,” then the inevitable question is “Why should we adopt the new system?” Your answers to this question will identify the major parts of the speech, which might look like this:

Thesis: “We should adopt the new e-mail system.” (Why should we adopt the new e-mail system?)
I. The new system is easier to operate.
II. The new system enables you to check your spelling.
III. The new system provides more options for organizing messages.

Support Your Propositions

Once you’ve identified your thesis and major propositions, turn your attention to supporting each of them. Tell the audience what it needs to know about the
Here are a few principles to help you research your speeches more effectively and more efficiently. A useful online guide to begin your research odyssey is Allyn & Bacon’s website at www.abacon.com/pubspeak (see accompanying screen for an idea of what you’ll find there).

Begin your search by examining what you already know. Before Edward Gibbon, the famed English historian and author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, would begin to write a new book, he would take a long walk or sit alone and try to recall everything he knew about the topic. Only after doing this did he move on to other sources of information. Winston Churchill followed the same procedure when preparing his speeches.

Write down what you know, for example, about books, articles, or websites on the topic or people who might know something about the topic. Also consider what you know from your own personal experiences and observations. In this way you can attack the problem systematically and not waste effort and time.

After you’ve examined all you know about a topic, continue your search by getting an authoritative but general overview of the topic. An encyclopedia article (for example, try the *Britannica*, whose full text is now available online at www.britannica.com; also see Research Links 4.1, “General Encyclopedias,” and 4.2, “Specialized Encyclopedias”) book chapter, or magazine article will serve this purpose well. Although a bit more difficult—you’ll have to sift through lots of noise—you could also search the Web (querying a few search engines) for some general overview. This general overview will help you see the topic as a whole and how its various parts fit together. Many of these articles contain references or links to direct the next stage of your search for more specific information. After securing this overview, consult increasingly specific and specialized materials, for example, newspaper articles, statistical reports, biographical information, or research reports (all discussed in future “Research Link” boxes).
elements in human blood. Convince the audience that the new e-mail system is easier to use, has spell check, and provides useful options for organizing e-mails.

In the informative speech, your support primarily amplifies—describes, illustrates, defines, exemplifies—the various concepts you discuss. You want the “causes of inflation” to come alive for the audience. You want them to see and feel the drug problem, the crime rate, or the economic hardships of the people you’re talking about. Supporting materials accomplish this. Presenting definitions, for example, helps the audience to understand specialized terms; definitions breathe life into concepts that may otherwise be too abstract or vague. Statistics (summary figures that explain various trends) are essential for certain topics. Presentation aids—charts, maps, actual objects, slides, films, and so on—enliven normally vague concepts. Because presentation aids have become so important in public speaking, you may want to include these in each of your speeches. If you start using these with your first speeches, you’ll develop considerable facility by the end of the semester. The best way to do this is to read the section on presentation aids (pages 79–94) immediately after you complete this chapter and begin to incorporate such aids into all your speeches.

In a persuasive speech, your support is proof—material that offers evidence, argument, and motivational appeal and establishes your credibility. Proof helps you convince the audience to agree with you. Let’s say, for example, that you want to persuade the audience to believe that the new e-mail system is easier to operate (your first major proposition as noted above). To do this you need to give your audience good reasons for believing in its greater ease of operation. Your major proposition might be supported as illustrated here:

I. The new e-mail system is easier to operate.
   A. It’s easier to install.
   B. It’s easier to configure to your personal preferences.
   C. It’s easier to save and delete messages.

Organize Your Speech Materials

Organize your materials to help your audience understand and retain what you say. You might, for example, select a simple topical pattern. This involves dividing your topic into its logical subdivisions or subtopics. Each subtopic becomes a main point of your speech and each is treated about equally. You’d then organize the supporting materials under each of the appropriate points. The body of the speech, then, might look like this:

I. Main point I
   A. Supporting material for I
   B. Supporting material for I

II. Main point II
   A. Supporting material for II
   B. Supporting material for II
   C. Supporting material for II

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Here political activist and filmmaker Oliver Stone delivers a speech. Why would research be necessary for a public speech that Oliver Stone might deliver? Would it ever be legitimate to give a public speech totally devoid of research?
III. Main point III
   A. Supporting material for III
   B. Supporting material for III

Word Your Speech

Because your audience will hear your speech only once, make what you say instantly intelligible. Don’t speak down to your audience, but do make your ideas, even complex ones, easy to understand at one hearing.

Use words that are simple rather than complex, concrete rather than abstract. Use personal and informal rather than impersonal and formal language. For example, use lots of pronouns (I, me, you, our) and contractions (can’t rather than cannot; I’ll rather than I will). Use simple and direct rather than complex and indirect sentences. Say “Vote in the next election” instead of “It is important that everyone vote in the next election.”

Perhaps the most important advice to give at this point is not to write out your speech word for word. This will only make you sound like you’re reading to your audience. You’ll lose the conversational quality that is so important in public speaking. Instead, outline your speech and speak with your audience, using this outline to remind yourself of your main ideas and the order in which you want to present them.
Title your speech. Create a title that’s relatively short (so it’s easy to remember)—two, three, or four words are often best. Choose a title that will attract the attention and arouse the interest of the listeners and has a clear relationship to the major purpose of your speech.

**Construct Your Introduction, Conclusion, and Transitions**

The last items to consider are the introduction, conclusion, and transitions.

**Introduction** In introducing your speech, try to accomplish three goals. First, gain your listeners’ attention. A provocative statistic, a little-known fact, an interesting story, or a statement explaining the topic’s significance will help secure this initial attention.

Second, establish a connection among yourself, the topic, and the audience. Tell audience members why you’re speaking on this topic. Tell them why you’re concerned with the topic and why you’re competent to address them. These are questions that most audiences will automatically ask themselves. Here’s one example of how this might be done.

You may be wondering why a twenty-five-year-old woman with no background in medicine or education is talking to you about AIDS education. I’m addressing you today as a mother of a child with AIDS and I want to talk with you about my child’s experience in school—and about every child’s experience in school—your own children as well as mine.

Third, orient your audience; tell them what you’re going to talk about.

I’m going to explain the ways in which war movies have changed through the years. I’m going to discuss examples of movies depicting World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam.

**Conclusion** In concluding your speech, do at least two things. First, summarize your ideas. For example, you might restate your main points, summing up what you’ve told the audience.

Let’s all support Grace Moore. She’s our most effective negotiator. She’s honest, and she knows what negotiation and our union are all about.

Second, wrap up your speech. Develop a crisp ending that makes it clear to your audience that your speech is at an end.

I hope then that when you vote on Tuesday, you’ll vote for Moore. She’s our only real choice.

**Transitions** After you’ve completed the introduction and conclusion, review the entire speech to make sure that the parts flow into one another and that the movement from one part to another (say, from the introduction to the first major proposition) will be clear to the audience. Transitional words, phrases, and sentences will help you achieve this smoothness of movement.

👉 Connect your introduction’s orientation to your first major proposition: “Let’s now look at the first of these three elements, the central processing unit, in detail. The CPU is the heart of the computer. It consists of . . .”
Connect your major propositions to each other: “But, not only is cigarette smoking dangerous to the smoker, it’s also dangerous to the nonsmoker. Passive smoking is harmful to everyone...”

Connect your last major proposition to your conclusion: “As we saw, there were three sources of evidence against the butler. He had a motive; he had no alibi; he had the opportunity.”

**Rehearse Your Speech**

You’ve prepared your speech to deliver it to an audience, so your next step is to practice it. Rehearse your speech, from start to finish, out loud, at least four times before presenting it in class. During these rehearsals, time your speech so that you stay within the specified time limits. Practice any terms that you may have difficulty with; consult a dictionary to clarify any doubts about pronunciation. Include in your outline any notes that you want to remember during the actual speech—not to remind you to use your presentation aid or to read a quotation.

**Deliver Your Speech**

In your actual presentation, use your voice and bodily action to reinforce your message. Make it easy for your listeners to understand your speech. Any vocal or body movements that draw attention to themselves (and away from what you’re saying) obviously should be avoided. Here are a few guidelines that will prove helpful.

1. When called on to speak, approach the front of the room with enthusiasm; even if, as do most speakers, you feel nervous, show your desire to speak with your listeners.
2. When at the front of the room, don’t begin immediately; instead, pause, engage your audience eye to eye for a few brief moments and then begin to talk directly to the audience. Talk in a volume that can be easily heard without straining.
3. Throughout your speech maintain eye contact with your entire audience; avoid concentrating on only a few members or looking out of the window or at the floor.

**Summary of Concepts and Skills**

In this first chapter we looked at the nature of public speaking and at probably the most important obstacle to public speaking, namely communication apprehension. We also reviewed, in brief, the ten steps to preparing and delivering a public speech.

Public speaking is a transactional process in which (a) a speaker (b) addresses (c) a relatively large audience with (d) a relatively continuous message.

- Studying public speaking will help you
  - Increase your personal and social abilities.
• Enhance related academic and professional skills in organization, research, style, and the like.
• Refine your general communication competencies.
• Improve your public speaking abilities—as speaker, as listener, and as critic—which results in personal benefits as well as benefits to society.

Among the essential elements of public speaking are:
• Speaker, the one who delivers the speech.
• Messages, the verbal and nonverbal signals.
• Channels, the medium through which the signals pass from speaker to listener.
• Noise, the interference that distorts messages.
• Audience, the intended receivers of the speech.
• Context, the physical, sociopsychological, temporal, and cultural space in which the speech is delivered.
• Delivery, the actual sending of the message, the presentation of the speech.
• Ethics, the moral dimension of communication.

Especially important in influencing public speaking is culture:
• Because of demographic changes and economic interdependence, cultural differences have become more significant.
• The aim of this perspective is to increase understanding of the role of culture in public speaking and to improve your skills in a context that is becoming increasingly intercultural.

Communication apprehension is a fear of speaking and is often especially high in public speaking. In managing your fear of public speaking, try to

- Reverse the factors that contribute to apprehension (novelty, subordinate status, conspicuousness, dissimilarity, and prior history).
- Acquire relevant public speaking techniques for managing apprehension.

In preparing and presenting a public speech follow these ten steps:
- Select your topic and purpose.
- Analyze your audience.
- Research your topic.
- Develop your thesis and major propositions.
- Support your major propositions.
- Organize your speech materials.
- Word your speech.
- Construct your conclusion, introduction, and transitions.
- Rehearse your speech.
- Deliver your speech.

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**Vocabulary Quiz**

**Introducing Public Speaking**

Match the terms of public speaking with their definitions. Record the number of the definition next to the appropriate term.

1. Anything that interferes with the listener receiving the message the speaker sends.
2. The listeners to a public speech.
3. A relatively continuous message delivered to a relatively large audience in a unique context.
4. The physical, psycho-sociological, temporal, and cultural environment in which the public speech is delivered and received.
5. The medium that carries the message signals from speaker to listener.
6. The study of the morality of acts such as public speaking.
7. The collection of beliefs, attitudes, values, and ways of behaving shared by a group of people and passed down from generation to generation through communication.
8. Words, phrases, or sentences that connect one part of the speech to another.
9. The central theme or main idea of the speech.
10. Fear of communication, especially public speaking.

1. noise
2. context
3. public speech
4. ethics
5. culture
6. apprehension
7. channel
8. thesis
9. transitions
These exercises, presented at the end of each chapter, are designed to stimulate you to think more actively about the concepts and skills covered in the chapter and to practice your developing public speaking skills. The last exercise in each chapter involves analyzing a speech. A complete speech is presented here with annotations to guide you in understanding what an excellent speech looks like. You might use the methods of these speakers in your own speeches. As a complement to these exercises, suggestions for short speeches, based on the content of the chapters, are available at www.ablongman.com/devito. See “short speech technique.”

1.1 Constructing a Speech
Consult the “Dictionary of Topics” on the text’s website at www.ablongman.com/devito for suggestions for speech topics. Select a topic and:

1. Formulate a specific thesis.
2. Formulate a specific purpose suitable for an informative or persuasive speech of approximately five minutes.
3. Analyze this class as your potential audience and identify ways that you can relate this topic to their interests and needs.
4. Generate at least two major propositions from your thesis.
5. Support these propositions with examples, illustrations, definitions, and so on.
6. Construct an introduction that gains attention and orients your audience.
7. Construct a conclusion that summarizes your main ideas and brings the speech to a definite close.

Discuss these outlines in small groups or with the class as a whole. Try to secure feedback from other members on how you can improve these outlines.

1.2 Getting Started with the Speech of Self or Other Introduction
One of the first speeches you may be called upon to make is the speech of introduction, illustrated here. It may prove useful to review this speech and its accompanying annotations to get an overview of the parts of the speech. This speech (and the one in the following exercise) will then give you reference points for examining the steps in preparing a public speech presented in Figure 1.2.

The type of speech of introduction illustrated here serves a pedagogical function and is used to introduce oneself or another student to the class. This speech is usually relatively short and is designed to give each person in the class an early and nonthreatening public speaking experience and at the same time to give class members a chance to get to know each other. (A different type of speech of introduction is discussed in Chapter 11, “Special Occasion Speeches.”)

In the speech presented here, one student introduces another student to the class.

[Introduction]
It’s a real pleasure to introduce Joe Robinson to you. I want to tell you a little about Joe’s background, his present situation, and his plans for the future.

[Transition]
Let’s look first at Joe’s past.

[Body, first major proposition (the past)]
Joe comes to us from Arizona where he lived and worked on a small ranch with his father and grandparents—mostly working with dairy cows. Working on a farm gave Joe a deep love and appreciation for animals which he carries with him today and into his future plans.

Joe’s mother died when he was three years old and so he lived with his father most of his life. When his father, an

In this introduction, the speaker accomplishes several interrelated purposes: to place the speech in a positive context, to explain the purpose of the speech and orient the audience, to tell them what the speech will cover and that it will follow a time pattern—beginning with the past, moving to the present, and then ending with the proposed future. What other types of opening statements might be appropriate? In what other ways might you organize a speech of introduction?

This transitional statement alerts listeners that the speaker is moving from the introduction to the first major part of what is called the “body” of the speech.

The speaker here gives us information about Joe’s past that makes us see him as a unique individual. We also learn something pretty significant about Joe, namely that his mother died when he was very young. The speaker continues here to answer one of the questions that audience members probably have, namely, why this somewhat older person is in this class and in this college. If this were a longer speech, what else might the speaker cover here? What else would you want to know about Joe’s past?
Air Force Lieutenant, was transferred to Stewart Air Force Base here in the Hudson Valley, Joe thought it would be a great opportunity to join his father and continue his education.

Joe also wanted to stay with his father to make sure he eats right, doesn’t get involved with the wrong crowd, and meets the right woman to settle down with.

[Transition]
So Joe and his father journeyed from the dairy farm of Arizona to the Hudson Valley.

[Second major proposition (the present)]
Right now, with the money he saved while working on the ranch and with the help of a part time job, Joe’s here with us at Hudson Valley Community College.

Like many of us, Joe is a little apprehensive about college and worries that it’s going to be a difficult and very different experience, especially at 28. Although an avid reader—mysteries and biographies are his favorites—Joe hasn’t really studied, taken an exam, or written a term paper since high school, some ten years ago. So, he’s a bit anxious but at the same time looking forward to the changes and the challenges of college life.

And, again, like many of us, Joe’s a bit apprehensive about taking a public speaking course.

Joe is currently working for a local animal shelter. He was especially drawn to this particular shelter because of their no-kill policy; lots of shelters will kill the animals they can’t find adopted homes for, but this one sticks by its firm no-kill policy.

[Transition]
But, it’s not the past or the present that Joe focuses on, it’s the future.

[Third major proposition (the future)]
Joe is planning to complete his AB degree here at Hudson Valley Community and then move on to the State University of New Paltz where he intends to major in communication with a focus on public relations.

His ideal job would be to work for an animal rights organization. He wants to help make people aware of the ways in which they can advance animal rights and stop so much of the cruelty to animals common throughout the world.

[Transition, Internal Summary]
Joe’s traveled an interesting road from a dairy farm in Arizona to the Hudson Valley, and the path to New Paltz and public relations should be just as interesting.

Here the speaker shows that Joe has a sense of humor in his identifying why he wanted to stay with his father, the very same things that a father would say about a son. Can you make this more humorous?

Here’s a simple transition, alerting the audience that the speaker is moving from the first major point (the past) to the second (the present). In what other ways might you state such a transition?

Here the speaker goes into the present and gives Joe a very human dimension by identifying his fears and concerns about being in college and taking this course and in his concern for animals. The speaker also explains some commonalities between Joe and the rest of the audience (for example, being apprehensive in a public speaking class is something shared by nearly everyone). Some textbook writers would suggest that telling an audience that a speaker has apprehension about speaking is a bad idea. What do you think of its disclosure here?

This transition tells listeners that the speaker has finished talking about the past and present and is now moving on to the future.

From the present, the speaker moves to the future and identifies Joe’s educational plans. This is the one thing that everyone has in common and something that most in the class would want to know. The speaker also covers Joe’s career plans, again, something the audience is likely to be interested in. In this the speaker also reveals important aspects of Joe’s interests and belief system—his concern for animals and his dedication to building his career around this abiding interest. What kinds of information might these speeches of introduction give you about the attitudes and beliefs about your listeners?

This transition (a kind of internal summary) tells you that the speaker has completed the three part discussion (past, present, and future) and offers a basic summary of what has been discussed.
1.3 Analyzing a Speech

Read the following speech and respond to the accompanying questions. These questions will guide you through the speech and will illustrate the principles considered in this chapter.

**Adverse Drug Events**

**Ramona L. Fink**

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*Coached by Michael Tew and Terry Bonnette*

On March 23, 1995, the *Boston Globe* reported on the circumstances surrounding the death of one of their columnists, 39-year-old Betsy Lehman, a victim of a mathematical error. While undergoing cancer treatment at Harvard Medical Schools’ Dana-Farber Institute, Betsy was given four times the proper amount of the anti-cancer drug Cytoxan. While we may like to think that such gross errors could only happen on *Chicago Hope*, media attention to this occurrence is alerting the nation to the disturbing reality of Adverse Drug Events, or ADEs, within our nation’s hospitals. While hospital errors such as cutting off the wrong limb have recently been horrifying the nation, ADEs are specific errors related to medications in hospitals and their commonplace occurrence is just as, if not more, horrific. As the January 11, 1996 *Business Wire* explains, “Our nation’s healthcare systems have built-in defect rates, (up to 14%), that other industries do not tolerate.” Bruce Chabner, director of the Division of Cancer Treatment at the National Cancer Institute, told the *New York Times* on March 24, 1995 quite simply, “(ADEs) could happen at any place in this country, and have happened at every place in this country.” Everytime we are given a drug by a hospital employee, we assume it to be a safe drug and a safe dose. Such an assumption could be deadly. In order to protect ourselves, we need to, first, understand the seriousness of Adverse Drug Events, second, see how and why so many ADEs are occurring; and finally, examine practical solutions which need to be taken to reduce the risk of Adverse Drug Events.

When Betsy Lehman entered Dana-Farber for cancer treatment, she knew that there were risks associated with

This topic is probably not one that you’d turn on the television to listen to, and yet it’s a topic that everyone would probably agree is very important. How would this topic be received by members of your public speaking class? Would class members be interested in the topic? Would they want to learn more about it? For guidance on selecting and limited a topic, see “Your Topic” in Chapter 3, “Selecting Your Topic, Purpose, and Thesis.”

How effectively did the speaker introduce the speech? Did the speaker gain attention; establish a connection between herself, the audience, and the speech; and orient the audience? For ways of introducing your speech, see “Introductions, Conclusions, and Transitions” in Chapter 6, “Organizing Your Speech.”

Usually, speakers are advised to combine the specific with the general, the concrete with the abstract. In this way the audience can see not only the general principle but also a specific example of it. Notice that the speaker follows this general advice by combining the specific example of Betsy and the more general and abstract statements on adverse drug events. How effective do you think this was? To learn more about how to word your speech see Chapter 7, “Wording Your Speech.”

It’s essential that the speaker successfully involve the listener in the first minute of the speech. If the listener spends an entire
chemotherapy; however, many fail to realize the risk associated with even the most routine drug administrations. The November 6, 1995 *American Medical News* illustrates with the horrifying story of a pharmacist who mistook morphine for the blood thinner Heparin, and did not catch that mistake until it had already been injected into three ailing infants. In a personal telephone interview with Rebecca Wilfinger, representative of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, on February 27, 1996, she explained that estimates of error rates range from 1% up to 20%, because different hospitals use different criteria for what constitutes an ADE. Conservatively, she explains, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists utilizes the 1% error rate. However, Rebecca and the December 21, 1994 *Journal of the American Medical Association* agree that even a 0.1% rate is unacceptable. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* study, which has initiated recent concern over ADEs, explains that this tiny error rate in other industries would still result in 2 unsafe plane landings each day at Chicago O’Hara International Airport; 16,000 pieces of lost mail and 32,000 bank checks deducted from the wrong bank account every hour. Every source you have or will hear me cite today concludes that ADEs are the leading type of medical error, thus the leading cause of 80–100,000 deaths each year, and according to the July 5, 1995 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the source of additional costs, amounting to over $2,000 per hospitalized patient, making the annual cost to a 700-bed hospital $3.8 million.

The costs, both physical and monetary, should prompt us to ask how and why so many medication errors occur. The reasons are two-fold; first, drug naming and packaging; and second, internal system errors. *Nursing*, of September 1995, explains that many pharmaceutical companies use similar packaging and drug naming as a trademark. Unfortunately, these similarities make grabbing the wrong drug an easy, and possibly deadly mistake. Examples and warnings of such errors now appear in every issue of *Nursing*. The February 1996 issue, for instance, gives the example of mix-ups between Potassium Chloride and Sodium Chloride’s similar packages which recently killed three and injured at least four.

In a field where errors are unacceptable and potentially deadly, there is a tendency to lay the blame on individuals. However, the January 11, 1996 *Business Wire* explains that “Internal system and process failure are most often at fault.” Humans inevitably make mistakes, but the real errors come when the system does not catch and correct those mistakes. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* study identified failures, lack of easily accessible patient information, inaccurate order transcription, inefficient medication order tracking, and poor communication between personnel.

Although this is a persuasive speech, with the ultimate aim of changing the audience’s way of thinking about drugs, much of this speech is informative. What are the major topics on which the speaker sought to inform her audience?

What does the speaker do to convince you that this is a problem that can affect you directly? Would you have wanted additional evidence?

In one sentence, what is the speaker’s thesis? What is the main or central idea that the speaker wants to get across? For more information on the thesis see Chapter 3, “Selecting Your Topic, Purpose, and Thesis.”

Does the speaker provide an effective orientation to the speech? Do you feel you have a clear road map for the rest of the speech? For ways to orient your listeners see the section on Introductions in Chapter 6, “Organizing Your Speech.”
The study also found that three quarters of these errors occur in the ordering and administration stages. The September 1995 American Journal of Nursing confirms that lack of knowledge about drug, dose, identity checking, and patient information availability are the most common reasons for the errors. For instance, given thousands of different medications, a doctor may prescribe a drug he is unfamiliar with; an uninformed nurse may prepare and administer an equally unfamiliar drug; and since hundreds of patients are seen in a day, the lack of on hand, comprehensive patient information opens the door for more error. Finally, poor communication between personnel provides information gaps in what should be an integrated process. The March 16, 1995 New England Journal of Medicine explains, from the classic complaint of a doctor’s poor handwriting, to simply being rushed and distracted, misprinting, misreading, or the simple misplacement of a decimal or zero in prescriptions is common. These gaps inhibit inter-personnel understanding and the organization’s ability to catch mistakes before administration.

Understanding the various causes of ADEs, we can now discuss the steps that need to be taken by the medical profession and by ourselves, in order to reduce the opportunity for error. On October 22, 1995 national experts in medicine, nursing, and pharmacy met in a “Panel to Identify Adverse Drug Events.” Its goal, according to the October 25, 1995 Health Line, “was to recommend top priority changes that hospitals should make (to have a) maximum impact on preventing medication errors.” Nursing, of January 1996, outlines the recommendations. Topping the list was the use of bar-coded aided computer systems. The November 20, 1995 Hospitals and Health Networks explains that the system reduces errors caused by misreading doctor’s quickly-scarwled orders, by having doctors directly input prescription into computers connected to a hospital-wide network. The system cross-checks for proper drug and dose against the patient’s medical profile. As a final precaution, bar-codes on medications and patients IDs, which hold drug, dose, and patient information, are scanned and automatically cross-checked immediately before administration.

Further recommendations include making sure that pharmacists are fully involved in drug treatment plans, as well as packaging, labeling, and distributing drugs in unit doses, to avoid calculation and preparation difficulties. Pharmaceutical companies can have a great impact by following the example of Smith-Kline Beecham Pharmaceuticals which Nursing of December 1995 reports has begun redesigning their easily confused medications.

These recommendations serve as guidelines for preventative action against ADEs. Acknowledging that these changes require time and funding, the July 5, 1995 Journal of the American Medical Association stresses that

Thorough research is essential for an effective speech. But, because a speech is meant to be addressed to an audience and to influence that audience, the audience should be shown that your speech is well researched. Has this speaker effectively researched the topic? Do you feel that the speaker really knows what she is talking about? On what basis did you form these impressions? This topic is discussed at length in the numerous Research Link boxes throughout the text.

Generally speakers are advised to use examples, illustrations, narration, statistics, and testimony to support the major propositions of the speech. What types of supporting materials did the speaker use? Were these effectively chosen and presented? For more guidance on selecting and presenting supporting materials see Chapter 4, “Supporting Your Ideas.”

Here is a good explanation of the speaker’s purpose: to persuade the audience that the medical profession and we ourselves need to take action to reduce the chances of adverse drug reactions. What more specific purposes does the speaker try to achieve? Logical reasoning, emotional appeal, and proof of the speaker’s own credibility are three types of proof a speaker can use to advance her or his purpose. Was the speaker’s reasoning logical? Did she appeal to your emotions? Did she establish her own credibility—her competence, good character, and charisma? The three types of appeals—logical, emotional, and credible—are discussed at length in Chapter 10, “Persuading Your Audience.”

Was the speech easy to follow? What aids did the speaker provide to help the listener follow the speech? For example, did the speaker provide transitions to enable listeners to visualize that she was moving from one point to another? For a discussion of transitions see the section on “Introductions, Conclusions, and Transitions” in Chapter 6, “Organizing Your Speech.”

The language and style of a speech should be clear, vivid, appropriate to the topic and to the audience (let’s say, members of your public speaking class), and personal (rather than formal). How would you describe the language of this speech in terms of these four characteristics? For more on this topic see the sections on “Choosing Words” and “Phrasing Sentences” in Chapter 7, “Wording Your Speech.”

A conclusion should generally summarize the major topics and crisply close the speech. In addition some conclusions provide a motivation or direction for the audience. What functions did this conclusion serve? Was it appropriate given the topic and
Public Speaking Exercises

Efforts to reduce ADE rates are “cost neutral or may even reduce costs.”

Until such changes are made we can protect ourselves. The People’s Medical Society Newsletter of October 1995 outlines things which we can do. First, ask questions about any prescribed treatments. Know the names and administration times and procedures of all medications given to you. Also, be aware of the color, size, and shape of your medications. Second, inform all of your health care providers of known allergies and current medications and keep a written journal of this information. Finally, be assertive if something seems different from the norm. While it may not be easy to question medical professionals, it is your health and your life.

Unfortunately, we can never completely eliminate medication errors such as the one which killed Betsy Lehman. However, knowing the seriousness of ADEs, as well as how and why they occur, we have been able to identify practical solutions to reduce the opportunity for their occurrence. In taking action to protect ourselves from Adverse Drug Events, we can keep the dramas and traumas of these errors out of our real world and leave them to the worlds of televised fiction.