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# **Speak with Success**

**A Student's Step-by-Step Guide  
to Fearless Public Speaking**

**Susan J. Benjamin**



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# Introduction

Some years ago, authors David Wallechinsky, Irving Wallace, and Amy Wallace presented a series of lists in their best-selling book *The Book of Lists* (see the Bibliography on page 186 for information on the new edition of this book). One of the lists, compiled by a team of market researchers, was entitled “The 14 Worst Human Fears.” After asking three thousand Americans “What is your greatest fear?”, 41 percent replied, “Speaking before a group.” The fear of public speaking topped the list of fourteen as the worst human fear (Wallechinsky, 469).

The best way to deal with the normal anxiety that accompanies public speaking is to prepare the speech carefully. That means that you know ahead of time what you will say and how you plan to present content. You should organize the information so that listeners can follow the pattern of your thoughts, and the content should be specific and new to your audience. The final part of speech preparation involves delivery: You should plan to present information in an interesting, attention-sustaining manner.

In the following chapters, you will learn how to create an effective speech. The chapters will also take you through the steps necessary for preparing and delivering an excellent speech. If you follow these steps, you may still experience normal pre-performance jitters, but you will conquer what *The Book of Lists* terms the “number-one worst human fear.” You will also learn how to communicate in a manner that will please and enlighten others.

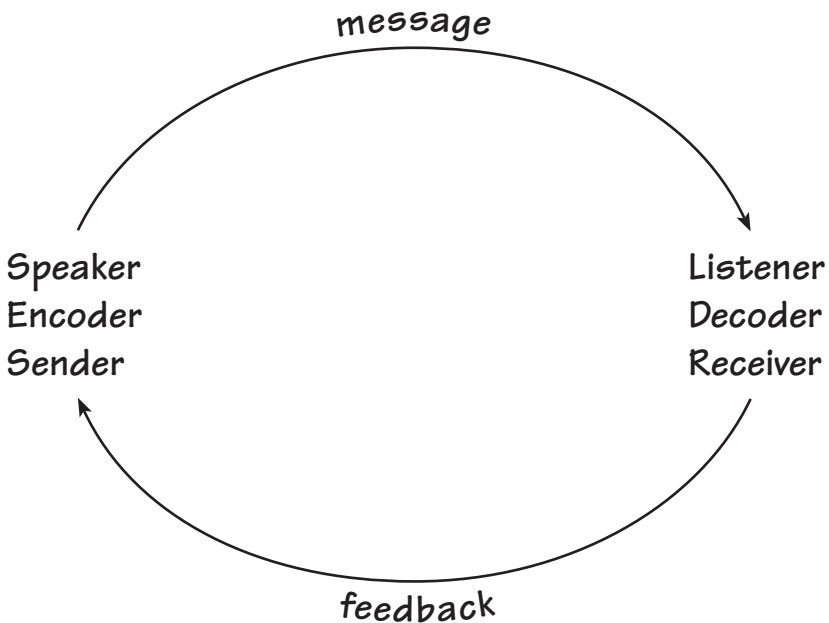


# The Speech Chain: Fostering Real Communication

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## Introduction

Why do we give speeches? We speak primarily to share information with others. The speaker sends out a message to begin the process. Listeners receive it and send back a message. The message the listener sends back to the speaker is called *feedback*. After receiving the feedback, the speaker sends out new messages, and the communication cycle continues. Giving a speech is truly a circular process, as indicated in the Speech Chain below (Jerowski et al., 12).



## **Communicating: The Speaker's Goal**

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The Speech Chain illustrates the process of real communication, the goal of every speaker. In real communication, messages flow back and forth; the speaker is not talking merely to take up sound space. To communicate well, you must follow these steps:

1. Prepare a well-organized message filled with engaging content. Chapters 2 and 3 contain information on how to gather and organize content.
2. In speech delivery, establish eye contact with as many individuals as possible. When audience members see that you are looking directly at them, they will know that you are communicating with them. While speaking, look at individuals' faces and hold each one's gaze for a few seconds. Try to get audience members to look directly into your eyes.
3. Look directly at your listeners and search for feedback. Indeed, audience members' responses to the speaker's message are every bit as important as the speaker's presentation. Feedback during the speech

tells the speaker how the message is being received. Feedback may be either positive or negative. Positive feedback includes such behaviors as head nodding to indicate understanding or agreement, smiling, or raising a hand to ask a question. Negative feedback includes such behaviors as talking with others in the audience during the speech or conducting personal business, such as homework for another class.

4. Use feedback to adjust your message. For example, if audience members start to yawn, look at the clock or place their heads on their desks, the feedback is telling you to change the way in which you are presenting the message. Adjusting your speaking rate, pausing, or asking a startling question may spark the communication.

## Listening: An Important Link in the Speech Chain

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No matter how many speeches you give, you will spend much more time listening to others than speaking. For example, in a speech class, you may listen to twenty-five speeches by your fellow students for every one speech that you give. Some communication experts assert that students spend up to 60 percent of their time listening (McCutcheon, 53). Therefore, to get the most out of what you hear, you need to develop good listening skills.

Hearing is a natural, involuntary act; if your ears and auditory canals are in good working order, you can hear. We may hear noises, such as those that wake us up in the middle of the night, even when we don't want to pay attention to them. Hearing is not a matter of choice. However, to get information from a speech, real listening takes work. The listener must pay careful attention to the speaker to catch both the obvious and subtle points of the message. Thoughtful attention to the speaker's manner will reveal any hidden messages. Listening is an important skill to develop because the good listener not only acquires information,