

# Speaking and Presenting

Lesson Objectives:

- Understand the importance of good speaking habits in the work place
- Identify ways to improve your speaking skills when interacting with others
- Develop and improve speaking and presenting skills

Please read the information below about speaking and presenting:

## Communication and Relationships

The exchange of information between a sender and a receiver is called communication. Whatever job you do, you will spend much of your time communicating: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. These communication skills are **crucial** to your success. Communication skills help you gain information, solve problems, make decisions, and share ideas.

When we communicate, we do more than just share facts. We reveal a lot about who we are and how we feel about ourselves and others. Our opinions of others are based in large part on their communication style. In fact, all our relationships are built on communication.

We communicate through both verbal and nonverbal signals. Verbal signals are written or spoken words. Nonverbal signals include tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, postures, and eye contact. Nonverbal signals can convey a much stronger message than verbal signal, especially in emotional situations. Have you ever talked to a person who looked and sounded angry or sad, but said nothing was wrong? The body language probably told you more about that person's real state of mind than their words did.

## Speaking: What is Your Point?

Whether you are speaking to an audience of one or one hundred, you want your listeners to get your point and be receptive to your message. This means that you need to be clear about your purpose, your audience, and your subject. You also need to use good speaking habits.

### Know Your Purpose

Every time you speak, you have a **purpose**, an overall reason or goal, that causes you to say what you do. You may want to ask a question, share a thought or feeling, or simply greet someone. Common workplace purposes for speaking include:

- building relationships with customers or clients
- informing employees of a new policy
- requesting or giving help or information
- proposing a new idea or change to a supervisor

### Organize What You Want to Say

Having a clear purpose helps you communicate effectively. Have you ever started to explain something, only to realize that you are not really sure what you are trying to say? Thinking about your purpose ahead of time helps you organize your information and sound clear and confident.

After you have determined your purpose, you can use a number of techniques to organize what you want to say:

- Enumeration, or listing key points
- Generalization followed by examples
- Cause and effect, or telling what happened and why
- Compare and contrast, or pointing out similarities and differences

### Know Your Audience

When you think of an audience, do you imagine people seated at theater or a stadium? In fact, an **audience** is anyone who receives information. Once you know your purpose in speaking, you need to know your audience. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who are my listeners?
- What do they already know about my subject and what do they need to know?
- What are my listeners' beliefs, values, and interests?
- What do they expect from me - to be entertained, informed, or persuaded?

Knowing this information helps you create a message that your listeners will hear and accept. If your audience knows little about a topic, for example, you should begin with some background information. If your audience has strong beliefs about a certain issue, you should show respect for those beliefs in order to win their trust.

### Know Your Subject

The **subject** is the main topic or key idea. Whether you are giving a lecture or talking to a customer, make sure you know your subject thoroughly. State your idea clearly, and use specific facts and examples to support what you are saying. Show that you know your subject by speaking clearly and directly. Move logically from point to point as you speak. Reinforce main ideas with vivid examples.

To show you know your subject, **cite** solid facts. Compare these statements: "Rain forests are important." "Rain forests are home to over 60 percent of the plant and animal species on Earth." The first statement is a *generality*, or broad statement. The second is a specific fact. Generalities are not very persuasive. Most people are convinced by hard facts or examples.

### Use Good Speaking Habits

*How* you say something is as important as *what* you say. Follow these guidelines whether speaking to someone in person, by phone, or e-mail:

- Use Correct Pronunciation
- Enunciate Clearly
- Vary Your Intonation
- Make Connection with Your Listeners

Correct pronunciation makes a positive impression. **Pronunciation** is the way a word's vowels and consonants are spoken and how its syllables are stressed. In English, pronunciation often does not reflect spelling. If you are not sure how to pronounce a word, as a teacher or use a dictionary, perhaps an online dictionary that includes sound clips.

**Enunciation** is the speaking of each syllable clearly and separately. When you enunciate, you are easier to understand. You also show self-confidence. Avoid nonwords such as *uh* and *um* and "empty" words such as *sort of*, *well*, and *okay*. that make you seem uncertain.

You can send different messages by changing the **intonation**, the rising and falling tone or loudness of your voice. Use a louder pitch to stress key ideas. Varying your intonation helps keep your listeners' interest. Speakers who use a flat tone or show speak at a constant high pitch quickly lose their listeners' attention.

Make emotional connections with listeners by addressing them by name, making eye contact, and gesturing politely in their direction. As you speak, look for signs from your listeners that your message is being understood. You may need to explain things in a different way. Always ask whether your listeners have questions, opinions, or other feedback. Show that you value their time and input. Try to speak slowly enough to be clear, yet quickly enough to hold interest, and loudly enough to be heard, yet quietly enough to not hurt people's ears. Focus on solutions instead of problems. Be courteous and attentive. When speaking in a group, listen to what others say and avoid interrupting them. Use language that everyone can understand. Avoid slang and cliches, and match your words to the setting.