

locate a graph in *Time* magazine that visually illustrates the percentage of men versus women who receive Ph.D.s in the sciences and engineering. The source of the data is a federal government agency, which falls within the public domain. However, as the creator of the graph, *Time* magazine owns the copyright for this particular display of the data.

The long and short of it? If you are a professional public speaker who makes use of copyrighted materials in your speeches, you must obtain copyright clearance. For speeches created for onetime use in the classroom or for other nonprofit, educational purposes, accurately crediting your sources will often suffice. (For more on copyright, visit the U.S. Copyright Office online at www.copyright.gov.)

PLAGIARISM ON THE INTERNET

The rules for copyright and fair use apply equally to print and online sources; thus failure to accurately credit online sources is plagiarism. As with print sources, direct quotations, paraphrased information, facts, statistics, or other information that was gathered and reported by someone other than yourself must be accurately credited. This includes information obtained from Web sites, electronic publications, mailing lists, newsgroups, and online databases. (For specific guidelines on acknowledging Internet sources, see Chapter 10 and Appendices F–J. For additional direction on orally crediting sources of various types, see Chapter 8, “Developing Supporting Material.”)

Managing Speech Anxiety

5

Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.

–Marie Curie

For many of us public speaking tops the list of things we fear. According to one study, at least 75 percent of students in public speaking courses approach the course with anxiety, while some other surveys show public speaking to be the number-one fear, mentioned more often than death at number two.¹ Even accomplished speakers often feel jittery before they give a speech. It turns out that feeling nervous is not only normal but desirable. “Of course I was nervous,” baseball great Lou Gehrig replied when asked if he was anxious about coming to bat in the ninth inning. “If I wasn’t, I couldn’t have hit that double off the wall.”²

Channeled properly, nervousness can boost performance. The difference between seasoned public speakers and the rest of us is not that the seasoned speakers don’t feel nervous or anxious. It’s just that they’re more practiced at making it work *for* rather than against them. They’ve also mastered specific techniques that help them cope with and minimize their tension.

What Makes Speakers Anxious?

Researchers have identified several factors that underlie the fear of addressing an audience.³ These include lack of public speaking experience (or having previously had a negative public speaking experience), feeling different from members of the audience, and uneasiness about being the center of attention. Each factor can lead to the onset of **public speaking anxiety (PSA)** – that is, fear or anxiety associated with either actual or anticipated communication to an audience as a speaker.⁴

LACK OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Anxious anticipation is a natural reaction to new experiences, especially those that are challenging or complex. For those who have had no public speaking experience, anxiety about what to expect is only natural. And with no experience to fall back on, it’s hard to put these anxieties in perspective. It’s a bit of a vicious circle. Some people react by deciding to avoid making speeches altogether. Unfortunately, although they avoid the anxiety of speechmaking, they also lose out on the considerable rewards it brings. Lack of experience may be particularly

hard on females. One study found that female executives experience markedly higher levels of speech anxiety (42 percent) than their male counterparts (15 percent) when they make only occasional speeches.⁵

Anxious anticipation also results from previous negative experiences with public speaking that led to unfavorable audience reactions. This can sometimes happen to inexperienced speakers when, for example, they lose track of their thoughts during a speech or misjudge audience expectations. Gaining more speaking experience provides opportunities to assess different kinds of audiences, to adapt to unexpected occurrences, and to self-evaluate each speech, thus providing more successful speech experiences and more confidence.

FEELING DIFFERENT

Novice speakers often feel alone—as if they were the only person ever to experience the dread of public speaking. Moreover, the prospect of getting up in front of an audience makes them extra-sensitive to their personal idiosyncrasies, such as a less-than-perfect haircut, a slight lisp, or thinking that no one could possibly be interested in anything they have to say.

As novice speakers, we become anxious because we assume that being different somehow means being inferior. Actually, everyone is different from everyone else in many ways. Just as true, nearly everyone experiences nervousness about giving a speech.

BEING THE CENTER OF ATTENTION

Speakers often comment about how audience members appear to behave toward them during a speech. Listeners might fail to make eye contact with the speaker, converse with one another during a speech, or point at the speaker. When this

✓CHECKLIST

Recognizing and Overcoming Your Underlying Fears about Public Speaking

Problem	Solution
✓ Does a lack of public speaking experience intimidate you?	Prepare and practice rehearsing your speech at least several times. Do it in front of at least one other person. This way, you'll feel more confident that you have experience with your present speech.
✓ Do you worry about appearing different to others?	Remember that everyone is different from everyone else in many ways. Dress well, be well groomed, and trust that you will make a good impression.
✓ Do you dread being the center of attention?	Remind yourself that the audience won't notice anything about you that you don't want to reveal, especially if your speech is well planned and rehearsed. Put the focus on the speech instead of on yourself.

occurs, our tendency is to think that we must be doing something inappropriate; then we wonder what's wrong and whether the entire audience has noticed it.

This kind of thinking builds rapidly and, left unchecked, can distract us from the speech itself, with all our attention now focused on "me." As we focus on "me," we become all the more sensitive to things that might be wrong with what we're doing—and that makes us feel even more conspicuous, which increases our anxiety. In actuality (and ironically), an audience notices very little about us that we don't want to reveal, especially when the speech is well developed and effectively delivered. Consequently, there is no good reason to be anxious about being the center of attention. You see yourself more critically than the audience does, so relax and focus on delivering your message.

Pinpointing the Onset of Public Speaking Anxiety

Different people become anxious at different times during the speechmaking process. For some people PSA arises as soon as they learn that they will have to give a speech at some point in the future. For others it arises as they approach the podium. Research suggests that females may experience higher anxiety than males at all stages of the speechmaking process.⁶ As such, it is particularly important that they experiment with the anxiety-reducing techniques described in this section. Figure 5.1 illustrates the different points during the speechmaking process at which PSA can occur.⁷

PRE-PREPARATION ANXIETY

Some people feel anxious the minute they know they will be giving a speech. **Pre-preparation anxiety** at this early stage can have several negative consequences. First, depending on its severity, the person may be reluctant to begin planning for the speech. Second, it can preoccupy the person to such an extent

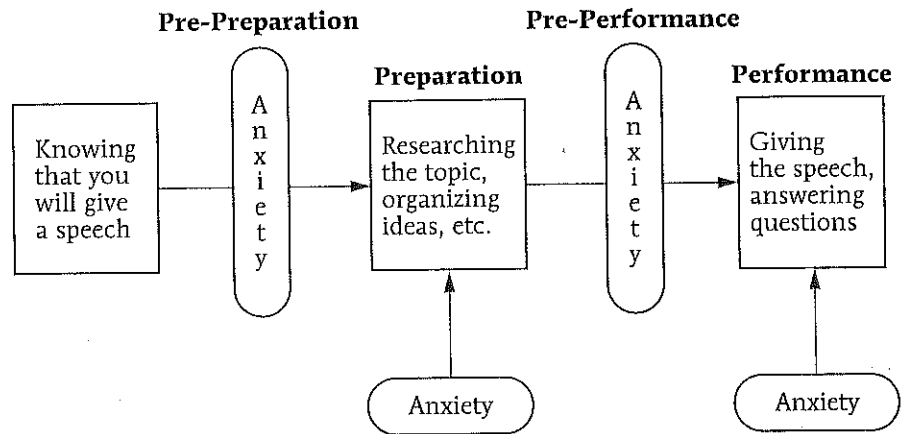


Figure 5.1 Where Anxiety Can Occur in the Speechmaking Process

that he or she misses vital information that is required to fulfill the speech assignment.

PREPARATION ANXIETY

For a minority of people, anxiety arises only when they actually begin to prepare for the speech. At that point they might feel overwhelmed at the amount of time and planning required. They might hit a roadblock that puts them behind schedule, or they might be unable to locate adequate support for a critical point. These kinds of preparation pressures produce a vicious circle of more stress, avoidance of the process, and procrastination—all of which contributes to **preparation anxiety**. Research has shown, however, that for the great majority of people, anxiety is lowest during the preparation phase.⁸

PRE-PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Some people experience anxiety when they rehearse their speech. At this point, the reality of the situation sets in: Soon they will face an audience of people who will be watching and listening only to them. As they rehearse, they may also realize that their ideas don't sound as focused or as interesting as they should. Knowing that time is short, they begin to get nervous. If this **pre-performance anxiety** is strong enough, and is interpreted negatively, they may even decide to stop rehearsing.

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

For the majority of people, anxiety levels tend to be highest just before speaking begins.⁹ This is true even of celebrities, who report that their worst stage fright occurs just as they walk onstage to begin their performances. **Performance anxiety** in speechmaking is probably most pronounced during the introduction phase of the speech. This is when the speaker utters the first words of the speech and is most cognizant of the audience's attention. In fact, the speaker's perceptions of the audience are important here—an audience perceived to be hostile or negative usually elicits higher anxiety in the speaker than either positive or neutral audiences.¹⁰ However, experienced speakers agree that if they control their nervousness during the introduction, the rest of the speech comes relatively easily.

Strategies for Getting Started with Confidence

Depending on when it strikes, the consequences of public speaking anxiety can include everything from procrastination to poor speech performance. The important thing to remember is to manage your anxiety and not let it manage you—by harming your motivation or by causing you to avoid investing the time and energy required to prepare and deliver a successful speech. The first step in effective management of speech anxiety involves planning and practicing your speech.

ESL Speaker's Notes
Confidence and Culture: When English Isn't Your First Language

In addition to the normal fear of being at center stage, non-native speakers of English face the burden of worrying about delivering a speech in a non-native language. If English is your first language, remind yourself of how difficult it would be for you to deliver a speech in another language. As you listen to a non-native speaker, place yourself in his or her shoes. If necessary, politely ask questions for clarification.

If you are a non-native speaker of English, try to think about public speaking as an opportunity to learn more about the English language and how to use it. As you listen to your classmates' speeches, for example, you will gain exposure to spoken English. Practicing your speech will give you time to work on any accent features you want to improve.¹ In addition, by spending time writing and outlining your speech, you will gain confidence in your written language skills.

Throughout this text there are exercises that you may find useful. You can practice some of them while rehearsing your speeches. Some can be done alone, and others during conversations with friends. Here are a few to get you started. Native English speakers can also use the following tips:

1. Take your time and speak slowly as you introduce the purpose and the main points of your speech. This will give your listeners time to get used to your voice and to focus on your message.
2. You may already be aware of certain English words that you have trouble saying. Practice saying these words five times. Pause. Then say the words again, five times. Progress slowly until the word becomes clearer and easier to pronounce.
3. Avoid using words that you don't really have to use, such as some kinds of jargon (see Chapter 16 and the Glossary). Learn to use a thesaurus to find synonyms, or words that mean the same thing, that are simpler and easier to pronounce.
4. Offer words from your native language as a way of drawing attention to a point you're making. This helps the audience appreciate your native language and your accent. For example, the Spanish word *corazón* has a more lyrical quality than its English counterpart *heart*. Capitalize on the beauty of your native tongue.

Remember, practicing oral English is the surest way to master it.

1. J. E. Flége, J. M. Munro, and I. R. A. MacKay, "Factors Affecting Strength of Perceived Foreign Accent in a Second Language," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 97 (1995), 3125ff.

PREPARE AND PRACTICE

There's nothing magical about gaining confidence in public speaking—except, of course, the glow of accomplishment that sets in after the hard work is done and the speech is over. Confidence comes with knowing what you're doing, and the surest route is through preparation and practice. If you are confident that you know your material and have adequately rehearsed your delivery, you're far more likely to feel confident at the podium than otherwise. Thus preparation

