



MASTERING

PUBLIC

SPEAKING

GEORGE L. GRICE

JOHN F. SKINNER

E C O N D E D I T I O N



Mastering Public Speaking

Second Edition

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A Simon & Schuster Company
Needham Heights, Massachusetts 02194

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Grice, George L.

Mastering public speaking / George L. Grice, John F. Skinner. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-13-120270-7

1. Public speaking. I. Skinner, John F. II. Title.

PN4121.G719 1994

808.5'1 — dc20

94-22768
CIP

This book is printed on recycled, acid-free paper

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 99 98 97 96 95 94

Credits begin on page 456, which constitutes a continuation of the copyright page.

To

Wrenn, Evelyn, Carol, and Leanne

To

Suzanne, Drew, and Devin;

Gertrude and Beverley;

Rick, Randy, G.W., and JFS;

Katy and Taylor

Preface

The word began as the *spoken* word. Long before anyone devised a way to record messages in writing, people told one another stories and taught each other lessons. Societies flourished and fell, battles were waged and won on the basis of the spoken word. Ancient storytellers preserved their culture's literature and history in their memories and translated them orally to eager audiences. Crowds could wander away from the unprepared, unskilled speaker, but the most competent, skilled storytellers received widespread attention and praise.

After the development of script and print, people continued to associate marks on the page with the human voice. Even today, linked as we are by radio, television, and computer networks, a speaker standing at the front of a hushed room makes a special claim on our attention and our imagination. As you develop and deliver speeches in this class — and in future years as you deliver reports, sell products, present and accept awards, or campaign for your candidates — you are a part of an oral tradition as ancient as the race. This book is about the contract that always exists between a speaker and an audience, and about the choices you make in your roles as speaker and listener.

We developed this book with two principles in mind. First, public speaking, like ancient storytelling, requires a level of competence that is teachable, skills that can be handed down from patient teacher to interested student. Yet this is more than a skills course. Although a working knowledge of skills is fundamental to your mastery of public speaking, the master speaker is principled as well as skilled. We want to instruct you in *how* to make wise choices as you choose topics, and then research, organize, practice, and deliver your speeches. Just as important, however, we also want to spur you at each point in the speech-making process to think about *why* you make the choices you do.

The second principle guiding us has been most economically stated by British journalist and author Gilbert K. Chesterton: "There are no uninteresting subjects, there are only uninterested people." This book is for those who believe, as we do, that the lessons we have to teach one another can enrich the lives of every listener. The student of art history can learn from the business major, just as the business student learns from the art historian. This course will give you the chance to investigate subjects that appeal to you. We challenge you to develop speech topics creatively and to listen to one another's speeches expecting to learn.

Public speaking is an important part of communication, and communication is not only part of your education, but is also the way you gain and apply your learning. A liberating and life-long education occurs only through communication, with ourselves and those around us. We wish you each the kind of education Steven C. Beering, President of Purdue University, described so eloquently in a speech inaugurating his university's School of Education:

Education is dreaming, and thinking and asking questions. It is reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Education is exploring the unknown, discovering new ideas, communicating with the world about us. Education is finding yourself, recognizing human needs, and communicating that recognition to others. Education is learning to solve problems. It is acquiring useful knowledge and skills in order to improve the quality of life. Education is an understanding of the meaning of the past, and an inkling of the potential of the future. Education represents self-discipline, assumption of responsibility and the maintenance of flexibility, and most of all, an open mind. Education is unfinishable. It is an attitude and a way of life. It makes every day a new beginning.¹

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are, first and foremost, grateful to the many university, college, and community college educators whose enthusiasm contributed to the success of the first edition of this textbook. The second edition of *Mastering Public Speaking*, like the first, is the product of more than just two co-authors. Though we have tried to speak with one voice for the sake of our readers, the truth is that many voices resonate throughout this text — voices of our teachers, our colleagues, our editors, and our students. What we know, what we value, and thus what we write is shaped in part by their influence and insights. Wherever possible we have tried to acknowledge their contributions. For all their influence on this manuscript, we are thankful.

Significantly, our collaboration began at the urging of a former student, Pam Lancaster, now a district sales manager at Prentice Hall. We continue to be grateful to Prentice Hall for allowing us to make the first edition of *Mastering Public Speaking* the book we wanted it to be. Steve Dalphin, executive editor, deserves special thanks for his faith in the project, his patience, and his suggestions. We are indebted to Virginia Feury-Gagnon, our developmental editor on both the first and second editions, for venturing to the rim of the volcano yet again to fine tune our manuscript. We are also grateful to many authors and publishers for their permission to quote material in this book.

¹ Steven C. Beering, "The Liberally Educated Professional," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 15 April 1990: 400.

We want to thank Carla Daves and the entire editorial and production staffs at Allyn and Bacon for smoothing the transition during the restructuring of the Simon & Schuster Educational Group. Diane Kraut, thanks for securing permissions, and thank you, Leslie Brunetta, for your careful copyediting. We want to express our thanks to Dayle Silverman for her fortitude and skill in formatting pages. And Helane M. Prottas, you were the goddess of graphic design.

Three reference librarians read our revised research chapter closely: Ralph Domas of the San Antonio College Learning Resource Center, and Linda Farynk and Larry Pollard of Radford University's McConnell Library. Thanks for your expert advice and for your encouragement. In addition, Diane Gomez, computer graphics specialist at the San Antonio College Learning Resource Center, and Cynthia Cone gave us state-of-the-art advice on the preparation of computer graphics, while warning us how quickly new software develops in that vital field.

We have benefited immensely from the encouragement and advice of some former colleagues and our fellow faculty members at Radford University and San Antonio College: Maresa Brassil, Mary Crow, Merrill Jones, J. Drew McGukin, Larry Pollard, Janet Stahl, and Richard Worringham. We are especially grateful to Gwen Brown, Mike Cronin, Barbara Strain, Suzanne Skinner, Carolyn Delecour, Charles Falcon, and David Mrizek, who gave us their insights, suggestions, and encouragement. Rick Olsen, Ray Penn, and Gwen Brown, thanks for putting yourselves not only "on the line" but also on videotape to demonstrate the value of excellent speech criticism. Rick Olsen and Mike Cronin helped us refine the "Your First Speech" section in Chapter 1.

In addition, *Mastering Public Speaking* has been shaped and refined by the close readings and thoughtful suggestions of a number of reviewers: Pamela Cooper, Northwestern University; Elizabeth Bell, University of South Florida; David B. McLennan, Texas Christian University; Kimberly Batty Herbert, Eastern New Mexico University; Beth M. Waggenspack, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Carl R. Burghardt, Colorado State University; Edward H. Sewell, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Barbara L. Baker, Central Missouri State University; Dayle C. Hardy-Short, Idaho State University; Doris Werkman, Portland State University; and Frances Swinny, professor emerita, Trinity University.

Finally, we are indebted to all our public speaking students who have crafted their messages, walked to the front of their classrooms, and informed, persuaded, entertained, and challenged us. Without their ideas and experiences, writing and revising this book would have been impossible, just as without tomorrow's students it would have been unnecessary.

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An Introduction to Public Speaking

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Interpersonal Communication
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Public Communication
Mass Communication

Components of Communication

Linear Model of Communication
Interactive Model of Communication

Your First Speech

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Develop Your Speech Content
Organize Your Speech
Organize Your Speech Introduction
Organize the Body of Your Speech
Organize Your Speech Conclusion

Word Your Speech

Practice Your Speech

Prepare Your Notes

Practice Productively

Deliver Your Speech

Evaluate Your Speech

The Public Speaker as Critical Thinker



Chapter 1

"The most important thing I learned in school was how to communicate.... You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your brains won't get you anywhere."

LEE IACocca

"All the great speakers were bad speakers at first."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

■ WHY STUDY PUBLIC SPEAKING?

Today, beyond the relative security of the college or university classroom, nearly 7,000 speakers will stand in front of American audiences and deliver speeches.¹ And during those same twenty-four hours, people will make more than 30 million business presentations.² These speakers will express and elaborate their ideas, champion their causes, and promote their products or services. Those who are successful will make sales, enlist support, and educate and entertain their listeners. Many will also enhance their reputations as effective speakers. To achieve these goals, each will be using the skills, principles, and arts that are the subject of this textbook.

Consider, too, that somewhere on a college campus right now is the student who will one day deliver an inaugural address after being sworn in as president; the student who will appear on national television to accept the Heisman Trophy, the Tony Award for Best Actress, or the Academy Award for Best Director; and the student who will present breakthrough medical research findings to a national conference of doctors and medical technicians, or whose words will usher passage of important legislation.

You may be taking this course as an elective because you want to improve your public speaking skills in the relative security of a classroom. Chances are, however, that you are in this class because it is a requirement for graduation. If that's the case, you may rightfully be asking, "Why should I take a course in public speaking?" The answer, suggested in the preceding real-life examples, has three parts: Studying and practicing public speaking benefits you personally, professionally, and publicly.

Personal Benefits of Studying Public Speaking

This course can benefit you personally in three ways.

1. Studying public speaking helps you to succeed in college.
2. Studying public speaking increases your knowledge.
3. Studying public speaking helps build your confidence.

First, mastering public speaking can help you acquire skills important to your success in college. According to a recent Carnegie Foundation report,

To succeed in college, undergraduates should be able to write and speak with clarity, and to read and listen with comprehension. Language and thought are inextricably connected, and as undergraduates develop their linguistic skills, they hone the quality of their thinking and become intellectually and socially empowered.³

Look at some of the chapter titles in this textbook. They include words such as *listening*, *analyzing*, *researching*, *organizing*, *wording*, and *delivering*. These are skills you will use in constructing and delivering your speeches. They are also *transferable* skills; they can help you throughout your academic studies, as well as in your chosen career.

Second, public speaking can help you become more knowledgeable. There is a saying that we learn:

10 percent of what we read,
20 percent of what we hear,
30 percent of what we see, and
70 percent of what we speak.⁴

Consider for a moment two different ways of studying lecture notes for an exam. One method is to read and reread your notes silently. An alternative is more active and makes you a sender of messages. You stand in your room, put your lecture notes on your dresser, and deliver the lecture out loud, pretending you are the instructor explaining the material to the class. Which method do you think promotes better understanding and retention of the course material? You will not be surprised to learn that it's the second method.

Speaking is an active process. You discover ideas, shape them into a message, and deliver that message using your voice and body. The act of speaking is a crucial test of your thinking skills. As author E.M. Forster observed, "How do I know what I think until I've seen what I've said?" The process of developing and delivering an idea clarifies it and helps make it uniquely your own. In this course, you will learn a lot about the topics on which you choose to speak. By learning how to construct an effective public speech, you will also become a better listener to others' speeches, oral reports, and lectures, and this will further increase your learning.

A third personal benefit of this course is that it can help build your confidence and self-esteem. We devote Chapter 3 to discussing the most common fear of adult Americans: the fear of speaking to a group of people. In this course, you will learn how to turn this apprehension into confidence. You will do so by reading this textbook, by listening to your instructor, and, most important, by doing. The confidence and poise you gain as you begin to master public speaking will help you when you give that oral report on "Gender Roles in the Plays of Shakespeare" in your British literature class, when you address your school board urging them to expand the district's arts education program, or when you are asked to say a few words upon receiving the Outstanding Community Service award for your involvement in the neighborhood watch program. As the Emerson quotation suggests, great speaking requires practice, but your efforts will bring you these three rewards.

Professional Benefits of Studying Public Speaking

Studying communication, and specifically public speaking, is important to you not only personally but also professionally. In fact, numerous studies document a strong relationship between communication competence and career success. Effective speaking skills enhance your chances of first securing employment and then advancing in your career. John Hafer and C.C. Hoth surveyed thirty-seven companies, asking them to rate the characteristics they considered most important when hiring an employee. Out of twenty-six total characteristics, oral communication skills ranked first.⁵

More recently, three speech and business professors collected 428 responses from personnel managers in business organizations to determine the “factors most important in helping graduating college students obtain employment.” Oral communication skills ranked first and listening second.⁶ The researchers concluded:

From the results of this study, it appears that the skills most valued in the contemporary job-entry market are communication skills. The skills of oral communication (both interpersonal and public), listening, written communication, and the trait of enthusiasm are seen as the most important. It would appear to follow that university officials wishing to be of the greatest help to their graduates in finding employment would make sure that basic competencies in oral and written communication are developed. Courses in listening, interpersonal, and public communication would form the basis of meeting the oral communication competencies.⁷

This course will instruct you in two of those vital skills: public speaking and listening.

Once you are hired, your speaking skills continue to work for you, becoming your ticket to career success and advancement. Researchers Roger Mosvick and Robert Nelson found that managers and technical professionals spend approximately twice as much time speaking and listening as they do reading and writing.⁸ A survey of 500 executives found that speaking skills “rated second only to job knowledge as important factors in a businessperson’s success.” That same study also showed that effective communication helped improve company productivity and understanding among employees.⁹

Although you will likely spend only a small portion of your communication at work giving presentations and speeches, your ability to stand in front of a group of people and present your ideas is important to your career success. One survey of sixty-six companies found that 76 percent of executives gave oral reports.¹⁰ Another survey found that while on-the-job public speaking accounted for only 6 percent of managers’ and technical professionals’ time, it nevertheless ranked as more important to job performance than did time spent reading mail and other documents, dictating letters and writing reports, and talking on the phone.¹¹ Oral communication and public speaking clearly play a critical role in your professional life.

Public Benefits of Studying Public Speaking

Finally, public speaking can help you play your role as a member of society. As Thomas Mann noted in the quotation preceding this chapter, it is communication that connects us with each other. Public speaking is an important part of creating a society of informed and active citizens.

A democratic society is shaped, in part, by the eloquence of its leaders:

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who rallied a nation during the Great Depression by declaring, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself”;

John F. Kennedy, who urged citizen involvement, exhorting us to “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country”;

Martin Luther King, Jr., who challenged us to dream of a day when people will be judged not “by the color of their skin but by the content of their character”;