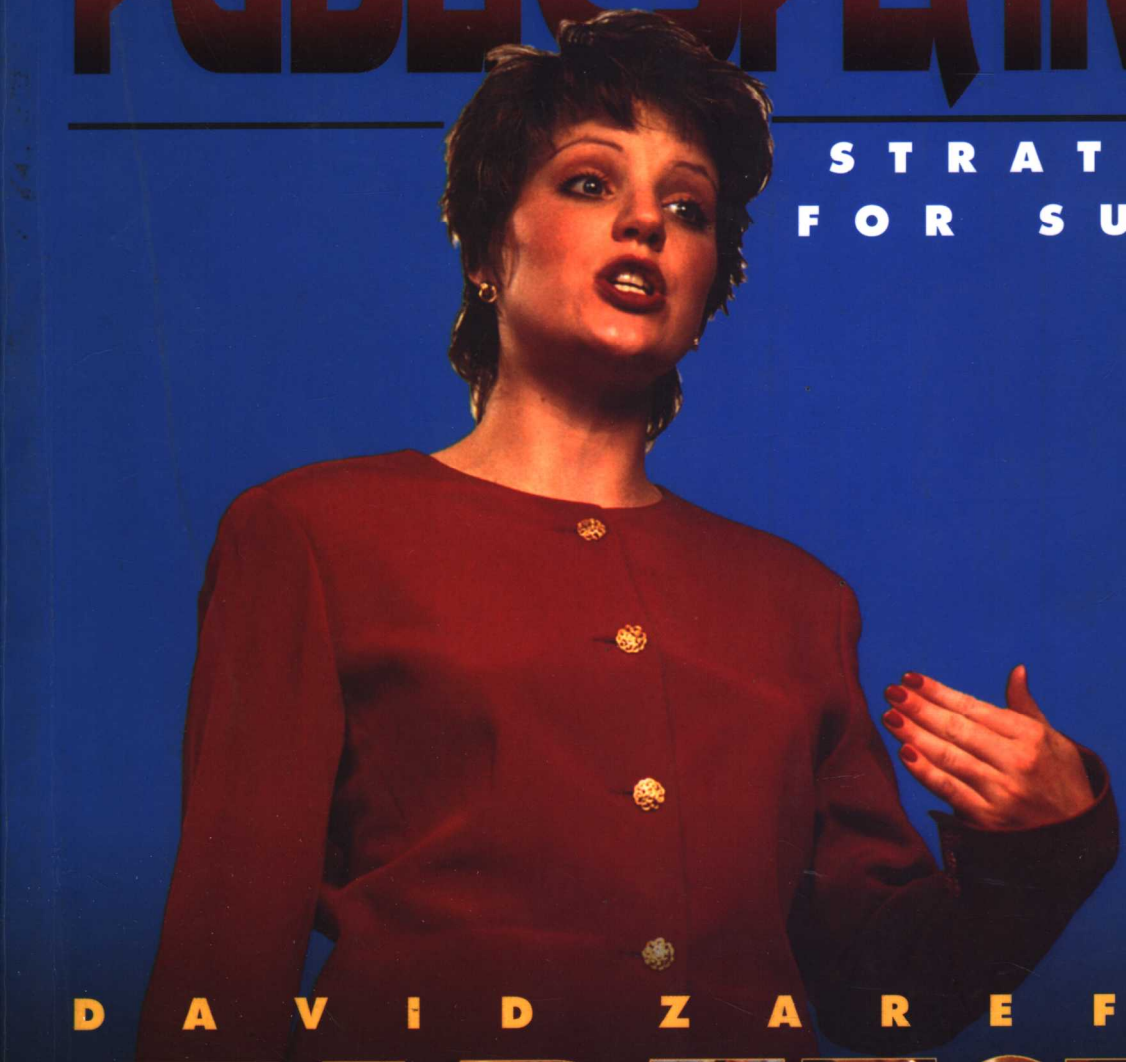
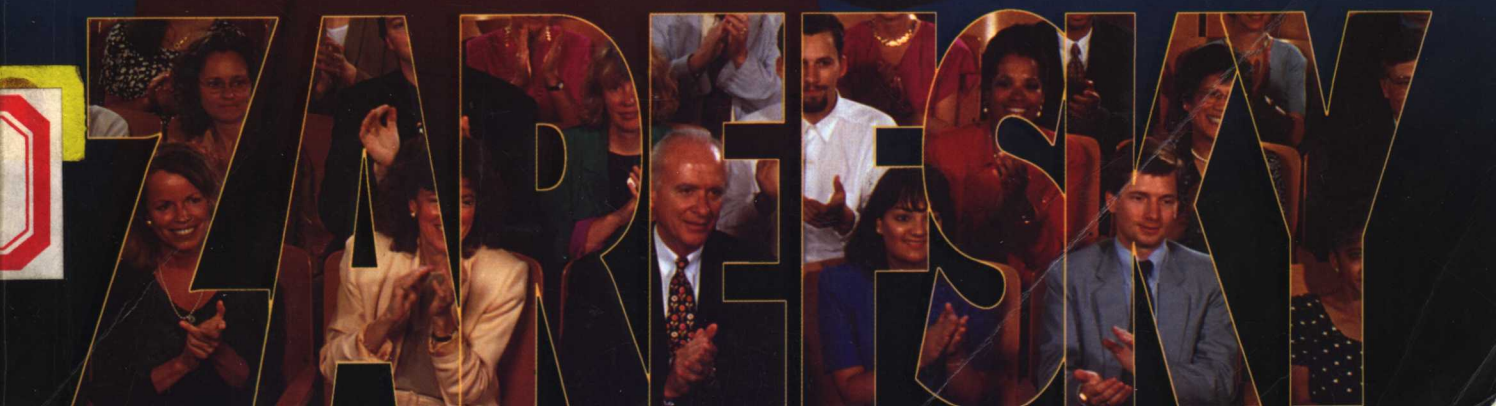
PUBLIC SPEAKING

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS



DAVID ZAREFSKY



USED

Public Speaking

Strategies for Success

David Zarefsky
Northwestern University

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To My Students

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To the Instructor

Many public speaking textbooks are available on the market, ranging all the way from classics such as Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to books that claim to incorporate the newest theory, research, and examples. Why, then, consider a new one?

Although public speaking textbooks have certain common elements—they all treat organization and delivery, for example—each book also has its own distinguishing features. The approach in this book is one that I have found helpful in teaching and thinking about public speaking, yet one that is not adequately represented in other available textbooks.

An Emphasis on Strategies and Decision-Making

The underlying premise of this book is that successful public speaking is *strategic*. By that I mean that it involves an understanding of the circumstances in which one speaks, deliberate choices about how to deal with those circumstances, and a plan for achieving one's goals. The key elements in a strategic approach to public speaking are *critical thinking* and *strategic planning*. Critical thinking has become something of an academic buzzword, but it usually is regarded as a matter of applied logic. This book, in contrast, views critical thinking as applied rhetoric—sizing up a situation, understanding its opportunities and constraints, listening carefully and critically, assessing ideas one reads or hears, and reasoning with an audience in mind. Strategic planning involves consciousness of goals and the selection of means to achieve them, in the face of the opportunities and constraints posed by the situation. These twin concepts, critical thinking and strategic planning, are applied throughout this book and represent a contemporary treatment of the classical idea of rhetorical invention.

Two special features in every chapter, "Strategies for Speaking" and "Choose Your Strategy," apply these concepts at different levels, pointing to decisions students can make as they consider the means and ends of making a speech.

Several other elements distinguish this book from others.

Integration of Theory and Practice

An approach that views public speaking as a set of techniques or rules to be followed is of limited value. Few actual speaking situations will match exactly those for which the "rules" were written; students need instead to be able to adapt to the particular situations in which they find themselves. To do that, they must understand the theory behind the rules. Recognizing this fact, some books try to "import" theory, including all the latest specialized terms and jargon. This book instead integrates theory into the underlying discussions of practice, without

highlighting obscure writers or technical terms but in the course of explaining what students should do and why. Theory and practice are treated as a seamless fabric.

A Variety of Challenging Examples and Applications

Because public speaking is situation-specific, the book includes a large number of cases and examples. Many textbooks make this claim. The examples you will find in this book have the following characteristics. First, they encompass a wide range of topics and issues, with some examples from actual speaking situations and some hypothetical to illustrate points in the text. Second, some examples compare speeches in the classroom with speeches in the field. Third, both brief examples and extended examples can be followed throughout an entire chapter. The chapter features called "Strategies for Speaking" offer exceptional opportunites for follow-up because they refer to speech segments discussed in the text and compare complete student and professional speeches available to instructors on video tapes and in transcripts. The examples throughout incorporate a diversity of cultural perspectives, partly to emphasize a need to analyze and respond to audiences as part of the strategic thinking process. Finally, in the special chapter features called "Choose Your Strategy," the examples are interactive; students are presented with a situation and some alternatives, and asked what they would do and why.

Stress on the Skills of Analysis, Research, and Reasoning

This book emphasizes practical applications of thinking skills that are so crucial to public speaking. Compared to other books, there is more extensive treatment of important skills and processes. These include active listening skills for mapping ideas and critical evaluation, and topic analysis to determine underlying issues. The investigation and research process is treated in considerable detail with specific advice and guidance for analyzing a thesis to discover new subtopics and approaches. There is a full chapter on reasoning in the context of the entire speaking situation (not limited to argumentation), a subject often ignored or slighted in public speaking texts. These practical skills and processes are regularly summarized for students in "checklist" sections provided in almost every chapter.

A Holistic Approach to the Study of Language and Delivery

This book recognizes a fundamental irony about language and delivery. They are the features of a speech that are most immediately noticeable, and the aspects on which many beginning speakers wish to concentrate. Yet to focus intensively on language and delivery may be the worst way to improve them; speakers may become so self-conscious that language and delivery are distracting mannerisms. This book, while quite specific in its treatment, focuses on language as a means to achieve a personal style and on delivery as a means to improve understanding of the message.

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Comprehensive Treatments of Visual Aids and of Occasions for Public Speaking

These topics are common to public speaking books, but the treatment here is particularly comprehensive. A wide variety of visual aids are considered, including those that make use of contemporary computer technology. Although this book covers both deliberative and ceremonial occasions for public speaking, it also presents a much wider than usual range of speaking occasions from everyday interchange in public forums and small groups.

A careful approach to the distinction between informing and persuading is noticeable in the later chapters. This book recognizes that one of the most venerable traditions in public speaking is to distinguish between speeches to inform and speeches to persuade. There is some truth to that distinction, and yet we know that matters are not so simple. Most speeches are a blend of information and persuasion, sometimes so fine a blend that the elements cannot even be separated. This book regards informing and persuading as headings for types of strategies speakers can use, and provides more specific coverage of speech purposes that may mix information and persuasion.

A Rich Concept of Audience Analysis and of the Public Forum

Analysis of the audience is basic to any speaking situation, yet many books offer an unrealistic understanding of what audience analysis involves. They focus primarily on mechanically described demographic information that the speaker often is unable to obtain. This book treats three separate levels of audience analysis, and draws on awareness of audience psychology and culture—including responsiveness to cultural diversity—as well as use of demographics.

This book opens by grounding public speaking in a concept of the public forum. All too often, the *public* dimension is missing from books on public speaking. Speakers will not always speak about personal issues to an audience of their friends. Rather than treating the classroom situation as representative, this book argues that it is a simulation of the public forum. Audiences are called upon to make judgments about matters on which they cannot possibly have all the relevant information. The task of the speaker is to help in guiding listeners to sound judgments. From this premise follow ideas about the importance of the speaker's *ethos,* about the responsibilities one incurs when speaking and the ethical standards one should meet, and about the collaborative nature of the speaker-audience relationship. These topics are all explored in this book.

Organization and Pedagogy

Although there are unique perspectives and approaches in almost every chapter, the structure of the book is relatively conventional, so that it might be adapted easily to public speaking classes at institutions of various types. An opening unit on the foundational skills of speaking and listening is followed by units that take up rhetorical invention, arrangement, style and delivery, and the contexts and occasions for speaking. Each chapter includes the following.

- Learning objectives listed at chapter openings help readers anticipate key ideas they will need to keep in mind as the chapter develops.
- Marginal glossaries remind students of key terms and concepts.
- End-chapter summaries encapsulate relationships among key concepts.
- End-chapter questions, projects, and case studies, as well as footnote references show background materials that interested students can pursue.

In addition, there are three special boxed features in nearly every chapter.

- *Checklists* summarize the practical skills students will use repeatedly as they develop and deliver speeches.
- *Strategies for Speaking* boxes compare the effectiveness of speaking devices used by actual student speeches with those used in parallel situations by professional speakers. Instructors wishing to pursue follow-up study of the speeches featured here can make use of printed transcripts and videotapes. TRANSCRIPTS of six of these speeches appear in the appendix, "Speeches for Analysis and Discussion," and transcripts of 16 student speeches appear in an Instructor's Resource Book of copy masters. VIDEO TAPES for the 16 full-length student speeches and for the professional ones featured in these boxes are available free to adopting instructors. (See the description of "Supplements for Instructors" below.)
- *Choose Your Strategy* features present readers with a "case study" situation requiring that they decide how the resource discussed in each chapter could be adapted to a concrete rhetorical situation. These features offer readers a chance to explore the variables and tradeoffs that inevitably apply to any strategic decision. There are usually no "correct" solutions for these open-ended *Choose Your Strategy* situations. Rather, they are exercises in what we have described as applied rhetoric—sizing up a situation, understanding its opportunities and constraints, assessing ideas, and reasoning with an audience in mind.

In the appendix eight full-length speeches are available for classes interested in analyzing the effectiveness of speakers in more depth. In addition to the six contemporary pieces—three by students—that are available on videotape to adopters, there are two historical speeches that illustrate the power of applied rhetoric at key decision points in our national development. Headnotes call attention to features of the rhetorical situation for each of these.

Supplements

A full array of supplements has been developed to help instructors and students get a maximum benefit from working with this text. These include the following.

FOR INSTRUCTORS

- *Annotated Instructor's Edition*
- *Instructor's Resource Manual with Copy Masters and Test Bank*
- *Video Tapes: Sixteen Student Speeches*

- *Video Tapes: Great Speeches from CNN News*
- *Computerized Test Bank*

FOR STUDENTS

- *Audio Study Guide to Public Speaking*
- *Computerized Guide to Speech Planning*

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The title of the book, *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success,* has a twofold meaning. The book offers a strategic perspective that should lead students to become more successful public speakers. Additionally, the art of public speaking provides many of the strategies for students to succeed in many different walks of life. My hope is that this book will help you to empower your students to achieve that goal.

David Zarefsky

To the Student

In the fall of 1961, as a sophomore in high school, I enrolled in my first course in public speaking. As the saying goes, it changed my life. I had taken the course to become more comfortable in speaking before a group and to learn how to use my voice effectively and how to control distracting mannerisms. I accomplished those goals and so much more. I learned how to think analytically, how to organize ideas, how to do research, how to assess an audience, how to inform and persuade. It was not long before I realized that these skills and habits were valuable not just in public speaking but in every other course and, indeed, in almost every aspect of life. If I were to identify one course that provided the tools I have used in my personal and professional life, without a doubt Public Speaking would be that course.

Thirty years later, my daughter had an almost identical experience. After taking a course in public speaking, she suddenly realized that it was easier for her to write essays and research papers and that the papers were better. She began to read more critically and to analyze what she read. She too had found patterns for working with ideas that have been useful well beyond the confines of the course.

It is my hope that this book, and the course of which it is a part, will help you to have a similar experience. For over 2500 years men and women have studied the art of public speaking, both because it is valuable in its own right and because, in the best sense of the term, it is a liberal art—one which frees and empowers people. It does so by providing the knowledge, cultivating the skills, and modeling the habits of effective thought and expression that can be applied to any area of life.

The title of this book is *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success*. That title has a double meaning. First, this book is about strategies for success in public speaking. Second, the premise of the book is that public speaking will provide you with strategies for success in life. Certainly it does not promise fame or fortune, but it does offer a blend of reflective judgment and carefully chosen action that should enable you, whatever your experience, to enjoy a life well lived.

I have chosen the term "strategy" to emphasize that public speaking is about *choices*. It is an art and not a science. When you speak, you will be faced with situations that offer both opportunities and constraints. You will want to decide how to work within this situation to achieve your goals, and your plan for doing so is a strategy. And even as you make choices in response to a situation, the pattern of your choices actually helps to define what the situation is. It affects you, but you also affect it.

Thinking strategically about public speaking means abandoning the belief that there is an all-purpose magic formula that will always produce a good speech. Although, as you will see, there are some general norms and expectations, a speech is good not because it follows some formula but because it deals effectively with a specific situation. A speech that is good in one context may be weak in another. It always is necessary to get down to cases.

For that reason, you will find many examples and case studies in this book. Some come from student speakers and some from speakers in the "real world." Some are actual situations and some are hypothetical. Some will describe what speakers actually did and some will ask you what you might do. Just as lawyers learn the law, in part, through the case method, so you will cultivate and sharpen the skills of public speaking by trying them out on specific cases.

Not only will this book provide lots of case material, but so will your class. You will have the opportunity not only to present speeches but the opportunity to listen to many as well. Listening to speeches is also important, not just a necessary evil to be endured while you wait your turn to speak. You develop habits of analysis and memory, you see a large array of choices other students make in specific situations, and you gain skill in assessing whether strategies succeed or fail and in deciding whether or not they are strategies that you might wish to use.

At the same time, public speaking does not study cases in a vacuum. It draws on a body of underlying theoretical knowledge to explain these situations. "Theory" does not mean that which is impractical; nor does it mean a lot of fancy terms or ideas that seem isolated from reality. Although sometimes the theory and practice of public speaking are studied in isolation, the premise of this book is that they need to be integrated at every step. Theory informs our understanding of practice by enabling us to explain what is happening in particular situations. And practice applies and modifies our understanding of theory. What you learn about theories of arrangement, for instance, will help you to organize a speech, but your experience in organizing speeches will also contribute to your thinking about theories of arrangement.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this class in public speaking. This book, your own experience, and the interaction with other students and your instructor are all vital parts of the course. I hope that, like my daughter and me, you will find that you not only achieve your original goals but actually transcend them.

David Zarefsky

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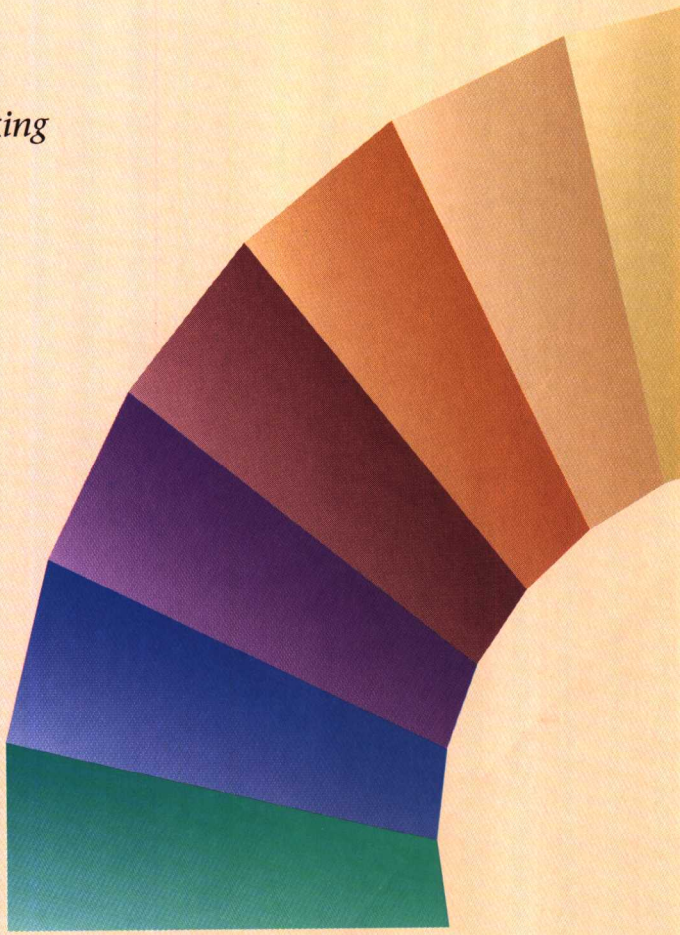

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