

Individual or two-person communication assignment options

1. *Impromptu speaking*

Impromptu speaking is brief (no more than three minutes) and involves little or no preparation time. Students can choose a topic or be assigned one. As with every oral presentation, students include an introduction, body, and conclusion, and they work from a brief set of notes. Some examples include a **short speech of welcome** (first day or first week activity), **a brief report on assigned reading/course content/point of interest, or an oral exam.**

For example, students in a PLS course could discuss a current events article found in the DEN or local newspaper. In a science class, students could describe a concept under study. In a MAT course, students could explain the process they went through when answering a particular math problem.

2. *Informative presentation*

The goal(s) of any informative presentation should be one or more of the following: impart knowledge, enhance understanding, or facilitate application of some information. Many different types of informative presentations are possible, such as the following: **self-narrative, informative speech, book review, presentation of course content, oral report of research, technical report, briefing, demonstration speech, project/progress report, adapted speech, training session, and narration of an AV presentation.**

A **self-narrative speech** could be given as an impromptu speech also, although a little preparation time is needed. This type of speech could be given in a variety of classes. The main point is to address some incident or memory in that person's life. For example, a cultural childhood memory, an instance of discrimination, typical family life, a time when the student felt uncomfortable around people, and so on. These could lead to interesting points of discussion in courses that address race, gender, economics, age, diversity, families, and so on.

Any **informative speech** requires knowing the subject and topic sufficiently so the audience has adequate knowledge of the subject by the end of the speech. The speech should address some topic about which most of the class has little knowledge. When discussing gender in a psychology course, for example, a student could inform the class on the ways males and females communicate differently. In a biology course, students could inform the class on plant life that exists in this area. Some informative speeches may also be **presentations of course content**, in which students might present part of a chapter or assigned reading (they summarize key points), **oral report of research**, where students take a course content and find additional information to present to the class, or a **technical report**, where students present current policies or procedures or changes in policies and procedures. Students may also be working on a semester-long project, and at the end of the semester present a **project report** that details the project undertaken, the process completed, and an evaluation of its success. It is also possible to include **progress reports** of the particular projects, so that at one or more points during the semester, students present a brief overview of work accomplished to date.

For the **book review**, students select a book and create a presentation for the class that teaches them something useful from the content of the class, and evaluate its relevance for the class. It is not merely a synopsis of the book.

An example of a **briefing** would be, in a HST, FCS, SOC, or PLS course, asking the student to research and develop a presentation on a pressing health problem of our country or another country. As part of the assignment, a policy recommendation could be made.

With a **demonstration speech**, students show how to do something, how something works, or describes a process that results in a particular outcome. For example, in a botany class, a student could show how students could plant a miniature oriental garden. In a business or computer science course, a student could demonstrate a particular computer application. In a theatre course, a student could demonstrate how lighting can affect mood on stage.

In the **adapted speech**, students select a part of a manuscript or other written work to present. They may read a poem, part of a speech written by someone else, or read part of some other written work. Students develop an appropriate introduction and conclusion.

For a **training session**, individuals research some topic related to the course and deliver a presentation that introduces the class members to that information. For example, one might develop a presentation on diversity training in which the student discusses different cultural norms, business practices, and communication differences.

For an **AV presentation**, students create a short Powerpoint or slide presentation on a relevant topic of their choice and narrate the presentation. In addition to giving students an opportunity to speak before the class, they are also working with sequencing information and coordination of equipment.

3. *Persuasive presentation*

In general, any persuasive speech has as its purpose one of the following: to convince, to actuate, or to inspire. Any topic chosen must be controversial. The majority of the class must disagree with the position and/or have no opinion. This assignment involves conducting research, determining a position, and constructing a sequence of arguments in support of the position. Different persuasive presentations could include a **persuasive speech** (see Section V, Monroe's Motivated Sequence), a **problem or analysis of a problem**, **solution of a problem speech**, and **speech of refutation**, and a **pro-con speech**.

Persuasive speech possibilities can be found in many disciplines, since students are asked to give a speech to persuade on one type of a proposition—fact, value, or policy. For example, in a sociology course, one could address the proposition, “Capital punishment deters crimes of murder.” In a labor course, students could address the proposition, “All public employees (including teachers) should be allowed to unionize and strike.”

For example, the student's goal when giving a **problem speech** is to convince the audience that a problem exists about which they ought to be concerned. In a solution speech, the student advocates a specific solution to a problem that has been identified (the problem speech is given first, then the solution speech). It is possible that this could be done in dyads or in groups, also. In a dyad, one could present the problem and the other could provide the solution. The solution must address causes or symptoms of the problem. Students can choose problems that are local (tuition, drinking age, General Education), state-wide (mega-hog farms, landfills use of chemicals in planting), national (cloning, campaign financing, health care system, electoral college), or international (global warming, AIDS, NATO). Whereas in the problem speech, the purpose is to convince the class that a problem exists, a **solution speech** would focus on how to "fix" the problem. Both the problem and solution speeches can be incorporated into a regular persuasive speech, or they can be presented separately.

A **speech of refutation** involves defending one's position on a controversial subject by refuting another argument. In an English or journalism class, for example, when students read something they disagree with, they could prepare a speech noting the areas of disagreement and presenting their side of the issue/concept. Similarly, with the **pro-con speech** students might write an essay about a particular topic and then be asked to give a speech defending the other side of the issue. Or one student could be asked to give the "pro" side and the other the "con" side. For example, in a military science course, students could present pro-con speeches discussing the proposition, "The U.S. should retain the all volunteer army."

4. *Two-person presentation*

There are instances in which having two people work together is preferable to either individual or group work. Some possibilities are to have a two-person **debate**, ask students to engage in some type of **role-play** situation, or to conduct in-class **interviews**. The degree to which students have worked together or have scripted these activities is up to the instructor. A debate is a lively way to present both sides of an issue. In general, the first person speaks, the second person presents the other side, the first person refutes that, and the second person refutes the first person's arguments. A role-play can be useful when talking about family or work situations. One person takes the role of parent, the other takes the role of child (or supervisor-subordinate or teacher-student). In a class setting, interviewing is a form of role-playing. In a business class, an in-class interview could demonstrate employment interviewing. In a journalism class, it could demonstrate journalistic interviewing. In a psychology class, it could demonstrate counseling interviewing, and so on.