

Communicating Your Message

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to tie together all aspects of your communication skill to deliver an outstanding presentation. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Communicating Your Message
2. Four Speeches that Changed History
 - a. President John F. Kennedy
 - b. Representative Barbara Jordan
 - c. President Ronald Reagan
 - d. President Barack Obama
3. The Dos and Don'ts of Oral Communication



BEFORE YOU START

How have communication tools helped you deliver an important message at work or school?

1. Communicating Your Message

As you prepare for Touchstone 3, let's take a moment to go over some tips for your oral presentation.

Oral Presentation Tips	Description
Keep an Eye on the Clock	You should carefully align the length of your presentation with the requirements of your audience, setting, topic, and purpose. Make sure to distribute information across your slides in a way that makes sense for your argument—this will keep you on track when you're in front of your audience. For your assignment in this course, your presentation should last between 3 and 5 minutes.
Use Your Speaker Notes	This week, you will be adding speaker notes to your slides. Because you want to keep the text on each slide to a minimum, the speaker notes are a great place to write down everything you want to say during your presentation. Speaker notes can't be seen by your audience; only you can see them. When it's time to record your presentation, all you have to do is follow the notes!

Prepare, then Relax	Make sure you know what the most important points of your presentation are and that you have the information you need to support those points. Adequate preparation can help even the most nervous speaker feel more comfortable. When you have everything ready, take a deep breath and go. You've got this!
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This challenge is the perfect time to reflect on what makes a powerful speech and how you can apply lessons from great speakers in history to improve your own communication skill. Now, let's read about a few examples.

2. Four Speeches that Changed History



Communication: Skill in Action

Strong communicators have the power to change the course of history. So, it's no surprise that for thousands of years, history's most influential leaders have been celebrated for their most memorable speeches. These speakers didn't just read a written message out loud; the stakes were too high for that. They used proven oral communication techniques — like strategic pauses, emoting, and conversational phrases — to connect with their listeners.

Their speeches were powerful, but they weren't magical. They were carefully constructed using tools that you can also master in your own communication. In the sections below, get ready to watch video excerpts from four history-making speeches that conveyed powerful messages in critical times. And look out for strategies popping up in the videos along the way!

2a. President John F. Kennedy

Ich Bin Ein Berliner (1963): A Speech That Cooled A Conflict

The Moment

It's 1963. The Cold War has sparked fear of all-out nuclear war in people around the world, and President Kennedy is poised to give an historic speech in Berlin, Germany. The city is literally divided in two — East Berlin is communist, West Berlin is democratic — and the rest of the world is dividing into opposing communist and democratic "sides," as well. In his speech, President Kennedy hopes to convince Europeans that democracy is the moral choice, and that Europeans should have confidence in the American vision for a free and unified Berlin. To do that, he has to connect with his audience, clearly articulating the benefits of democracy and the dangers of communism.

The Techniques

As you watch excerpts from President Kennedy's speech, pop-ups will point out how he:

- Pauses: so key words and ideas have a greater impact.
- Connects: using language that the audience can relate to.

The Speech

The Results

Kennedy's speech helped democracies claim the moral high ground over communist dictatorships, and

played an important role in restoring European confidence in the United States. In 1990, Kennedy's vision came true: Berlin was unified as one democratic city.

2b. Representative Barbara Jordan

Democratic Convention Keynote Address (1976): A Speech That Rallied The Vote

The Moment

It's 1976, two years after President Nixon's resignation, and Democrats understand the high stakes of this year's election. As keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention, Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan knows she has an important job: to convince Black Americans — a critical voting bloc — that they can and should help Democrats retake the White House. To do that, she needs to make an emotional plea that's as inclusive as possible, which she hopes will persuade millions of Black Americans to vote Democratic in November.

The Techniques

As you watch excerpts from Jordan's speech, pop-ups will point out how she uses:

- Emotion: she makes herself relatable and likeable by conveying positive emotion.
- Inclusivity: she uses welcoming and inclusive language.

The Speech

The Results

Jordan's speech made a positive impression on people at the convention and around the country. On November 2, 1976, Americans elected a Democrat to the presidency for the first time in 12 years. A key factor in Jimmy Carter's victory: 83 percent of Black Americans voted for him.

2c. President Ronald Reagan

Address To The Nation (1986): A Speech That Comforted The Nation

The Moment

It's January 28, 1986, and the Space Shuttle Challenger lifts into the sky. Its crew of astronauts includes Christa McAuliffe, a public school teacher who is on the shuttle to teach students about space from space. Schoolchildren all over the country watch the launch live, which makes it even more horrifying when the shuttle explodes, killing all seven crew members aboard. That night, with the future of the space shuttle program in jeopardy, President Ronald Reagan addresses the nation, hoping to comfort many different audiences at once with a personalized, heartfelt speech.

The Techniques

As you watch excerpts from President Reagan's speech, pop-ups will point out how he:

- Makes It Personal: makes the speech personal by referring to his feelings about the tragedy.
- Addresses Many Audiences: addresses the families of those who died and the schoolchildren who watched the shuttle explode.

The Speech

The Results

Reagan was often called "The Great Communicator," and his Challenger speech justified that nickname. Audiences, allies, and political foes all agreed that this address was both heartfelt and unifying. Despite this tragedy, the space shuttle program continued until 2011.

2d. President Barack Obama

Farewell Address (2017): A Speech That Reinforced A Legacy

The Moment

After eight years, President Barack Obama is about to become a civilian again. In his farewell address, he hopes to cement his legacy by reminding listeners of what was accomplished during his tenure and instilling in them a sense of hope for the future. Just days before leaving office, he delivers a message that is consistent with the ideas that propelled him into the White House in the first place. He speaks conversationally as he advises listeners that they have the power to continue moving the country forward.

The Techniques

As you watch excerpts from President Obama’s speech, pop-ups will point out how he:

- **Keeps It Conversational:** he uses the appropriate tone and language for his audience and purpose.
- **Conveys A Consistent Message:** he repeats a message of hope for the future throughout the speech.

The Speech

The Results

Obama’s final speech helped cement his legacy as he left office. In the final days of his presidency, Obama’s approval ratings were at 60 percent — their highest point since 2009, when he was sworn into office.

3. The Dos and Don’ts of Oral Communication

In the section above, you saw how four great leaders — who were also great speakers — used effective oral communication techniques at turning points in American history.

They employed techniques like strategic pauses, conveying positive emotion, and speaking to a variety of audiences as they delivered relevant messages. Luckily, you don’t have to be a political leader to be a successful communicator. By practicing and using these same techniques, you can make your message resonate. Check out the *Quick Tips* below!

Before You Speak	
Do	Don’t
Prewrite, draft, and revise.	Decide to just “wing it.”
Focus on a few key points.	Try to force in too many ideas.
Practice out loud and in front of others.	Read your remarks silently.
Know your audience.	Speak about topics with limited appeal.
Use stories people will remember.	Put in useless details to fill time.
Make note-cards for your main points.	Assume you’ll remember everything
When You Speak	
Do	Don’t
Move your body and mouth before starting.	Deliver a speech without warming up.

Be authentic and make it personal.	Keep it too general.
Speak conversationally.	Have a robotic delivery.
Let the audience absorb your words..	Be afraid of pauses.
Try to avoid fillers like “um” and “uh.”	Worry if one or two slip out.



HINT

You can download these quick tips as a PDF below for oral communication techniques that you can refer to when you’re giving your next speech, whether it’s in the boardroom or your living room.

 [Quick Tips: The Dos and Don’ts of Oral Communication](#)



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned some oral presentation tips for **communicating your message** in an engaging and effective way. You also listened to and analyzed **four speeches that changed history** to see how those techniques were put into practice by **President John F. Kennedy, Representative Barbara Jordan, President Ronald Reagan, and President Barack Obama**. Finally, you reviewed a list of **do’s and don’ts of oral communication** that will help your presentation shine.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.