

# Defining Credibility

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the role of credibility in public speaking. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Defining Credibility
  - a. Subjective Credibility: Self-Presentation
  - b. Objective Credibility: Expertise

## 1. Defining Credibility

What is **credibility**? Credibility is defined as the objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message.

Credibility is both objective, or based on facts and evidence, and subjective, based on opinions and feelings.

This quality encompasses everything from your college degree or professional certification to the immediate "gut feeling" people get when they walk into the room.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Credibility

The objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message.

#### 1a. Subjective Credibility: Self-Presentation

The **subjective** aspect of a public speaker's credibility is based on the speaker's self-presentation.

Here are some tips for earning credibility on a subjective level:

1. Dress the part. Show the audience that you take the speaking engagement seriously, and that you hope to earn their respect. If you're not sure how to dress, professional attire is always a safe bet.
2. Look at the audience. Establishing eye contact will make you seem open and trustworthy.
3. Speak loudly, clearly, and confidently. If you have confidence in yourself, the audience will too.



### TERM TO KNOW

## Subjective

Formed, as in opinions, based upon a person's feelings or intuition, not upon observation or reasoning; coming more from within the observer than from observations of the external environment.

### 1b. Objective Credibility: Expertise

Mark Twain once said that an expert is just "an ordinary fellow from another town. " If only it were that easy! In reality, if you want to convince the audience that you are an expert, you will have to show some credentials.

Here are three ways to establish **objective** credibility:

1. State your credentials. Audiences will trust you more readily if you can prove that other people value your expertise. Credentials include relevant degrees, certifications, testimonials, recommendations, work experience, volunteer experience, and informally, other types of personal experience.
2. Reveal a personal connection to your topic. Your input will have more weight if you can demonstrate that the topic means something to you.
3. Establish common ground with your audience. If you can explain that, ultimately, you all want the same thing, the audience will be much more likely to trust you and accept your message.



#### TERM TO KNOW

## Objective

Not influenced by irrational emotions or prejudices; based on facts or evidence.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **credibility** is a composite of subjective and objective factors, so it relates to feelings and opinions, as well as facts and evidence. The **subjective component of a public speaker's credibility** centers on the speaker's self-presentation. The **objective aspect of a public speaker's credibility** is based on the speaker's expertise.

Source: Boundless. "Defining Credibility." Boundless Communications Boundless, 17 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 23 May. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/methods-of-persuasive-speaking-15/credibility-appeals-76/defining-credibility-295-5438/>



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Credibility

The objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message.

##### Objective

Not influenced by irrational emotions or prejudices; based on facts or evidence.

##### Subjective

Formed, as in opinions, based upon a person's feelings or intuition, not upon observation or reasoning;

coming more from within the observer than from observations of the external environment.