

Interaction in Public Speaking

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about ways that you can interact with your audience. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Why Is Interaction Important?
2. Verbal Interaction
3. Non-Verbal Interaction

1. Why Is Interaction Important?

Often, when you think of a speech, you think of a one-way message from public speaker to audience. However, the most compelling speeches are those in which the speaker engages and interacts with his or her audience.



Interaction is important in public speaking because it involves your audience being more directly with both you as speaker and your content. An involved and engaged audience is more likely to pay attention to you and connect with your words.



TERM TO KNOW

Interaction

A conversation or exchange between people.

2. Verbal Interaction

While you may not necessarily engage in a two-way dialogue with your audience, there are plenty of ways to interact with them verbally. At a spirited campaign rally, for example, you may respond to people who call out from the audience.

If you're in a more subdued environment, you may directly ask questions of your audience. You want to make sure that these questions relate to the subject matter of your speech and then incorporate those answers into the rest of your speech. You might agree with what an audience member says, or you can use the opportunity to refute or rebut their response. This further involves your audience with your message.

You may also choose to call out select members of the audience by name, if appropriate -- for example, when sharing an anecdote. Another great way of engaging with your audience is both acknowledging them at the beginning of your speech and then thanking them for their time and attention at the conclusion of your speech.

3. Non-Verbal Interaction

Your non-verbal interaction with your audience consists largely of body-language cues. Whether it's eye contact with individual members of the audience or specific gestures and face expressions as you speak, your actions are just as important as your words when you're in front of an audience. Your audience will use your non-verbal cues to more fully comprehend your message and will often connect with or disengage from your message based on those cues.

Just remember that all **body language** and non-verbal communication requires appropriate context. Even an unintentional gesture -- crossed arms, a slouch, a frown -- can connote a very different meaning to your audience than the words you're actually saying.

Practice your speech in front of a mirror or record yourself so you can take note of any unintentional non-verbal signals you may be sending to your audience.



TERM TO KNOW

Body Language

Body language is a form of mental and physical ability of human non-verbal communication. It consists of body posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements. Humans send and interpret such signals almost entirely subconsciously.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that public speaking is not just a one-way communication of ideas from speaker to audience; an effective public speaker is one who engages and **interacts** with his or her audience. Asking questions of your audience, referencing and calling out members of the audience when appropriate, and even just acknowledging and thanking them for their time are all effective ways of **verbally interacting** with your audience. Your **non-verbal body-language cues**, such as facial expression, gesture, posture, and eye contact all add layers of interaction with your audience. Pay close attention to your non-verbal cues as you speak to ensure that your mannerisms match your message.

Source: Boundless. "Interaction in Public Speaking." Boundless Communications Boundless, 17 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 1 Jun. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/delivering-the-speech-12/interaction-in-public-speaking-66/interaction-in-public-speaking-264-11198/>



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