

# Oral Communication

**Student Learning Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in clear and concise live communication.

## The Value of Oral Communication

Oral communication consists of both extemporaneous and prepared communication, and is intended to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors. Oral communication is fundamental to individual, professional, and social growth. It enables the free expression and exchange of ideas, allowing individuals, organizations, and communities to understand and learn from one

another through expression. Oral communication is vital, because it is an empowering skill that allows individuals to become “upstanders,” rather than bystanders—people who are confident and neither silent nor afraid to speak at critical individual, professional, and social junctures.

## Supporting Skills

1. Students will demonstrate a clearly and consistently observable organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) within the context of a presentation.
2. Students will make language choices in the context of a presentation that are thoughtful, appropriate to the audience, and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation.
3. Students will use delivery techniques (posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) that make the presentation interesting and make the speaker appear comfortable.
4. Students will articulate and support a clear and well-supported central idea (thesis, main message, or creative theme).

## Course Content Criteria

1. Courses in this category give students multiple opportunities to develop oral communication skills.
2. Courses in the category contain at least two speaking events per student, at least one of which is a limited preparation event and at least one of which is a prepared speaking event.
3. Courses in this category provide students direct instruction or guidance on best practices in oral communication and provide students meaningful feedback on their oral communication skills.
4. Courses in this category include, as a required resource, an approved reference guide to public speaking, to be determined.
5. Courses in this category include an assessment assignment that requires students to demonstrate each of the skills in the Oral Communication Assessment Rubric (below). This assessment assignment should be an individual, live presentation on a topic appropriate to the content of the course.

## Glossary

1. **Direct instruction or guidance:** Providing formal instruction on best practices in delivering live, oral communication in a specific context, or presenting students with prepared materials (e.g., readings, video tutorials) that deliver such formal instruction.
2. **Extemporaneous communication:** The ability to spontaneously frame ideas, provide answers, speak clearly, and articulate thoughts verbally, in the moment, without preparation.
3. **Live communication:** Communication that occurs when a speaker delivers a message (prepared or extemporaneous) in real-time, in the presence of an audience. The message can be delivered in-person or via a video-conferencing platform.
4. **Meaningful feedback:** Detailed commentary and critique on all relevant aspects of a student's speaking event. Such commentary should reflect upon the student's ability, based on his or her speaking event, to demonstrate the skills highlighted in this rubric.
5. **Organizational pattern:** The logical structure within a message. This structure supports the thesis and is typically indicated by terms of enumeration and logical progression.
6. **Prepared communication:** A live oral communication event in which a student has at least 24 hours of preparation time to respond to a prompt, expecting at least four minutes of live presentation before an audience of at least four people. This speech should indicate a clear introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion.
7. **Speaking events:** Live situations in which a person speaks directly to at least four other people, either through a mediated format (such as a Zoom meeting) or in a face-to-face context (such as during a class presentation or sales pitch).

## Experience Criteria

Students may apply to fulfill the OC requirement through a co-curricular activity. These criteria apply to experiences that meet the OC curricular requirement and describe the characteristics of the experience, the steps a student must follow to petition the experience for approval, and the number and types of assignments students must submit to satisfy the requirement.

1. Students must obtain pre-approval for any activity used to satisfy this component. Approval must be obtained prior to the start of the activity.
2. Students must submit independent, third-party, verification of participation in the approved activity, by a supervisor or other authoritative individual, who is not a first or second-degree relative or close family friend.
3. Activities in fulfillment of this requirement must comprise multiple, audience-driven instances of individual, oral communication.
4. Activities in fulfillment of this requirement must include mechanisms for third-party feedback about the quality of the performance.
5. Activities in fulfillment of this requirement must comprise 15 hours of activity that includes speaking events that provide students with at least 12 minutes of audience-driven speaking.
6. Mediated oral communication events (through video recording, Skype, Zoom, etc.) should ideally only count for up to half of the required speaking time.
7. Students fulfilling oral communication through an activity must submit a written reflection with the petition outlining what the activity is, how they anticipate the activity will fulfill the requirement, and what they expect to gain and learn from the experience.
8. Students fulfilling Oral Communication through an activity must submit either a recording of the student engaged in a speaking event or a written reflection of approximately 1000 words that responds to the following prompt:

***Please describe in detail the activity you used to complete the Oral Communication requirement. In your reflection, answer the following questions. How did you meet the requirement of completing one prepared and one spontaneous presentation? Who was the audience for your presentations? What resources did you use to understand how best to present to your audience? What supporting materials did you use during your presentations? Who provided feedback on your presentations? How did your ability to communicate information through a presentation improve?***

## Oral Communication Rubric

Supporting Skills	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1
<b>Demonstrate a clearly and consistently observable organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions).</b>	Skillfully demonstrates a clearly and consistently observable organizational pattern that enhances the message, with seamless transitions between sections. The introduction and conclusion are strong, and the body is well-organized.	Demonstrates a clearly observable organizational pattern, though there may be minor lapses in clarity or coherence. Transitions between sections are present but may not always be smooth. The introduction and conclusion are evident but may lack impact.	Shows an intermittently observable organizational pattern that leads to noticeable confusion or disorganization in some parts of the presentation. Transitions between sections are weak or unclear. The introduction and/or conclusion may be underdeveloped, impacting the overall cohesion of the message.	Minimal evidence of an organizational pattern, with little to no observable structure in the presentation. Transitions are absent or ineffective, making the presentation difficult to follow. The introduction and conclusion are either missing or do not contribute meaningfully to the presentation.
<b>Make thoughtful and appropriate language choices.</b>	Makes language choices that are imaginative, memorable, and compelling, fully appropriate to the audience, and that enhance the effectiveness of the presentation.	Makes language choices that are thoughtful and appropriate to the audience, generally supporting the effectiveness of the presentation.	Makes language choices that are unclear or inconsistent, partially appropriate to the audience, and may detract from the presentation's effectiveness.	Makes language choices that are not appropriate to the audience and do not support the effectiveness of the presentation.
<b>Use effective delivery techniques (posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness).</b>	Uses delivery techniques (posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) that make the presentation compelling, engaging, and professional. The speaker appears confident and communicates with clear vocal variety and emphasis that enhances the message.	Uses delivery techniques that make the presentation interesting and engaging. The speaker appears comfortable, with vocal expressiveness that generally supports the message.	Uses delivery techniques that make the presentation understandable but may show discomfort or lack of confidence. Vocal expressiveness is present but may be inconsistent or lacking variety.	Uses delivery techniques that detract from the presentation, with the speaker appearing uncomfortable or unprepared. Vocal expressiveness is minimal or absent, leading to a flat or monotone delivery.
<b>Use of a clear and well-supported central idea (thesis, main message, or creative theme).</b>	The central idea is compelling, clearly articulated, and consistently reinforced with appropriate evidence, examples, or creativity. For argumentative presentations, the thesis is persuasive; for informational, it is precise; for creative, it is imaginative and thought-provoking.	The central idea is clear and supported by generally appropriate examples or reasoning. For argumentative presentations, the thesis is convincing; for informational, it is well-explained; for creative, it is coherent and interesting.	The central idea is present but not consistently reinforced or fully developed. Support is somewhat unclear or incomplete. For argumentative presentations, the thesis is underdeveloped; for informational, key details are missing; for creative, the theme lacks impact or clarity.	The central idea is unclear, missing, or unsupported. The presentation lacks focus or coherence.