



Unit 1 Speaking Characteristics

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Establish rapport with your audience

Unit 1

Speaking Characteristics

Communication

About Communication

Why are communication skills so important for good interpersonal relationships? Interpersonal communication skills are the vehicle by which all interactions between you and other people are made clear. Much of the communication that occurs between people is one-way, without either party truly hearing the other or accurately understanding what was said. In fact, if you think about it, modern culture often teaches us to avoid two-way communication because it is too personal and imposing.

To get better at communicating, it helps to start with **simple conversations**. When you are out with a gathering of friends, do you find it easy to just chat away without thinking of what to say next? How about when you get thrown in with a bunch of people you do not know?

For most of us, this second type of conversation is much more difficult. Why? What happens? Could it be that we have heard so much about only having a few seconds to make a good impression that many of us stay silent for fear of being judged? Could we be shy? Are we uninterested in the people there, so we do not want to talk? Whatever the reasons are, we are still being judged when we are silent, and since this course is about speaking and presenting, it will hopefully serve as a way to **help you speak up**.

Where do you find topics of conversation that you can bring up at the next party or office get-together? Conversations are much easier to start if you are a multi-topic person. Try to stay abreast of current events and to replenish your conversational pantry as often as you do your refrigerator.

Where can you get some good conversational openers?

Just as important as what you say is how you say it. Wear a smile – it is always becoming to your voice. Smiling makes us look friendly, so people will see you as approachable.

Do not attempt to make a derogatory remark under the guise of humor (that is **sarcasm**) and do not try to **shock**. (Some people are hard to shock anyway, and others may be shocked in a very negative way, so it just is not worth the risk.)

Lengthy emotional debates will not contribute to the gathering. Death, politics, religion, illness, and children usually head the list of subjects to be avoided, but there are exceptions to every rule. For example, many of us have

encountered situations when condolences must be expressed to someone who has been ill. If you have just joined a parenting group, you can likely expect to speak about your children.

Take an interest in the other people there and ask open ended, friendly questions. You do not want to interrogate people, just get to know them a little. Taking an interest helps make others feel comfortable and welcome, plus it will help you feel more comfortable. Find some common ground such as sports teams, food you enjoy, games you play, bike paths you ride, and so on.

No matter how seriously you try, **not all conversations can be made into engaging discussions**. Eventually even good conversations may come to an end. Tell the other person how much you have enjoyed speaking with them and go on to meet other people.

If you find yourself alone, look for others who look similarly disengaged or join a group with an odd number of people. You could pass the cheese tray or sample the buffet table. One tip that often works is to imagine you are the host or hostess. This makes you less worried about yourself and more concerned about other people.

What do these behaviors have to do with speaking in public? Self-confidence is an important element of public speaking. We grow our confidence when we are able to master one-on-one conversations. Then we can more easily make the transition to developing our presentation skills.

Stop! Check Your Mouth!

Speaking Characteristics

The characteristics below can make or break the audience's impression of a speaker. These are things you may not give a lot of thought to, but members of your audience will. Taking control of them can make you a dynamic and well-respected speaker.

Volume

Play with your volume and get control of it. Varying volume allows you to emphasize by being louder or softer at times. Get a good idea of your natural volume: too loud is hard on listeners, but so is too soft. Listen to people who deliver the news or who act as commentators. They use variety for maximum effect.

Clichés

When we are not sure what to say, we all fall back on old sayings. What makes them into clichés is that overuse makes them less interesting and tired. The most interesting speakers try to avoid saying things the same way everybody else does.

Instead of saying the baby's skin is, "Soft as a feather" we might say, "Soft as..." or instead of saying, "As hard as nails" we could say, "As hard as..."

Diction

Diction is about the way you pronounce and enunciate words. If you do not know how to pronounce a word, look in the dictionary or ask somebody who knows the correct pronunciation.

Make an effort to speak clearly. While you want to sound natural in your presentations, most of us need to slow

down and be more precise so that everyone can hear what is being said. Mumbling makes it difficult for the other person to know what we have said. If you know you chew your words, or otherwise make it difficult for people to understand you, start practicing and developing better speaking habits.

One excellent resource is to join a Toastmaster's chapter or another speaking organization. There are chapters around the world and there is vast benefit from the time you would invest.

Slang or Vulgarities

You may feel more comfortable when you are with friends and slip into local sayings or swearing. You might work in an organization where this is the norm, too. However, when you are presenting, it is important to project a professional image. Remember that you have a message to share and maybe people to convince. Do not undermine your own credibility by losing sight of what you need to do.

Gender References

In order to be inclusive in what you say, you must be sensitive to both masculine and feminine terms. Nurses are not always female and doctors are not always male.

How could you write these terms to be non-gender specific?

- Fireman
- Policeman
- Chairman
- Postman
- Housewife
- Mankind

Acronyms and Jargon

If terms are known only to people who work within your industry or in your company, either do not use them at all, or explain what they are and then use them. Do not make the assumption that everyone will know what they mean, even if they do work within your industry or your company.

Tact

Tact means making full use of diplomacy. This means saying the right thing at the right time, but also leaving the wrong thing unsaid.

Benjamin Disraeli, explaining his popularity with Queen Victoria said, "I never deny. I never contradict. I sometimes forget."

How often do you avoid other people because they always seem to say the wrong thing? They express themselves in such a way that it hurts or offends you or others. These people lack tact. Tact is a demonstration of skill and grace in dealing with others. It means that how you say something is as important as what you say. Tact enables you to maintain good interpersonal relations by not offending others.

FIVE GOOD RULES

Here are five rules to remember in order to have better conversations.

1. Talk to yourself in positive terms. Take time to clarify the message in your own mind before you try communicating it to someone else.
2. When you speak to individuals, take the time to express yourself in an organized manner. Use a pause to gather your thoughts.
3. Ask for feedback. Do not assume that the message sent was the message received.
4. When presenting to a group, have a message worth communicating.
5. Know when to stop talking.

What Is Your Type? How About Mine?

THE ASSESSMENT

There are many ways to describe personality types, with the idea that there are base temperaments that we can relate to, and that we prefer. The science behind this kind of assessment relates back to the work of Carl Jung, which was later advanced by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers.

IDENTIFYING YOUR CHARACTERISTICS AND PREFERENCES

We have developed an assessment that can help you identify what your base temperament is. First, look at the group of words. For each group, decide which of the four choices is most like you, a lot like you, somewhat like you, and least like you. It is important to answer the questions according to what feels right, and not what you think people think about you or may expect.

First, select the one that is most like you and write the number 4 on the line. Then select the term that is a lot like you and write number 3 on the line. Then write number 2, and then 1. You must use the numbers 4, 3, 2, and 1 in each section. There are no ties allowed, so you need to make a decision on each group. You can see an example on the next page.

Remember that you are working on preferences and not a math exam, so do not get overly tied up in absolute definitions!

When you are finished the questionnaire, follow the instructions on the scoring sheet.

Example

Scale

- 4 = Most like you
- 3 = A lot like you
- 2 = Somewhat like you
- 1 = Least like you

Terms

1. A driving need for you is:

3	C	To find meaning in life
4	A	To learn and gain knowledge
2	B	To belong
1	D	Freedom to do what you want

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. A driving need for you is:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | To find meaning in life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | To learn and gain knowledge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | To belong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Freedom to do what you want |

2. A primary need for you is:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Making an impact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Maintaining calm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | Relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Responsibility and duty |

3. Which of these things interests you?

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Ideas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Actions |

4. You respect:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Intellect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Performance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | Relationships |

5. You:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | Stick up for what you believe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Are constantly busy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Look to the future |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Like to provide for others |

6. You like:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Exploring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | Cooperation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Seizing opportunities |

7. You are good at:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Making quick decisions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Looking after details |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | Inspiring others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Solving complicated problems |

8. You want:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | Variety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Logic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | Harmony |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Stability |

9. You prefer to focus on:

<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Relationships
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	A	Knowledge

10. You value:

<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Security
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Self-improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	A	Intelligence

11. You make decisions by relying on:

<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Intuition
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Senses
<input type="checkbox"/>	A	Data
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Tradition

12. You enjoy:

<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Adventure
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Social gatherings
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Meaningful interactions
<input type="checkbox"/>	A	Theories and data

13. Your work stressors are:

<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Inefficiency
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Boredom

	B	Injustice
	A	Not knowing

14. You appreciate:

	C	Skilled performance
	A	Research and investigation
	B	Cooperative interaction
	D	Respect for policy and tradition

15. Your leadership style is

	D	Firm, fair, respectful
	C	Relaxed, flexible, open
	B	Patient, supportive, encouraging
	A	Logical, inspirational, direct

Scoring

Add the total number of points that you wrote beside each letter of the alphabet in the questionnaire. Pay close attention, since the letters above are not always in order!

Example

In our sample at the beginning of the questionnaire, we would add 4 points to the A column, 2 points to the B column, 3 points to the C column, and 1 to the D column.

A	
B	
C	
D	

Your Score

A	
B	
C	
D	

Total A's _____ Total B's _____ Total C's _____ Total D's _____

The letter with the highest total is most like you. Write it here: _____

The other letters are your next preferred styles. If your numbers are close to each other (within five points), you probably find it fairly easy to flex your style to those other categories. If your numbers are far apart, or one is much lower than the others, that is the area you will find it challenging to work within. You will have the knowledge of how to do it once you work through the material below.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A NUMBER?

In reality, we are a blend of all types, moving within the numbers and flexing into the other styles that our circumstances and our comfort levels dictate. This means that we are more like a blended drink than distinct ingredients. You will recognize that you may behave one way at work (super organized), usually be more relaxed at home, but return to your super organized self when stress at home increases. As you read the descriptions below, see if they agree with how you behave as a presenter. You will also gain some insight into how to connect with the different types in the descriptions.

Mostly A's – Inquiring Rationals

Inquiring Rationals are often **drawn to jobs such as banking and engineering**. They like to figure out how things work. They consider the structure and configuration of things. They process information intuitively and look at the big picture. These are visionaries, such as Albert Einstein and Bill Gates. When it is time to make decisions, they apply logic, and they do not get persuaded by emotions. If they do not respect you, you will not keep their attention. Experience and competency are very important to Inquiring Rationals.

This temperament profile makes up approximately **five to seven per cent of the population**. Other notables in this group are Walt Disney, Ben Franklin, Margaret Thatcher, and Napoleon.

To connect with Inquiring Rationals in your audience, demonstrate your expertise in your introduction and opening. Quote experts and remember to cite your sources. Get to the point – and your content – quickly. Broad statements are acceptable only if you can back them up, so be certain to have your statistics and data ready. To keep their attention, use facts and figures first and personal stories later.

If this is your preferred speaking style, your strength will be in the architecture of your speech. Your ideas are founded in the science, not hyperbole. Your presentation will be logical and creative, and you will even back up your own theories with evidence. To keep things moving, do not be afraid to add some stories and quotes to the mix.

Your weakness as a presenter or speaker is predictability. Too much logic might mean that you are giving a

presentation that only other Inquiring Rationals can understand. Learn how to incorporate humor and make your presentation interactive. Use stories to add depth and warmth; other people will thank you for it! Avoid staying glued to your PowerPoint slides and remember to step away from the podium to engage your audience.

Mostly B's – Authentic Idealists

Authentic Idealists are **natural teachers, counselors, and leaders**. They are benevolent and intuitive, and they focus on global issues like world poverty and humanitarian issues. Idealists love metaphors, stories, and symbols, rather than statistics and figures. They make decisions that reflect their values, and rely on emotion and instinct as opposed to logic. In fact, statistics and facts bore them. They are looking for significance, and they seek the truth. The Authentic Idealist temperament makes up about **10 per cent of the population**. Notable members of this group include Eleanor Roosevelt, Billy Graham, Mahatma Gandhi, Jane Goodall, Oprah Winfrey, and Albert Schweitzer.

To connect with the Authentic Idealists in your presentations, share your values and personal convictions. Be authentic and reach out to them by telling stories that demonstrate your empathy. Appeal to personal ethics and a higher calling. Show that you care about them and each person in the room. Authentic Idealists are more interested in how much you care than how much you can cite statistics.

If your speaking style is that of an Authentic Idealist, your strengths include making deep connections with your audience at an emotional level. You are a good storyteller, so find innovative ways to present your information. You have wisdom to share and are eager to do so. Your lack of ego about what you know makes you likeable.

If you have a weakness, it is your sensitivity to the audience. You are intuitive and will interpret meaning behind everything. This also means that you can get distracted by reactions of individuals in the audience, and that can make you lose track.

Your speeches tend to be powerful but can lack humor and get too emotional. You may also tend to believe that speaking from the heart is all you need, and you may not plan your presentation very well. You might be tempted to wing it. Make sure that you do not.

Mostly C's – Organized Guardians

Organized Guardians are extremely **dependable and loyal**, and they play by the rules. They have an amazing work ethic, stay down-to-earth, and they like routine. They are thorough and orderly. At times they are too serious, but they are practically always serious. They are good at taking care of other people. They want to hear about the bottom line, and they want the facts. They can often be your hardest and most judgmental members of the audience.

Organized Guardians will consider charts and graphs and will follow a well-prepared presentation longer than most people. They can shut down when too much emotion is presented and may get bored with stories. This temperament makes up **40 to 45 per cent of the population** and includes people such as Queen Elizabeth II, Mother Teresa, George Washington, and Colin Powell. With their respect for tradition, they are drawn to the military and policing. These are also the people who will pass traditions to their children and grandchildren. To connect with Organized Guardians in your audience, be concise, organized, and support statements with data. Present information in logical sequence and do not wander off down a tangent. Quote other experts.

If you are an Organized Guardian as a speaker, you will be very logical and organized. You will probably use PowerPoint because that is what people use, and you will have slides with plenty of bullets and numbers. Make sure you do not have more slides than you absolutely need!

Your weakness as a speaker can be predictability and a dry speech. The data will be there, but not the heart.

You may have far more material than you need because you think it is all important. This means that your speeches can be too dense and without humor. Draw on your compassion for others to add emotional depth to your presentation.

Mostly D's – Resourceful Artisans

Resourceful Artisans **crave action and live in the moment**. They are very social, confident, and persuasive. Steven Spielberg and Madonna are notable Resourceful Artisans. They are witty, playful, and fun. If they had a message to share, it would be that the world could lighten up a little. They love playing to an audience and look at the world as their stage. Like Organized Guardians, they can also perceive the world concretely. They can get bored with visionary tasks. They enjoy stories that they can easily relate to and imagine happening to them. This temperament makes up about **35 per cent of the population**.

To connect with Resourceful Artisans in your audience, be real and spontaneous. Do not stand behind a podium and read off your notes or slides. Engage them with questions and discussion. Use well-developed, engaging personal stories and let your creativity show. This style wants you to deliver an experience, not just a speech.

If you are a Resourceful Artisan as a speaker, your strengths include energy, personality, and creativity. You will deliver a show. You will get a thrill from the emotional connection between you and the audience. Build in some interaction to leverage your spontaneity. You are a natural storyteller, so tell some stories.

Your weakness might be in your organization and structure. Because you are living in the moment, you will avoid the homework that goes into the development of a brilliant presentation. You might avoid preparation and be willing to rely on spontaneity. Be careful not to be so spontaneous that you miss a good opportunity to deliver a message. Have fun, but stay on track.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

We all have preferences for how we do things, and now we hopefully understand a bit more about them. It is also important to remember that we ALL have the range of temperaments described here. We just have our own preferences; you might be mostly A, but call on behaviors that are more closely associated with B, C, or D as needed.

When making presentations, keep in mind your personality type as well as the fact that your audience will likely contain a range of types.

LEARNING TO TYPE

People That Are Most Like Me

What I like about working with them:



What aspects of their personality are challenging to work with?

How I could approach them to make it easier:

People That Are Least Like Me

What I like about working with them?

What aspects of their personality are challenging to work with?

How I could approach them to make it easier:

Further Reading:

- ✓ Berkley, Susan. *Speak to Influence*. Campbell Hall Press, 2004.
- ✓ Boothman, Nicholas. *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less*. Workman Publishing Company, 2000.