

## COMMON CORE FOCUS

**SL 1a–d** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions. **SL 2** Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study. **SL 3** Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. **SL 4** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner. **SL 6** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Good speakers and listeners do more than just talk and hear. They use specific techniques to present their ideas effectively, and they are attentive and critical listeners.*

## COMMON CORE

Included in this handbook:  
SL 1a–d, SL 2, SL 3, SL 4, SL 6

**1 Speech**

In school, in business, and in community life, a speech is one of the most effective means of communicating.

**1.1 AUDIENCE, PURPOSE, AND OCCASION**

Delivering a speech is an opportunity to share your ideas. Before you begin to prepare a speech, you will need to know *why* you are making the presentation and to *whom* you are presenting it. Understanding your purpose, the background and interests of your audience, and the occasion will help you select an appropriate focus and organizational structure for your speech.

- **Know Your Audience** What kind of group are you presenting to? Fellow classmates? A group of teachers? What are their interests and backgrounds? Understanding their different points of view can help you organize the information so that they understand and are interested in it.
- **Understand Your Purpose** Keep in mind your purpose for speaking. Are you trying to persuade the audience to do something? Perhaps you simply want to entertain them by sharing a story or experience. Your purpose directly affects your tone. Decide whether you’ll best accomplish your purpose by being serious or humorous.
- **Know the Occasion** Are you speaking at a special event? Is it formal? Will others be giving speeches besides you? Knowing what the occasion is will help you choose the proper language and the right length for the event.

**1.2 WRITING YOUR SPEECH**

Once you understand your purpose and audience, you are ready to write your speech. Use the following guidelines to help you:

- **Create a Unified Speech** Do this first by organizing your speech into paragraphs, each of which develops a single main or central idea. Then make sure that just as all the sentences in a paragraph support the main idea of the paragraph, all the paragraphs in your speech support the main idea of the speech.
- **Clarify Your Ideas** Make sure that you show clear relationships between ideas. Transition words can help listeners follow your ideas.

*For more information on transitions, see the **Writing Handbook**, page R32.*

- **Use Appropriate Language** The subject of your speech—and the way you choose to present it—should match your audience, your purpose, and the occasion. You can use informal language, such as slang, to share a story with your classmates. For a persuasive speech in front of a school assembly, use formal, standard American English. If you are giving an informative presentation, be sure to explain any terms that the audience may not be familiar with.
- **Provide Evidence** Include relevant facts, statistics, and incidents; quote experts to support your ideas and opinions. Elaborate—provide specific details, perhaps with visual or media displays—to clarify what you are saying.
- **Arrange Details and Evidence Effectively** In a good presentation, your controlling idea, or thesis statement should be supported by clearly stated evidence. The evidence can be presented as details, reasons, descriptions, or examples. Use the following chart to help you arrange your ideas.

<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on one strong example or statistic.</li> <li>• Make sure your evidence is intense or even surprising, so that it grabs the audience's attention.</li> </ul>
<b>Main Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to provide at least one piece of evidence for every new idea you introduce.</li> <li>• Define unfamiliar terms clearly.</li> <li>• When possible, include well-labeled diagrams or illustrations.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave your audience with one strong piece of evidence or a powerful detail.</li> </ul>

- **Use Figurative Language** Draw attention to important points with similes, metaphors, and sensory images.
- **Use Precise Language** Use precise language to convey your ideas. You can keep the audience's attention with a word that brings out strong emotion. You can use a question or interjection to make a personal connection with the audience.
- **Organize Effectively** Order your information in a way that helps you achieve your purpose. If you want to persuade, try starting with a "hook" (an interesting question or statement that captures your audience's attention) and finishing with your most compelling evidence. Which evidence is most important or interesting depends on your audience's background knowledge, experiences, and interests. You may need to reorganize your speech for different audiences.
- **Revise Your Speech** Revise, edit, and proofread it as you would for a written report. Check for correct subject-verb agreement and consistent verb tense. Correct run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Use parallel structure to emphasize ideas. Use complete sentences and correct punctuation and capitalization, even if no one else will see it. Your written speech should be clear and error free. If you notice an error in your notes during the speech, you may not remember what you actually wanted to say.

### 1.3 DELIVERING YOUR SPEECH

Use these techniques to help you prepare and present your speech:

#### Prepare

- **Review Your Information** Reread your notes and review any background research. You'll feel more confident during your speech.
- **Prepare Your Notes** Some people prefer to write down only key points. Others prefer the entire script. Write each main point, or each paragraph, of your speech on a separate numbered index card. Be sure to include your most important evidence and examples.
- **Plan Your Visual Aids** If you are planning on using visual aids, such as slides, posters, charts, graphs, video clips, overhead transparencies, or computer projections, now is the time to design them and decide how to work them into your speech.

#### Practice

- **Rehearse** Rehearse your speech several times, possibly in front of a practice audience. Maintain good **posture** by standing with your shoulders back and your head up. Glance at your notes to refresh your memory, but don't read them word for word. Instead, make **eye contact** with audience members. If you are using visual aids, arrange them in the order in which you will use them.
- **Use Speaking Techniques** Each time you rehearse, focus on a different speaking technique. **Voice modulation** means that your voice is clear and slightly varied—not too loud, not soft or mumbling, and not a monotone. Similarly, **inflection** refers to the tone of your voice. You may change your inflection to show how you feel about a particular point—happy, sad, and so on. **Tempo** means your rate of speed, and **enunciation** refers to how clearly you pronounce words.

- **Use Audience Feedback** If you had a practice audience, ask them specific questions about your delivery: Did I use enough eye contact? Was my voice at the right volume? Did I stand straight, or did I slouch? Use the audience's comments to evaluate the effectiveness of your delivery and to set goals for future rehearsals.
- **Evaluate Your Performance** When you have finished each rehearsal, evaluate your performance. Did you pause to let an important point sink in or use gestures for emphasis? Make a list of the aspects of your presentation that you will try to improve for your next rehearsal.

### Present

- **Begin Your Speech** Try to look relaxed and smile.
- **Make Eye Contact** Try to make eye contact with as many audience members as possible. This will establish personal contact and help you determine if the audience understands your speech.
- **Remember to Pause** A slight pause after important points will provide emphasis and give your audience time to think about what you're saying.
- **Speak Clearly** Speak loud enough to be heard clearly, but not so loud that your voice is overwhelming. Use a conversational tone.
- **Maintain Good Posture** Stand up straight and avoid nervous movements that may distract the audience's attention from what you are saying.
- **Use Expressive Body Language** Use facial expressions to show your feelings toward your topic. Lean forward when you make an important point; move your hands and arms for emphasis. Use your body language to show your own style and reflect your personality.
- **Watch the Audience for Responses** If they start fidgeting or yawning, speak a little louder or get to your conclusion a little sooner. Use what you learn to evaluate the effectiveness of your speech and to decide what areas need improvement for future presentations.

### Respond to Questions

Depending on the content of your speech, your audience may have questions. Follow these steps to make sure that you answer questions in an appropriate manner:

- Think about what your audience may ask and prepare answers before your speech.
- Tell your audience at the beginning of your speech that you will take questions at the end. This helps avoid audience interruptions.
- Call on audience members in the order in which they raise their hands.
- Repeat each question before you answer it to ensure that everyone has heard it. This step also gives you time to prepare your answer.

## 2 Different Types of Oral Presentations

### 2.1 INFORMATIVE SPEECH

When you deliver an informative speech, you give the audience new information or provide a better understanding of information. One example of an informative speech is a critique of a literary work, film, or dramatic production.

Use the following questions to evaluate the presentation of a peer or a public figure, or your own presentation.

#### Evaluate an Informative Speech

- Did the speaker maintain eye contact and speak clearly?
- Did the speaker explain the purpose of the presentation?
- Did the speaker take the audience's previous knowledge into consideration?
- Did the speaker cite a variety of sources for the information?
- Did the speaker communicate the information objectively?
- Did the speaker explain technical terms?
- Did the speaker use body language and visual aids effectively?

## 2.2 PERSUASIVE SPEECH

When you deliver a persuasive speech, you offer a thesis or clear statement on a subject, you provide relevant evidence to support your position, and you attempt to convince the audience to accept your point of view.

For more information, see *Speaking and Listening Workshop: Presenting a Persuasive Speech*, pages 998–999.

Use the following questions to evaluate the presentation of a peer or a public figure, or your own presentation.

### Evaluate a Persuasive Speech

- Did the speaker state a clear position or perspective in support of an argument or proposal?
- Did the speaker describe supporting points coherently and use logical, clearly explained evidence?
- Did the speaker arrange supporting details, reasons, descriptions, and examples in a way that made sense to the audience?
- Did the speaker effectively use speaking techniques such as voice modulation, inflection, tempo, enunciation, and eye contact?
- What is your opinion of the speaker's content and delivery? What was the speech's overall impact on you?

## 2.3 DEBATE

A debate is a balanced argument covering both sides of an issue. In a debate, two teams compete to win the support of the audience. In a formal debate, two teams, each with two members, present their arguments on a given proposition or policy statement. One team argues for the proposition or statement and the other argues against it. Each debater must consider the proposition closely and must research both sides of it. To argue persuasively either for or against a proposition, a debater must be familiar with both sides of the issue.

Use the following guidelines to evaluate a debate.

### Evaluate a Team in a Debate

- Did the team prove that a significant problem does or does not exist?
- How did the team convince you that the proposition is or is not the best solution to the problem?
- How effectively did the team present reasons and evidence supporting the case?
- How effectively did the team respond to arguments made by the opposing team?
- Did the speakers maintain eye contact and speak at an appropriate rate and volume?
- Did the speakers observe proper debate etiquette?

### PRACTICE AND APPLY

View a political debate for a school, local, state, or national election. Use the preceding criteria to evaluate it.

## 2.4 NARRATIVE SPEECH

When you deliver a narrative speech, you tell a story or present a subject using a story-type format. A good narrative keeps an audience informed and entertained. It also allows you to deliver a message in a creative way.

Use the following guidelines to evaluate a speaker or your own presentation.

### Evaluate a Narrative Speech

- Did the speaker establish a definite setting and a context, so audience members knew where and when events took place?
- Did the narrative include all the elements of a standard plot line—beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement?
- Did the plot line flow well?
- Did the speaker describe complex major and minor characters?
- Did the narrative have a consistent point of view, or did the speaker switch confusingly from *I* to *he* or *she*?
- Did the speaker maintain audience interest by using appropriate techniques, such as dialogue, suspense, movement, gestures, and expressions?

## 2.5 DESCRIPTIVE SPEECH

Description is part of most presentations. In a descriptive speech, you describe a subject that you are personally involved with.

Use the following questions to evaluate a speaker or your own presentation.

### Evaluate a Descriptive Speech

- Did the speaker make clear his or her attitude (point of view) toward the subject? Think about words, tone of voice, gestures, and expressions.
- Did the speaker organize information to make the message clear and to appeal to audience members' interests and background?
- Did the speaker arrange supporting details, reasons, descriptions, and examples effectively?

## 2.6 ORAL INTERPRETATION

When you read a poem, play, or story aloud, your voice can bring the literature to life.

### Oral Reading

An oral reading can be a monologue, during which you assume the voice of a character, the narrator, or the speaker in a poem. Or it may be a dialogue, during which you take the roles of two or more characters. Use the following techniques when giving an oral reading:

- **Speak Clearly** As you speak, pronounce your words carefully and clearly.
- **Control Your Volume** Make sure that you are loud enough to be heard but do not shout.
- **Pace Yourself** Read at a moderate rate, but vary your pace if it seems appropriate to the emotions of the character or to the action.
- **Vary Your Voice** Use a different voice for each character. Stress important words and phrases. Use your voice to express different emotions.

### Dramatic Reading

In a dramatic reading, several speakers participate in the reading of a play or other work. Use the following techniques in your dramatic reading:

- **Prepare** Rehearse your material several times. Become familiar with the humorous and serious parts of the script. Develop a special voice that fits the personality of the character you portray.
- **Project** As you read your lines, aim your voice toward the back of the room to allow everyone to hear you.
- **Perform** React to the other characters as if you were hearing their lines for the first time. Deliver your own lines with the appropriate emotion. Use not only hand gestures and facial expressions but also other body movements to express your emotions.

Use the following questions to evaluate an artistic performance by a peer or public presenter, a media presentation, or your own performance.

### Evaluate an Oral Interpretation

- Did the speaker speak clearly?
- Did the speaker maintain eye contact with the audience?
- Did the speaker project his or her voice without shouting?
- Did the speaker vary the rate of speech appropriately to express emotion, mood, and action?
- Did the speaker use a different voice for the character(s)?
- Did the speaker stress important words or phrases?
- Did the speaker use voice, tone, and gestures to enhance meaning?

### PRACTICE AND APPLY

Listen to an oral reading by a classmate or view a dramatic performance in a theater or on television. Use the preceding criteria to evaluate it.

## 2.7 ORAL INSTRUCTIONS

You give oral instructions any time you are called upon to explain how to do something or how to fix a problem. When you give oral instructions, your goal is to teach the audience how to perform the task you are explaining. Make sure you present steps in order, speak clearly, and explain any terms your audience may not know.

If you are asked to follow a set of oral directions, remember to take notes, ask questions to clarify any confusing details, and restate the instructions in your own words.

Use the following questions to evaluate a speaker or your own presentation of directions.

### Evaluate Oral Instructions

- Did the speaker make it clear what he or she was trying to explain?
- Did the speaker use a rate and volume of speech that made it easy for you to understand him or her?
- Did the speaker relate steps in a logical order?
- Did the speaker stay focused on the topic?
- Did the speaker monitor the audience's understanding by asking for and answering questions?

### PRACTICE AND APPLY

Work with a classmate. As he or she gives a set of directions to follow, evaluate his or her delivery. Once you complete the task, determine how well you followed the directions. Then give the same set of directions while he or she evaluates your delivery.

## 3 Other Types of Communication

### 3.1 CONVERSATION

Conversations are informal, but they are important means of communicating. When two or more people exchange messages, it is equally important that each person contribute and actively listen.

### 3.2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Successful groups use guidelines for discussion and also assign a role to each member.

Role	Responsibilities
Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduces topic</li> <li>• Explains goal or purpose</li> <li>• Participates in discussion and keeps it on track</li> <li>• Helps resolve conflicts</li> <li>• Helps group reach goal</li> </ul>
Recorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes notes on discussion</li> <li>• Reports on suggestions and decisions</li> <li>• Organizes and writes up notes</li> <li>• Participates in discussion</li> </ul>
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute relevant facts or ideas to discussion</li> <li>• Respond constructively to one another's ideas</li> <li>• Reach agreement or vote on final decision</li> </ul>

### Guidelines for Discussion

- Agree on the role and responsibilities that each member of the discussion group will have.
- Plan an agenda with clear goals and deadlines.
- Set time limits for speakers.
- Don't talk while someone else is talking.
- Support statements and opinions with facts and examples.
- Avoid getting sidetracked by unrelated topics.
- Vote on any key issues.

For more information, see *Speaking and Listening Workshop: Participating in a Panel Discussion*, pages 304–305.

### 3.3 INTERVIEW

An **interview** is a formal type of conversation with a definite purpose and goal. To conduct a successful interview, use the following guidelines:

#### Prepare for the Interview

- Select your interviewee carefully. Identify who has the kind of knowledge and experience you are looking for.
- Set a time, a date, and a place. Ask permission to tape-record the interview.
- Learn all you can about the person you will interview or the topic you want information on.

- Prepare a list of questions. Create questions that encourage detailed responses instead of yes-or-no answers. Arrange your questions in order from most important to least important.
- Arrive on time with everything you need.

#### Conduct the Interview

- Ask your questions clearly and listen to the responses carefully. Give the person whom you are interviewing plenty of time to answer.
- Be flexible; follow up on any responses you find interesting.
- Avoid arguments; be tactful and polite.
- Even if you tape an interview, take notes on important points.
- Thank the person for the interview, and ask if you can call with any follow-up questions.

#### Follow Up on the Interview

- Summarize your notes or make a written copy of the tape recording as soon as possible.
- If any points are unclear or if information is missing, call and ask more questions while the person is still available.
- Select the most appropriate quotations to support your ideas.
- If possible, have the person you interviewed review your work to make sure you haven't misrepresented what he or she said.
- Send a thank-you note to the person in appreciation of his or her time and effort.

For more information, see *Speaking and Listening Workshop: Conducting an Interview*, pages 890–891.

#### Evaluate an Interview

You can determine how effective your interview was by asking yourself these questions:

- Did you get the type of information you were looking for?
- Were your most important questions answered to your satisfaction?
- Were you able to keep the interviewee focused on the subject?

## 4 Active Listening

**Active listening** is the process of receiving, interpreting, evaluating, and responding to a message.

#### Before Listening

- Learn what the topic is beforehand. You may need to read background information or learn new terms to understand the speaker's message.
- Think about what you know or want to know about the topic.
- Have a pen and paper to take notes.
- Establish a purpose for listening. You might listen to a funny story for enjoyment. Alternatively, you might listen to a formal speech to be informed about ideas that interest you.

#### While Listening

- Focus your attention on the speaker. Your facial expressions and body language should demonstrate your interest in hearing the topic.
- Listen for the speaker's purpose (usually stated at the beginning), which alerts you to main ideas.
- Listen for words or phrases that signal important points, such as *to begin with*, *in addition*, *most important*, *finally*, and *in conclusion*.
- Pay attention to explanations of unfamiliar terms. Use these terms to help you understand the speaker's message.
- Notice ideas that are repeated for emphasis.
- Jot down the most important points.
- Note comparisons and contrasts, causes and effects, or problems and solutions.
- As you take notes, use phrases, abbreviations, and symbols to keep up with the speaker.
- Note how the speaker uses word choice, voice pitch, posture, and gestures to convey meaning.

#### After Listening

- Ask questions to clarify anything that was unclear or confusing.
- Review your notes right away to make sure you understand what was said.

- Summarize and paraphrase the speaker's ideas.
- Compare your interpretation of the speech with others' reactions.

#### 4.1 CRITICAL LISTENING

**Critical listening** involves evaluating a spoken message to judge its accuracy and reliability. You can use the following strategies as you listen to messages from public speakers:

- **Determine the Speaker's Purpose** Think about the background, viewpoint, and possible motives of the speaker. Separate facts from opinions. Listen carefully to details and evidence.
- **Determine the Speaker's Attitude** What point of view does the speaker have about the information he or she is presenting? Is the speaker enthusiastic and confident or bored and uncertain?
- **Listen for the Main Idea** Figure out the speaker's main message before allowing yourself to be distracted by seemingly convincing facts and details.
- **Recognize the Use of Persuasive Techniques** Speakers may present information in a particular way to persuade you to buy a product or accept an idea. Persuasive devices such as glittering generalities, either/or reasoning, and bandwagon or snob appeal may represent faulty reasoning and provide misleading information.  
*For more information, see **Recognizing Persuasive Techniques**, page R21.*
- **Observe Nonverbal Messages** A speaker's gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice should reinforce the message. If they don't, you should doubt the speaker's sincerity and his or her message's reliability.
- **Give Appropriate Feedback** An effective speaker looks for verbal and nonverbal cues from you, the listener, to see how the message is being received. For example, if you understand or agree with the message, you might nod your head.

#### 4.2 VERBAL FEEDBACK

At times you will be asked to give direct feedback to a speaker. You may be asked to evaluate the way the speaker delivers the presentation as well as the content of the presentation.

- **Ask Probing Questions** Examine the subject thoroughly and seek more information about it. Politely ask questions such as, "What evidence do you have to support the first point you made?" and "Could you give us details about X?"
- **Respond to Persuasive Messages** You may make a **challenge**, in which you respectfully disagree with the speaker and supply evidence that supports your viewpoint. Or you may respond with an **affirmation**—a positive comment about the main idea or about a significant detail.

##### Evaluate Delivery

- Did the speaker articulate words clearly and distinctly?
- Did the speaker pronounce words correctly?
- Did the speaker vary his or her rate?
- Did the speaker's voice sound natural and not strained?
- Was the speaker's voice loud enough?

##### Evaluate Content

**Here's how to give constructive suggestions for improvement:**

**Be Specific** Don't make statements like "Your charts need work." Offer concrete suggestions, such as "Please make the type bigger so we can read the poster from the back of the room."

**Discuss Only the Most Important Points** Don't overload the speaker with too much feedback. Focus on important points, such as

- Is the topic too advanced for the audience?
- Are the supporting details well organized?
- Is the conclusion weak?

**Give Balanced Feedback** Tell the speaker not only what didn't work but also what did work: "Consider dropping the last two slides, since you covered those points earlier. The first two slides got my attention."