Speaking isn’t just what you say, but also how you say it. Chances are you have interesting information to convey, but if it is not delivered in a clear and engaging manner, the audience will lose interest.

Delivery is about non-verbal communication, or how a person uses his or her body and voice to express the ideas. This includes: speaking intelligibly, establishing eye contact and movement.

**Speaking intelligibly:** If a speaker gives a speech and no one can understand it, is it effective? There are three parts to speaking intelligibly: volume, pitch and voice inflection, and rate.

- **Volume:** This should be adjusted based on the acoustics of the room, which means you should practice in the room beforehand, with someone in the very back. If they can’t hear you, your volume must go up. Remember that you sound louder to yourself than you do to the audience, and watch for their non-verbal communication to determine whether or not you are at a proper volume.

- **Pitch and voice inflections:** Pitch is highness or lowness of the speaker’s voice. Inflections are the changes, and bring a presentation from monotone to energetic. If you sound bored with your speech, chances are others will too. Look at the speech and determine where various inflections should be placed for various effects. Record yourself and listen, or have someone in the room with you when you practice to ensure proper pitch and inflection.

- **Rate** is the pace at which we speak. Just like pitch can be varied for different effects, so can rate. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech started out at 92 words a minute, and then finished at 145, showing how rate can be used to bring liveliness to the speech. No matter how slowly you think you’re speaking, you sound slower than you truly are speaking. Nerves tend to make us speak faster and higher. Speak slowly to explain something complex (like a definition) and faster when it is already known to the audience. A good way to judge rate is to perform the presentation out loud and time it.

Note on your outline places to speed up and slow down, as well as places for various pitches and vocal inflections. The same can be said for pauses, which are used to add emphasis, signal the end of a thought, or to allow information to sink in. Avoid vocal fillers—uh, like, er, um. If you’ve lost your train of though, take a deep breath and continue.

**Articulation and pronunciation**
Poor articulation is common and comes most frequently from habit. Be sure to avoid these common mistakes.

- Ought to—otta
- didn’t—dint
- for—fur
- don’t know—dunno
- Have to—hafta
- them—em
- want to—wanna
- will you—wilya

Again, the best way to judge is to have someone else listen to you or to record yourself speaking. Be sure to go over your speech—is there a name or word in another language? Determine how to pronounce it before hand. One part of articulation is the rate at which you go—the faster you speak the harder it is to understand.

**Personal appearance: Confidence is key**
The audience tends to see you before they have a chance to hear what you say, and they will form their impression quickly. Dress one step above the audience to garner respect and a good first impression. This doesn’t have to mean a suit, but put some effort into your appearance.
Movement: Covers everything from posture to eye contact. Moving purposefully is different than bobbing or swaying. We move to demonstrate going from point to point. We sway because we’re nervous. To prevent swaying and other nervous behavior, keep your feet evenly distributed. Movement starts in the beginning, so walk confidently, with good posture. To end effectively, pause after your last line to let your words sink in, then collect your notes and walk off confidently no matter how poorly you felt you did.

Gestures
What do we do with our hands? Do we keep them clasped, let them hang, or do we place them in our pockets? However you decide and how often you decide to gesture they should add to the speech and not take away or distract the audience from your message. They should appear natural and spontaneous, adding to the conversational nature of the speech.

Eye contact is an easy way to gain a rapport with the audience and gauge their reactions to what you have to say. Make eye contact with the entire audience—in a small group look briefly from one person to the other, in a larger group scan rather than trying to make contact with everyone. Keep yourself from falling into a dead, blank stare—make eye contact that is confident, warm, and friendly.

Choose the right delivery style.
- Extemporaneous delivery (speaking from a thorough outline) is the most engaging and flexible style of delivery. You should create a keyword outline, practice many times with that outline, and then (preferably) transfer that outline to note cards for the presentation.
- Manuscript delivery: There are times when you will need to speak from a manuscript. If this is the case, make sure that you create a speech manuscript (in other words, don’t just read sections of the paper), practice reading the manuscript several times, and then maintain eye contact and make it seem conversational when you deliver the speech. Use underlining, highlighting, and cues (“eye contact,” “slow down,” “pause”) to guide your reading. Place one hand on the manuscript while you are reading and follow along in order to keep your place when you look up. Practice turning the pages of the manuscript so that you can do so discreetly. Use at least a font size of 14 and double space your manuscript. Manuscript delivery is difficult; don’t make the mistake of waiting until the last minute to prepare this kind of speech.

Delivery may be the hardest part of giving a presentation because our nerves kick in once we are in front of an audience. Be sure to practice numerous times before you give the presentation, and come to the Speaking Center for more tips on delivery.