

**General Education
Minimum Course Expectations
Communication: Oral Communication
Listening, Speaking, and Presenting Effectively**

The AAC&U defines oral communication as: “prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.” At the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, oral communication is recognized as consisting of three components: listening, speaking, and presenting effectively. Courses addressing oral communication must include all three components.

Listening

Listening is a specific communication skill that is separate albeit interconnected with effective presentation. According to the National Communication Association,

Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. People listen in order to comprehend information, critique and evaluate a message, show empathy for the feelings expressed by others, or appreciate a performance. Effective listening includes both literal and critical comprehension of ideas and information transmitted in oral language. (pp. 10-11)¹

Students should be explicitly assessed on their listening skills, and there should be documentation provided of the students' comprehension, critique, or aesthetic appreciation through listening.

- Students should apply criteria while listening that is appropriate for the subject matter of the course disciplinary background.
- Evidence of effective listening should be documented through a product such as written assignment, orally-presented assignment, or examination performance.
- Effective listening should be evaluated by some of the following specific criteria:²
 - Recognition of main ideas
 - Identify supporting details
 - Recognize explicit relationships among ideas
 - Recall basic ideas and details
 - Attend with an open mind
 - Perceive the speaker's or performance purpose and organization of ideas and information
 - Discriminate between statements of fact and statements of opinion
 - Distinguish between emotional and logical arguments
 - Detect bias and prejudice
 - Recognize speaker's attitude
 - Synthesize and evaluate by drawing logical inferences and conclusions
 - Recall the implications and arguments

¹ http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Teaching_and_Learning/Assessment_Resources/PDF-Speaking_and_Listening_Competencies_for_College_Students.pdf

² Most of these criteria are drawn from the National Communication Association's report on *Speaking and Listening Competencies for College Students*.

- Recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages
- Employ active listening techniques when appropriate
- Apply appropriate aesthetic criteria when assessing an artistic performance

Speaking

Speaking out loud in a formal situation can be a stressful and difficult and it combines a number of skills. Students should be encouraged to think about the *speaking* part of a presentation as separate from the *content*. The ways in which one presents the content are a specific communication skill.

Speaking is about communicating effectively through volume, enunciation, pace, rhythm, and pitch. An effective presentation will involve clear and effective speaking to communicate those ideas.

Speaking should be evaluated based on some of the following criteria:

- Rate – is the speaker taking time and emphasizing important ideas?
- Volume – can the speaker be heard?
- Enunciation – can the speaker be understood?
- Rhythm – is there variation in the presentation of ideas, heightening the most important and allowing for pauses where listeners can absorb important points?
- Pitch – Is the speaker using a pitch range that is pleasant to listen to as opposed to being strident or monotone?

While speaking is only one facet of oral communication, speakers should be aware of the very basic mechanisms of good speaking in order to make their presentations as effective as possible.

Presenting effectively

- Minimum of 2 oral presentations
- Presentations in total should be for a minimum of 10 minutes (these could be distributed in various ways such as a 3-minute and 7-minute presentation, two 5-minute presentations, a 2-minute, 2-minute, and 6-minute presentation).
- Only presentations that are 2-minutes in length or longer will count toward fulfilling this criterion.
- Should be based on research or material appropriate for specific disciplinary nature of course
- Should utilize an organizational structure appropriate for the disciplinary background(s) of the course subject material (i.e., problem solution, story/narrative, sequential/chronological)
- Should be delivered extemporaneously or with minimal use of script or notes
- Should use nonverbal communication to project confidence and establish a connection with the audience by maintaining eye contact with the audience and good posture
- In cases of group presentations, part of the student's grade should be based on his/her individual performance during the group presentation
- Present ethically by using language that is respectful of diverse groups and giving proper attribution to source material

