

# INTRODUCTION: TAKING A PUBLIC SPEAKING CLASS

## ***Dynamic Presentations* by Amanda Quibell**

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### **In this chapter...**

- Public Speaking—So What, Who Cares?
- Giving and Receiving Feedback: It is Harder Than You Think
- Virtual Presentations: Making Eye Contact is Key
- Team Speeches



# PUBLIC SPEAKING - SO WHAT, WHO CARES?

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*If you can't communicate and talk to other people and get across your ideas, you're giving up your potential.*  
 – Warren Buffet, American business magnate

## Why Does Public Speaking Matter?

If you are a student, public speaking may be the most important class you take. Some of you expect public speaking will be part of your future—maybe you are going into business, teaching, or politics, and you will be expected to give speeches on a regular basis. Even if you don't expect to be delivering formal speeches, *all* careers require some public speaking – for example, training others at work, speaking to clients, or explaining things to patients.

Here are a few more reasons having good presentation skills is important to you.

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## Employers Seek Good Communicators

*Getting ahead of the next curve requires courage and communication:  
 Courage to determine the next bold move, and communication to keep the troops committed to the value of moving forward.*

*Rallying stakeholders to move together in a common course of action is all part of the innovation and survival process.*

*Leaders at every level in an organization need to be skillful at creating resonance if that organization is to control its own destiny.*

— Nancy Duarte, *Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences*

Employers want to hire people who are good communicators. Learning to develop your public speaking skills will help you to be employable and to succeed in your future career. The Conference Board of Canada lists communications skills as the top attributes employers want to see on resumes.

## Public Speaking Skills Helps with Career Improvement

Public speaking is not just essential to get the job but to keep and advance in a job. Surveys of college graduates reported oral and written communication skills, public speaking, group leadership, and motivating and managing others were most essential for career improvement. In a Gallup Alumni survey, graduates reported they wished they had more communication training to help them once they have graduated.

## Public Speaking is a Part of Your Civic Responsibility

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world.*

*Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.*

*Margaret Mead, American Cultural Anthropologist*

Speaking up for what you believe in is an important part of being in a democracy. This is not all about you. The opportunities you have been given and the education you are receiving can be used to help others. Boyer, in an article titled *Civic Education for Responsible Citizens*, (<https://georgian.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rch&AN=9103041614&site=ehost-live&scope=site>) suggests at the heart of a good education is civic engagement. Students should “develop responsible ways of thinking, believing and acting.”

## You Can Make a Difference

Take a look at how others have spoken out and made a difference.

Watch this excerpt from Greta Thunberg. At age 16, she spoke at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019.

**Watch Greta’s full speech on YouTube (2 mins)** (<https://youtu.be/TMrtLsQbaok>)).

At age 19, Zach Wahls stood before the Iowa House Judiciary Committee to talk about his experience of growing up with same-sex parents.

**Watch Zaach Wahls Speaks about Family on YouTube (3 mins)** (<https://youtu.be/FSQQK2Vuf9Q>)

Amanda Gorman at 22-years-old read her poem, *The Hill We Climb* at the inauguration of US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

**Watch Amanda Gorman reads inaguration poem, ‘The Hill We Climb’ on YouTube (6 mins)** (<https://youtu.be/LZ055illIiN4&t=1s>)

## Presentational Literacy Helps You Share Your Ideas

Chris Anderson, from TED Talks, reminds us of the campfires of old have become the fires of the internet where ideas can spread. More than ever presentational literacy is important. (Heads up, there is an embedded ad in this video)

**Watch We can help you master public speaking – Chris Anderson on YouTube (5 mins)**

(<https://youtu.be/kcoch-Mpgls>)

## Public Speaking Allows You to Tell Your Story

Each of us has a story to tell. Think about a tough time you went through and how you came out stronger having been through that experience. What if you could take that experience and use it to help others push through?

Think about how you had to learn something the hard way. What if you could tell others about what you learned so they don't make the same mistake?

Think about a historic event you witnessed: 911, Global Pandemic, Race Riots. What if you could tell others what you witnessed so they could see history as more than words on a page?

A lot of public speaking is just people telling their stories. Here examples.

Go to National Public Radio's This I Believe (<https://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe>) and find a story.

Go to the Moth, the Art and Craft of Storytelling, ([https://themoth.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwp86EBhD7ARIsAFkgakj7AUcNEYcbFPHqxLUQMZXqZyYhK3yYl8MeeAPkUXhZbVgB3XerHvgaAufEALw\\_wcB](https://themoth.org/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwp86EBhD7ARIsAFkgakj7AUcNEYcbFPHqxLUQMZXqZyYhK3yYl8MeeAPkUXhZbVgB3XerHvgaAufEALw_wcB)) and watch one of the speeches. This club in New York City had now gone international. (Think of a coffeehouse meets poetry slam meets comedy club. )

## Public Speaking Can Help You Grow as a Person

When most people think about public speaking, they think about what they are giving to others. Very few people think of public speaking in terms of what they get. You will find when you deliver a speech, you gain knowledge, you gain confidence, and you gain a wonderful feeling of accomplishment.

Speech coach Martin McDermott helps his students think about what they will gain by asking them, "What will go right when you speak?"

- I will learn about public speaking, a workplace skill in great demand.
- I will stand up to one of the greatest fears human beings face.
- My audience will learn something valuable from me they can apply to their lives.

- I will experience power and self-confidence I didn't know I had.
- I will see myself in a new and more positive light.
- I will share interesting parts of myself, and others will come to know and like me.
- I will discover a hidden talent for speaking.
- I will grow as a person. So What, Who Cares?

One of the things you should do as you write a speech is to ask, **“So what who cares?”** Who is going to listen to your speech and why they should care about what you are saying?

You should care because public speaking is not a class you take, it is what you do to get your message across. It is not about getting a grade; it is about learning to develop important skills that will help you accomplish your goals. It is not about you as a professional, having to give a speech; it is about you having an opportunity to share your message. It is not about you as a teacher having to teach, but about students who need to learn.

So what, who cares? Hopefully, you care. Hopefully, you care enough about yourself to try to be the best version of yourself.

What happens from this point on, is up to you.

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Be skillful in speech, that you may be strong.  
Merikare, Egyptian Pharaoh

### Key Takeaways

#### Remember This!

- Public speaking is a skill that is not only helpful while you are in college but will likely be helpful in job attainment and career advancement.
- Doing public speaking will help you grow in knowledge and gain confidence.

## Bonus Features

**Watch Happy National Speech and Debate Education Day from Jared Padalecki!** (<https://youtu.be/YW8B4azcKA8>)

## Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “Public Speaking–So What, Who Cares?” In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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# GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK: IT IS HARDER THAN YOU THINK

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- Your colleague asks you to listen to them practice their speech practice and give them feedback.
- Your teacher asks you to give feedback to another classmate about their speech.
- Your boss asks, “What did you think about my speech?”

In each case, the person is looking to you to provide feedback. In this chapter, you will learn about how to assess the feedback situation, how to offer constructive criticism, and how to graciously receive criticism. Let’s start with how to ask for feedback and listen graciously.

## Receiving Feedback

When you ask for feedback from others, receive their feedback as a gift. Someone is taking their time and giving it to you; someone is putting themselves out there and saying things that might cause discomfort, but they are doing it for you. Individuals vary on how they receive feedback and how comfortable they are with being evaluated.

### When receiving feedback, try doing the following:

- Sit in a non-defensive posture. It is tempting to cross your arms and to tense up all your muscles when receiving oral feedback. Keep your body open and loose. Staying open helps them to feel like you really want their suggestions and closed arms can equal a closed mind — keep an open body.
- Do not take feedback as a personal insult.
- If the feedback is verbal, write down the suggestions, even if you disagree with the suggestions. Respect the other person’s opinions by writing them down. It makes them feel like they have been heard and you appreciate the feedback they are giving. Writing the feedback down also helps you to not cross your arms defensively—see suggestion one— and it helps you remember the suggestions.
- Do not take it as a personal insult. *Seriously!*
- Avoid the temptation to defend yourself. “I did it this way because...” or, “I thought it would be best to...” You already know why you did things the way you did. Interrupting them to tell them the reasons you did what you did comes off as defensive and reduces the likelihood they will give you all the feedback

they have to offer. You already know what you were thinking and by telling them you haven't advanced your situation. Use this time to learn what they are thinking.

- Do not take it as a personal insult. *Really, this is so important.*
- Breathe. Most people feel stress when someone is giving them constructive criticism, breathe and relax so you can really listen.
- Do not take it personally. Do not take it personally. Do not take it personally. This cannot be emphasized enough! Since it is about your performance or your speech writing, it is hard not to feel criticism of your speech as a criticism of your person. Try to take criticism instead as someone caring enough about you to push you to grow.

### After Every Speech, Do a Self-Evaluation

Allison Shapira of Global Speaking suggests you do a self-evaluation after each speech:

1. **What did I do well?**
2. **What didn't I do so well?**
3. **What am I going to do differently next time?**

Write these down and keep this on file for the next time you give a speech.

## Constructive Criticism

There will be times when others look to you to read over their speech or listen to them practice and then give them constructive criticism. Constructive criticism is made up of two words: constructive—the building of something, and criticism—the giving of a critique. So constructive criticism is critiquing with the intention of building something. When we give others constructive criticism, our goal should be to help build them to be better speakers.

## Give Them Help

Reagel and Reagle came up with a creative way to remember the goal of feedback, it should **HELP**:

- H**elp the speaker improve
  - E**ncourage another speech
  - L**ift self-esteem
  - P**rovide useful recommendations
-

## Give Them a Sandwich



Diagram of the Sandwich Feedback Technique is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero)

One way to give constructive criticism is to use the sandwich method. Say something positive, give feedback about something they can work on to improve, and then say something positive. This way, the first and last words out of your mouth are positive.

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## Ask Questions

Ask honest questions that can help lead them to solutions or ask questions to soften the sound of negative feedback:

“What did you mean by...”

“Have you considered? ”

“Have you thought about...?”

“When you said... did you really mean?”

**For example:**

“Have you considered the impact of showing such a gruesome photo on your slide?”

“Have you considered starting with a quote? ”

“Have you thought about whether the people in the back will be able to see your poster?”

“Have you thought about using a microphone so everyone can hear you?”

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## Beyond the Sandwich: Data Points and Impact Statements

In her video, called “The Secret to giving Great Feedback”, LeeAnn Renninger refers to a 4 Step “Feedback Formula”.

**Watch The secret to giving great feedback | The Way We Work, a TED series on YouTube (0 mins)** (<https://youtu.be/wtI5UrrgU8c>)

In our college class, we will focus on **steps 2 & 3**.

### Data points (or clear examples)

- Name specifically what you saw or heard, and leave out any words that aren’t objective. Avoid “blur words”, which are not specific and could mean different things to different people.
- Convert any blur words into actual data points or observations. For example, instead of saying, “You didn’t engage your audience”, be specific and say “Your introduction didn’t mention what the benefits are to the audience”
- Being specific is also important with positive feedback. Saying “I really liked your presentation” doesn’t offer the other person any clear ideas of what they should keep doing. Instead, try to name specifics: “You made it very easy to understand the process when you described [give the example],” or “The visuals you included showed that [give the example]”.
- Be as clear as you can, so the presenter knows to continue doing these things!

### The Impact statement

- Don’t stop at just giving the “evidence” or describing your observations. Keep going – explain how what you saw and heard impacted you.
- You might say “I really liked how you added those stories, because it helped me grasp the concepts faster,” or “the way you opened your presentation surprised me and got my attention.

By providing data points as well as impact statements, your peer critiques will be clear, specific, and provide your classmate with something they can actually use to work on to improve!

**Source:** Except where otherwise noted, “Beyond the Sandwich: Data Points and Impact Statements” by Amanda Quibell is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

## Different People, Different Types of Feedback

It is no surprise that people give and receive feedback differently. One person might take a feedback statement and be grateful for the corrections while the next person might take it as a complete insult. Below, you'll learn about some of the most common differences.

### High and Low Self Monitors

Psychology researcher Mark Snyder identified people as being either high self-monitors or low self-monitors. High self-monitors typically try to fit in and play the role according to the context. They are about image, and they are motivated to fit in with their peers. They like to know what is expected, so they can adapt to the situation. Giving them useful feedback may mean pointing out how they can make changes in their message to meet the audience's expectations. When giving feedback to high self-monitors, focus the feedback on how they can elevate their credibility in the eyes of the audience.

On the other hand, low self-monitors tend to be motivated to act based on their inner beliefs and values. They are motivated to be true to their sense of self and to above all—be genuine. When giving low self-monitors feedback, encourage them to be the best speaker they can be while being true to themselves. Focus on giving them feedback in a way that encourages them to harness their unique talents.

While you may not know exactly whether they are high or low self-monitor, you likely have some idea of what motivates them. The more you can tailor your feedback to them, the more likely it is they will hear what you are saying. If you are curious about your type, you can take the quiz. You can have the person giving you feedback take the quiz as well. This can be a helpful exercise to think about how you give and receive feedback.

Take the high and low self-monitor quiz to find out your type (<https://www.outofservice.com/self-monitor-censor-test/>)

### Cultural Differences

*When you know your sickness  
You're halfway cured.  
French saying*

In the book, *The Culture Map*, a Dutch businessman is quoted as saying, "It is all a lot of hogwash. All that positive feedback just strikes us in the face and not in the least bit motivating." People from different cultural groups have different feedback norms. As our society grows increasingly diverse, it is important to learn not just how to give good feedback, but to give feedback that demonstrates an awareness of how different cultures give and receive feedback.

Erin Meyer does international training to help business professionals understand differences and similarities and how to bridge the gap:

Managers in different parts of the world are conditioned to give feedback in drastically different ways. The Chinese manager learns never to criticize a colleague openly or in front of others, while the Dutch managers learns always to be honest and to give the message straight. Americans are trained to wrap positive messages around negative ones, while the French are trained to criticize passionately and provide positive feedback sparingly. Having a clear understanding of these differences and strategies for navigating them is crucial for leaders of cross-cultural teams.

Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*

## Upgraders and Downgraders

Meyers identifies cultures as *Upgraders* and *Downgraders*. Upgraders use words or phrases to make negative feedback feel stronger. An upgrader might say, “this is *absolutely* inappropriate.” As you read this, see if you identify more as an upgrader or downgrader.

### Upgraders say:

- Absolutely—“That was absolutely shameless.”
- Totally—“You totally missed the point.”
- Strongly—“I strongly suggest that you...”

By contrast, downgraders use words to soften the criticism. A downgrader might say, “We are not quite there yet” or “This is just my opinion, but...”

### Downgraders say:

- “Kind of”
- “Sort of”
- “A little”
- “Maybe”
- “Slightly”
- “This is just my opinion.”

When giving and receiving feedback across cultures, it is helpful to be aware of these differences so you can “hear” what they are really saying. Take for example this statement as a Dutch person complains about how Americans give feedback.

The problem is that we can't tell when the feedback is supposed to register to us as excellent, ok, or really poor. For a Dutchman, the word "excellent" is saved for a rare occasion and "okay" is...well, neutral. But with the Americans, the grid is different. "Excellent" is used all the time, "Okay" seems to mean, "not okay." "Good" is only a mild complement. And when the message was intended to be bad, you can pretty much assume that, if an American is speaking and the listener is Dutch, the real meaning of the message will be lost all together.  
 Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*.

Nannette Ripmeester, Director of Expertise in Labour Mobility, illustrates these differences to her clients with a chart. This chart shows the differences between what the British say, what they mean, and what the Dutch understand. This is a condensed version of her list.

**Table 1: What the British say & mean vs. what the Dutch Understand**

What the British Say	What the British Mean	What the Dutch Understand
Very interesting	I don't like it	They are impressed.
Perhaps you would think about... I would suggest...	This is an order. Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about this idea and do it if you like it.
Please think about that some more	It's a bad idea. Don't do it.	It's a good idea, keep developing it.
I would suggest	Do it as I want you to	An open suggestion
An issue that worries me slightly	A great worry	A minor issue
A few issues that need to be addressed	A whole lot needs to be changed	2-3 issues need rewriting

Chances are as you read this list, you identified yourself in some of the statements and identified someone you know who is in the other list. Hopefully, this made you think about how personal style can be as different as cultural style. The big idea here is when you are giving and receiving feedback, it can be helpful to try to identify their communication style and adjust accordingly.

## Politeness Strategies

As you already know, whenever you critique someone's work, there is a potential to hurt their feelings. There

are many factors that influence whether the feedback is helpful or hurtful. In communication, we use the term “face” to mean the sense of self a person projects. People can “take face” by creating a situation where someone looks bad to others or people can “lose face” by doing something that diminishes them in the eyes of others. Optimally, we want people to feel like they “gain-face” and feel encouraged. The way that you give feedback as well as the person’s natural tendencies will influence how “face” is affected.

When giving feedback, you should think about how your feedback takes or gives face. You also need to consider what is at stake for the other person. Is this a small speech assignment or is it a career-defining presentation? In addition, critiquing someone privately vs critiquing someone in front of their boss will have different “face” outcomes.

How much you are willing to “take face” from someone may depend on the importance of the feedback. You will likely want to provide more suggestions for someone who is doing a career speech to get their dream job vs that same person doing a college speech worth minimal points. You will likely be more invested in helping a friend polish a speech to make it just right as opposed to someone you barely know.

Finally, the other thing influencing feedback is the power difference between people. You will likely give feedback differently to your little sister than you would to your boss. The status of the individuals and how important power is to them will impact how “face” is taken and given. For example, a high-power country like China would consider an open critique of a teacher, boss, or elder a huge insult, whereas someone from a low-power country, would be less offended. In any situation, you will be negotiating power, context, and the need to save face.

Taking all these factors into account, Brown and Levinson created Politeness Theory as a way to explain the different ways we give feedback to save face.

**Bald on Record:** This type of feedback is very direct without concern for the person’s esteem face. This type of feedback is usually given if there is a small fix the speaker would feel strongly about.

**Examples of bald on record feedback:**

- “Be sure you bold the headings.”
- “Alphabetize the references.”

**Positive Politeness:** In this type of feedback, you would build up the face or esteem of the other person. You would make them feel good before you make any suggestions. (It looks a lot like the sandwich method, hunh?)

**Examples of positive politeness feedback:**

- “You are so organized; this one little fix and it will be perfect.”
- “I love the story you told, a few more details would really help me see the character.”



**Negative Politeness:** The name of this type of feedback is a little misleading. It doesn't mean you are negative. It means you acknowledge that getting feedback may make them feel negative. You would say things that acknowledge their discomfort. You might minimize the criticism so it doesn't make them feel bad or find other ways to soften the blow of criticism.

**Examples of negative politeness feedback:**

- “I know this critique might sound rough and I hope it helps, but I think you really need to work on the middle section.”
- “This is just me making suggestions, but I would be able to understand more if your slide has a heading.”
- I'm not an expert on this, but I think you might need to have a stronger thesis.”
- “I see what you are trying to do here, but I think some of your audience members might not get it.”

**Off Record:** When you give feedback that is off the record, you are hinting vaguely that they should make a change.

**Examples of off the record feedback.**

- “How many sources are we supposed to have?” (Instead of saying, “You need to have more research”)
- “I thought we were supposed to have slides with our speech, maybe I heard that wrong.”
- “Are other people in the class dressing up?”

**Avoidance:** Some people are afraid of giving feedback so they will avoid the situation altogether.

## Try This

### Avoid the three C's

- Criticize
- Complain
- Condemn

### Perform the three R's

- Review

- Reward
- Recommend

From Westside Toastmasters

## Giving Feedback During a Speech

When you are listening to someone speak, you are giving constant nonverbal feedback. Are you leaning forward listening intently or are you leaned back picking at your fingernails? The way you listen lets the speaker know that you value them and what they are saying. It can be reassuring to the speaker to have people who are in the audience smiling and nodding.

Try this little experiment: If you have a speaker who is average or boring, lean in and listen intently. Don't be insincere and cheesy, but rather try to be an earnest listener. You will find that when the speaker notices you paying attention, they will usually become less monotone and more engaging. The speaker affects the audience, and the audience affects the speaker.

## Asking for Feedback During Your Speech

Appoint someone to be your speech buddy who will give you signals and alert you during your speech, for example: to speak louder or to check your microphone. If you know that you tend to pace, lean on the podium, or say um's, have them give you the signal.

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Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak.  
Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

*Winston Churchill*

*Former Prime Ministre of the United Kingdom*

## Key Takeaways

### Remember This!

- Be open to the feedback of others, it can help you improve as a speaker.
- When giving feedback to others consider the context, their needs, the impact on their esteem, and their culture.
- Use the feedback sandwich as a model for giving constructive criticism.

## Attribution & References

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# VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS: MAKING EYE CONTACT IS KEY

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*Zoom in, Zoom out.  
But never lose your focus.  
Shikha Td, poet*

## There are many reasons you will need to know how to speak to a camera.

1. You are in an online class and you have to record your speech to submit it.
2. You are making a conference presentation and the conference is online.
3. You are in a Zoom/Teams (or other online) meeting.
4. You are making a career presentation as part of a job interview.
5. You are a teacher/trainer doing remote training.
6. You are a businessperson making pitches online.



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Let's face it, the pandemic elevated the need for video meetings and presentations, and it is likely they are here to stay. Many businesses are doing interviews remotely and several have moved to online platforms for training. This chapter will talk about best practices for using a camera in a live online format and in a recorded and then playback format.

## Understand the Context

The first thing you need to do is fully understand the context. Will you be recording and uploading, or will you present live? Is this a one-time presentation? Will this presentation be recorded so others can see it online? All these factors will make a difference.

## Check Your Light

Make sure you have adequate lighting.

1. Never be in front of a window where you are backlit.
2. Always have adequate lighting on your face.
3. Use a lamp or lighting system to light your face and adjust it properly.
4. If you use a ring light, try bouncing it off the ceiling so you do not get light rings in your pupils.
5. Avoid using an overhead light because it casts shadows under your eyes.

## Check your Camera

I once made a 30-minute video recording of a lecture to realize later that I didn't have the equipment set up correctly. The sound was not recorded. I was so frustrated because I had to do the entire thing over again. Avoid my mistake and record a test segment and then make sure it works before you record too much of your speech. Look at the playback and consider whether the lighting is good enough for the audience to see your face.

If you have an important conference on Zoom or Teams, check your equipment beforehand. The first time I taught online, I practiced with my family. I practiced making the slides work, checking the microphone, the lighting, and the camera angle. Most accounts will allow you to sign up for a temporary free account if you need to practice outside of school or work.

## Check the Sound

Record yourself speaking for a minute and then play it back. Is the sound OK? Can the audience hear you clearly? If not, adjust your microphone. Sometimes the sound echoes in the room or there are too many background noises. Make sure your audio is clear and there is very little interference.

Some setups work better using a headset and microphone and some computers and cell phones work well with the main microphone. In many programs, you can go in through settings and adjust to the sound.

## Check for Interferences

I had a student give his speech using his computer and he set his phone on the desk beside his laptop. He kept getting audio notifications beeping throughout his speech. It was very distracting. Turn off notifications or turn off your cell phone entirely. If you are working from home, tell your roommates, siblings, and friends

you will need the space to be quiet. Closing the window and closing the door can help keep out some ambient sound.

## Put the Video Camera at or Above Eye Level

This may mean you set your laptop on a stack of books, or you readjust your web camera on your desktop. However it is accomplished, make sure the camera is level or a little higher than your eyes. The most common mistake that I see is when someone leans the laptop lid back making it look like the camera is looking up the nose of the speaker.

## Look Directly into the Camera

Eye contact is established when you look at the camera directly. If it helps, draw a smiley face and put it on your camera to remind you to look in the “eyes” of your audience.

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Photo by Magnet Me, used under Unsplash license

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## Think About Where to Put the Note Cards

Tape your note cards to the top of your computer screen or hang them on something behind your computer. Place your cards so you never have to look down to see your notes.

## Frame the Shot

Depending on the type of speech, you want to frame your head or do a 3/4 shot. It is best to frame the shot so the audience can see your gestures.

## Head Shot

Notice how public speaking guru uses a close up shot, allowing us to see his gestures while making strong eye contact.

**Watch Virtual Communication | Mark Bowden on YouTube (7 mins)** (<https://youtu.be/mg0ahpQxQ4A>)

## Stand Don't Sit (If possible)

You should read the situation on this one, but if in doubt stand. You will have better air support if you are standing. You will also gesture more freely.

## Gesture

You should have open gestures. If you do a tight headshot, you will not see your gestures, so you need to pull the camera back and gesture higher.

## Fix the Camera Zoom in One Place

If you are having a friend record you with a handheld device, make sure that the zoom is kept in one place. Sometimes bored camera operators will zoom in and out making for a very unprofessional recording.

## Plan the Ending

Your ending will leave a lasting impression so do not leave it to chance. Plan out the exact last words and then resist the temptation to tack on any last comments. Speech endings are always challenging, they are even more difficult online.



## Edit the Video

If you are recording your video in advance to be played back later. Edit the part where your arm reaches up to turn on and turn off your recording device. If appropriate, use the feature that allows you to put words on the screen if important words or concepts are relevant.

Here is a video I found helpful (mostly) about lighting setup and camera placement. I particularly like her advice to wear pants.

**Watch How To Look Better On Video Calls/FaceTime/Zoom on YouTube (10 mins)**

(<https://youtu.be/7ppTAA-1tm0>)

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During the 2020 pandemic when many things went viral, Toastmasters held its speech contests virally. Notice how this creative speaker made the most of the situation to earn him the first-place win.

**Watch 2020 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking: Mike Carr on YouTube (8 mins)**

(<https://youtu.be/TA7awoBxBxc>)

## Key Takeaways

### Remember This!

- Always check your equipment: Camera, microphone, lighting.
- Make “eye contact” by looking into your camera.
- Adjust your camera so it is eye level or slightly above eye level

## Attribution

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# TEAM SPEECHES

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## What are the advantages and disadvantages of group decision-making?



Dragon Boat Races, by Marc Dalmulder, licensed under CC BY 2.0

Groups can, however, overcome this impediment to performance through teamwork. A group may include many talented individuals, but they must learn how to pool their individual abilities and energies to maximize the team's performance. Team goals must be set, work patterns structured, and a sense of group identity developed. Individual members must learn how to coordinate their actions, and any strains and stresses in interpersonal relations need to be identified and resolved (Salas et al., 2009).

Group decision-making has the advantage of drawing from the experiences and perspectives of a larger number of individuals. Hence, the ideas have

the potential to be more creative and lead to a more effective decision. In fact, groups may sometimes achieve results beyond what they could have done as individuals. Groups also make the task more enjoyable for members in question. Finally, when the decision is made by a group rather than a single individual, implementation of the decision will be easier because group members will be invested in the decision. If the group is diverse, better decisions may be made because different group members may have different ideas based on their backgrounds and experiences. Research shows that for top management teams, groups that debate issues and that are diverse make decisions that are more comprehensive and better for the bottom line in terms of profitability and sales (Simons et al., 1999).

There are various ways groups come to a decision.

### Delegation to an expert

In some cases, groups may make a **decision by expert**. A group may not be ready to make a decision at a given time, either because it lacks sufficient information or is experiencing unresolved conflict among members with differing views. In such a situation, the group may not want to simply drop the matter and

move on. Instead, it may turn to one of its members who everyone feels has the expertise to choose wisely among the alternatives that the group is considering. The group may also turn to an outside expert, someone who is external to the group who may be able to provide guidance. The group can either ask the expert to come back later with a final proposal or simply allow the person to make the decision alone after having gathered whatever further information he or she feels is necessary.

## Averaging

Group members may shift their individual stances regarding a question by “splitting the difference” to reach a “middle ground.” This technique tends to work most easily if numbers are involved. For instance, a group trying to decide how much money to spend on a gift for a departing member might ask everyone for a preferred amount and agree to spend whatever is computed by averaging those amounts.

## Voting

If you need to be quick and definitive in making a decision, voting is probably the best method. Everyone in mainstream American society is familiar with the process, for one thing, and its outcome is inherently clear and obvious. A majority vote requires that more than half of a group’s members vote for a proposal, whereas a proposal subject to a two-thirds vote will not pass unless twice as many members show support as those who oppose it.

Voting is essentially a win/lose activity. You can probably remember a time when you or someone else in a group composed part of a strong and passionate minority whose desires were thwarted because of the results of a vote. How much commitment did you feel to support the results of that vote?

Voting does offer a quick and simple way to reach decisions, but it works better in some situations than in others. If the members of a group see no other way to overcome a deadlock, for instance, voting may make sense. Likewise, very large groups and those facing serious time constraints may see advantages to voting. Finally, the efficiency of voting is appealing when it comes to making routine or noncontroversial decisions that need only to be officially approved.

## Consensus

Consensus is another decision-making rule that groups may use when the goal is to gain support for an idea or plan of action. While consensus tends to take longer in the first place, it may make sense when support is needed to enact the plan. The process works by discussing the issues, generating a proposal, calling for consensus, and discussing any concerns. If concerns still exist, the proposal is modified to accommodate them. These steps are repeated until consensus is reached. Thus, this decision-making rule is inclusive, participatory, cooperative, and democratic. Research shows that consensus can lead to better accuracy (Roch, 2007), and it

helps members feel greater satisfaction with decisions (Mohammed & Ringseis, 2001) and to have greater acceptance. However, groups take longer with this approach, and groups that cannot reach consensus become frustrated (Peterson, 1999).

Consensus should not be confused with unanimity, which means only that no one has explicitly stated objections to a proposal or decision. Although unanimity can certainly convey an accurate perspective of a group's views at times, groupthink, as discussed below, also often leads to unanimous decisions. Therefore, it's probably wise to be cautious when a group of diverse people seems to have formed a totally unified bloc with respect to choices among controversial alternatives.

When a consensus decision is reached through a full interchange of views and is then adopted in good faith by all parties to a discussion, it can energize and motivate a group. Besides avoiding the win/lose elements intrinsic to voting, it converts each member's investment in a decision into a stake in preserving and promoting the decision after it has been agreed upon.

## Guidelines for Seeking Consensus

How can a group actually go about working toward consensus? Here are some guidelines for the process:

- **First, be sure everyone knows the definition of consensus and is comfortable with observing them.** For many group members, this may mean suspending judgment and trying something they've never done before. Remind people that consensus requires a joint dedication to moving forward toward improvement in and by the group.
- **Second, endeavor to solicit participation by every member of the group.** Even the naturally quietest person should be actively "polled" from time to time for his or her perspectives. In fact, it's a good idea to take special pains to ask for varied viewpoints when discussion seems to be stalled or contentious.
- **Third, listen honestly and openly to each group member's viewpoints.** Attempt to seek and gather information from others. Do your best to subdue your emotions and your tendency to judge and evaluate.
- **Fourth, be patient.** Reaching consensus often takes much more time than voting would. A premature "agreement" reached because people give in to speed things up or avoid conflict is likely later to weaken or fall apart.
- **Fifth, always look for mutually acceptable ways to make it through challenging circumstances.**



"We are better when we are united", by Clay Banks, licensed under Unsplash License

Don't resort to chance mechanisms like flipping a coin, and don't trade decisions arbitrarily just so that things come out equally for people who remain committed to opposing views.

- **Sixth, resolve gridlock earnestly.** Stop and ask, "Have we really identified every possible feasible way that our group might act?" If members of a group simply can't agree on one alternative, see if they can all find and accept the next-best option. Then be sure to request an explicit statement from them that they are prepared to genuinely commit themselves to that option.

One variation on consensus decision-making calls upon a group's leader to ask its members, before initiating a discussion, to agree to a *deadline* and a "*safety valve*." The deadline would be a time by which everyone in the group feels they need to have reached a decision. The "safety valve" would be a statement that any member can veto the will of the rest of the group to act in a certain way, but only if he or she takes responsibility for moving the group forward in some other positive direction.

Although consensus entails full participation and assent within a group, it usually can't be reached without guidance from a leader. One college president we knew was a master at escorting his executive team to consensus. Without coercing or rushing them, he would regularly involve them all in discussions and lead their conversations to a point at which everyone was nodding in agreement, or at least conveying acceptance of a decision. Rather than leaving things at that point, however, the president would generally say, "We seem to have reached a decision to do XYZ. Is there anyone who objects?" Once people had this last opportunity to add further comments of their own, the group could move forward with a sense that it had a common vision in mind.

Consensus decision-making is easiest within groups whose members know and respect each other, whose authority is more or less evenly distributed, and whose basic values are shared. Some charitable and religious groups meet these conditions and have long been able to use consensus decision-making as a matter of principle. The Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, began using consensus as early as the 17th century. Its affiliated international service agency, the American Friends Service Committee, employs the same approach. The Mennonite Church has also long made use of consensus decision-making.

## Groupthink

Have you ever been in a decision-making group that you felt was heading in the wrong direction, but you didn't speak up and say so? If so, you have already been a victim of groupthink. **Groupthink** is a group pressure phenomenon that increases the risk of the group making flawed decisions by leading to reduced mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment. According to Janis (1972), groupthink is characterized by eight symptoms that include:

1. *Illusion of invulnerability* shared by most or all of the group members creates excessive optimism and encourages them to take extreme risks.

2. *Collective rationalizations* where members downplay negative information or warnings that might cause them to reconsider their assumptions.
3. *An unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality* may incline members to ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their actions.
4. *Stereotyped views of out-groups* are seen when groups discount rivals' abilities to make effective responses.
5. *Direct pressure* on any member who expresses strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments.
6. *Self-censorship* is when members of the group minimize their own doubts and counterarguments.
7. *Illusion of unanimity* is based on self-censorship and direct pressure on the group; the lack of dissent is viewed as unanimity.
8. *The emergence of self-appointed mindguards* where one or more members protect the group from information that runs counter to the group's assumptions and course of action.

Groups do tend to be more likely to suffer from symptoms of groupthink when they are large and when the group is cohesive because the members like each other (Esser, 1998; Mullen et al., 1994). The assumption is that the more frequently a group displays one or more of the eight symptoms, the worse the quality of their decisions will be. However, if your group is cohesive, it is not necessarily doomed to engage in groupthink.

## Recommendations for avoiding groupthink

The following are strategies for avoiding groupthink:

### Groups Should:

- Discuss the symptoms of groupthink and how to avoid them.
- Assign a rotating devil's advocate to every meeting.
- Invite experts or qualified colleagues who are not part of the core decision-making group to attend meetings, and get reactions from outsiders regularly and share these with the group.
- Encourage a culture of difference where different ideas are valued.
- Debate the ethical implications of the decisions and potential solutions being considered.

### Individuals Should:

- Monitor their own behavior for signs of groupthink and modify behavior if needed.
- Check themselves for self-censorship.
- Carefully avoid mindguard behaviors.
- Avoid putting pressure on other group members to conform.



- Remind members of the ground rules for avoiding groupthink if they get off track.

## Group Leaders Should:

- Break the group into two subgroups from time to time.
- Have more than one group work on the same problem if time and resources allow it. This makes sense for highly critical decisions.
- Remain impartial and refrain from stating preferences at the outset of decisions.
- Set a tone of encouraging critical evaluations throughout deliberations.
- Create an anonymous feedback channel where all group members can contribute if desired.

## What are relationship roles and task roles?

It is often useful to use task roles and relationship roles in a group. These roles can help groups to stay organized and ensure that everyone is contributing in a meaningful way.

## Helpful Task Roles

- Leader: walks members through the agenda of each meeting
- Recorder: officially takes notes of what happens in each meeting and what decisions are made
- Editor: pieces together each member's researched part into a cohesive whole
- Presentation Software Expert: collects slides needed for the presentation and makes them cohesive making sure the guidelines for effective slides are needed; also changes slides as the speakers need
- Information Giver: offers facts, beliefs, input
- Boy Scouter: prepared with map and info
- Information Seeker: asks for clarification, raises helpful questions
- Administrator: keeps people on track, organizes logistics
- Elaborator: offers further clarification
- Clarifier: explains
- Interpreter: makes sense of info for group
- Watch Dog: time manager
- Housekeeper: checks for loose ends
- Idea Giver: Comes up with new ideas
- Feedback Giver: reflects and evaluates
- Summarizer: reviews decisions, goals or outcomes
- Critiquer: looks at a problem from all sides

## Not Helpful Task Roles

Not all task roles are created equally. Some are much more helpful than others. Here are some to stay away from.

- Dominator: talks and does not allow anyone else to talk
- Blocker: negative resistant behavior, groundless disagreement
- Avoider: non-involvement, does not contribute ideas or communicate
- Recognition Seeker: calls attention to self
- Distractor: goes off on tangents, irrelevant
- Slider: does little or no work, procrastinates

## Helpful Relationship Roles

- Harmonizer: helps settle differences
- Sensor: expresses group mood and feelings
- Tension Reliever: creates fun and uses humor to diffuse tense situations
- Listener: hears content and feeling

## Not Helpful Relationship Roles

- Clown: distracts from task with self-focused play
- Captain Oblivious: disconnected
- Disconbobulator: keeps group in upheaval
- Criticizer: attacks persons, not issues

## How do we use the Nominal Group Technique to choose our Team Name and Topic?

We are going to teach you two great ways to make decisions in your team. The first one you are going to use to make a decision as to what your team name should be. This decision making process is call the **Nominal Group Technique**.

1. Each member privately writes down a list of all team names they like.
2. When everyone has finished writing, all members share their entire list. (This is more helpful than brainstorming as a group right away because it prevents group members from accidentally criticizing another member's ideas before they have a chance to be seen.)



3. The Recorder writes down a master list with all the team names suggested.
4. Now as a group brainstorming can begin. Remember, no criticism of ideas at this stage. You can modify names, piggy back one name on another. Maybe someone's suggestion triggers an idea for a new name. All these ideas are written down by the Recorder.
5. When the team has exhausted ideas, the team can choose a team name. Now is the time you can evaluate the possible choices. You can decide to vote either by secret ballot or openly. Does majority rule? So you want 2/3rd of the group to be in favor. Do you want full consensus? Up to you.

You can use this same technique to choose your **Team Speech Topic**. You need to decide on a great resource here at SLCC that you would like to persuade your fellow students to use. What will it be? There are so many great resources, some obvious and some almost hidden. Find one you feel would be a great benefit to your fellow students.

## What is the Reflective Thinking Process of Decision Making?

The next most valuable group problem-solving process is called the **Reflective Thinking Process**. This one you will want to use as you decide how you will go about creating your Team Speech. What you will want to include, what research do you need, who will do what part?

## Group Problem-Solving Process

There are several variations of similar problem-solving models based on American scholar John Dewey's **reflective thinking process** (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). As you read through the steps in the process, think about how you can apply this to organizing your speech. Some of the following steps are straightforward, and they are things we would logically do when faced with a problem. However, taking a deliberate and systematic approach to problem-solving has been shown to benefit group functioning and performance. A deliberate approach is especially beneficial for groups that do not have an established history of working together and will only be able to meet occasionally. Although a group should attend to each step of the process, group leaders or other group members who facilitate problem-solving should be cautious not to dogmatically follow each element of the process or force a group along. Such a lack of flexibility could limit group member input and negatively affect the group's cohesion and climate.

### Step 1: Define the Problem

Define the problem by considering the three elements shared by every problem: the current undesirable

situation, the goal or more desirable situation, and obstacles in the way (Adams & Galanes, 2009). At this stage, group members share what they know about the current situation, without proposing solutions or evaluating the information. Here are some good questions to ask during this stage:

- What is the current difficulty?
- How did we come to know that the difficulty exists?
- Who/what is involved?
- Why is it meaningful/urgent/important?
- What have the effects been so far?
- What, if any, elements of the difficulty require clarification?

At the end of this stage, the group should be able to compose a single sentence that summarizes the problem called a problem statement. Avoid wording in the problem statement or question that hints at potential solutions. A small group formed to investigate ethical violations of city officials could use the following problem statement: “Our state does not currently have a mechanism for citizens to report suspected ethical violations by city officials.”

Another example.

Poor: How can I find a podium? (This is poor because it indicates the solution is a podium in the problem statement. We need to ask what do we need the podium for? If it is to put my notes on, could there be another solution?)

Better: What can hold my notes? (Now a lot more solutions are available. A table, a stack of books, a student could hold my notes, turn the garbage can upside down, etc.)

## Step 2: Analyze the Problem

During this step, a group should analyze the problem and the group’s relationship to the problem. Whereas the first step involved exploring the “what” related to the problem, this step focuses on the “why.” At this stage, group members can discuss the potential causes of the difficulty. Group members may also want to begin setting out an agenda or timeline for the group’s problem-solving process, looking forward to the other steps.

Here are two examples of questions that the group formed to address ethics violations might ask: Why doesn’t our city have an ethics reporting mechanism? Do cities of similar size have such a mechanism? Once the problem has been analyzed, the group can pose a problem question that will guide the group as it generates possible solutions. “How can citizens report suspected ethical violations of city officials and how will such reports be processed and addressed?” As you can see, the problem question is more complex than the problem statement, since the group has moved on to a more in-depth discussion of the problem during step 2.

## Step 3: Generate Possible Solutions

During this step, group members generate possible solutions to the problem. This is where brainstorming techniques to enhance creativity may be useful to the group. Again, solutions should not be evaluated at this point, only proposed and clarified. The question should be what could we do to address this problem, not what should we do to address it. It is perfectly OK for a group member to question another person's idea by asking something like "What do you mean?" or "Could you explain your reasoning more?" Discussions at this stage may reveal a need to return to previous steps to better define or more fully analyze a problem. Since many problems are multifaceted, group members must generate solutions for each part of the problem separately, making sure to have multiple solutions for each part. Stopping the solution-generating process prematurely can lead to groupthink.

For the problem question previously posed, the group would need to generate solutions for all three parts of the problem included in the question. Possible solutions for the first part of the problem (How can citizens report ethical violations?) may include "online reporting system, e-mail, in-person, anonymously, on-the-record," and so on. Possible solutions for the second part of the problem (How will reports be processed?) may include "daily by a newly appointed ethics officer, weekly by a nonpartisan non-government employee," and so on. Possible solutions for the third part of the problem (How will reports be addressed?) may include "by a newly appointed ethics commission, by the accused's supervisor, by the city manager," and so on.



Woman in black coat, by Christina Morillo, licensed under Pexels License

## Step 4: Evaluate Solutions

During this step, solutions can be critically evaluated based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Once the potential solutions have been narrowed based on more obvious differences in relevance and/or merit, the group should analyze each solution based on its potential effects—especially negative effects. Groups that are required to report the rationale for their decision or whose decisions may be subject to public scrutiny would be wise to make a set list of criteria for evaluating each solution. Additionally, solutions can be evaluated based on how well they fit with the group's charge and the abilities of the group. To do this, group members may ask, "Does this solution live up to the original purpose or mission of the group?" and "Can the solution actually be implemented with our current resources and connections?" and "How will this solution

be supported, funded, enforced, and assessed?” Conflict may emerge during this step of problem-solving, and group members will need to employ effective critical thinking and listening skills.

For example, to narrow the list of proposed solutions, group members may decide by majority vote, by weighing the pros and cons, or by discussing them until a consensus is reached. There are also more complex decision-making models like the “six hats method,” which we will discuss later. Once the final decision is reached, the group leader or facilitator should confirm that the group is in agreement. It may be beneficial to let the group break for a while or even to delay the final decision until a later meeting to allow people time to evaluate it outside of the group context.

## Step 5: Implement and Assess the Solution



Long exposure, single image, by Tsvetoslav Hristov, licensed under Unsplash license

Implementing the solution requires some advanced planning, and it should not be rushed unless the group is operating under strict time restraints or delay may lead to some kind of harm. Although some solutions can be implemented immediately, others may take days, months, or years. As was noted earlier, it may be beneficial for groups to poll those who will be affected by the solution as to their opinion of it or even do a pilot test to observe the effectiveness of the solution and how people react to it. Before implementation, groups should also determine how and when they would assess the effectiveness of the solution by

asking, “How will we know if the solution is working or not?” Since solution assessment will vary based on whether or not the group is disbanded, groups should also consider the following questions: If the group disbands after implementation, who will be responsible for assessing the solution? If the solution fails, will the same group reconvene or will a new group be formed?

Certain elements of the solution may need to be delegated out to various people inside and outside the group. Group members may also be assigned to implement a particular part of the solution based on their role in the decision-making or because it connects to their area of expertise. Likewise, group members may be tasked with publicizing the solution or “selling” it to a particular group of stakeholders. Last, the group should consider its future. In some cases, the group will get to decide if it will stay together and continue working on other tasks or if it will disband. In other cases, outside forces determine the group’s fate.

## Six Thinking Hats Method

Edward de Bono developed the **Six Thinking Hats** method of thinking in the late 1980s, and it has since become a regular feature in problem-solving and decision-making training in business and professional contexts (de Bono, 1985). The method's popularity lies in its ability to help people get out of habitual ways of thinking and to allow group members to play different roles and see a problem or decision from multiple points of view. The basic idea is that each of the six hats represents a different way of thinking, and when we figuratively switch hats, we switch the way we think. The hats and their style of thinking are as follows:

- **White hat.** Objective—focuses on seeking information such as data and facts and then neutrally processes that information.
- **Red hat.** Emotional—uses intuition, gut reactions, and feelings to judge information and suggestions.
- **Black hat.** Critical—focuses on potential risks, points out possibilities for failure, and evaluates information cautiously and defensively.
- **Yellow hat.** Positive—is optimistic about suggestions and future outcomes, gives constructive and positive feedback, points out benefits and advantages.
- **Green hat.** Creative—tries to generate new ideas and solutions, thinks “outside the box.”
- **Blue hat.** Process—uses metacommunication to organize and reflect on the thinking and communication taking place in the group, facilitates who wears what hat and when group members change hats.

Specific sequences or combinations of hats can be used to encourage strategic thinking. For example, the group leader may start off wearing the Blue Hat and suggest that the group start their decision-making process with some “White Hat thinking” to process through facts and other available information. During this stage, the group could also process through what other groups have done when faced with a similar problem. Then the leader could begin an evaluation sequence starting with two minutes of “Yellow Hat thinking” to identify potential positive outcomes, then “Black Hat thinking” to allow group members to express reservations about ideas and point out potential problems, then “Red Hat thinking” to get people’s gut reactions to the previous discussion, then “Green Hat thinking” to identify other possible solutions that are more tailored to the group’s situation or completely new approaches. At the end of a sequence, the Blue Hat would want to summarize what was said and begin a new sequence. To successfully use this method, the person wearing the Blue Hat should be familiar with different sequences and plan some of the thinking patterns ahead of time based on the problem and the group members. Each round of thinking should be limited to a certain time frame (two to five minutes) to keep the discussion moving.

1. This problem-solving method has been praised because it allows group members to “switch gears” in their thinking and allows for role-playing, which lets people express ideas more freely. How can this help

- enhance critical thinking? Which combination of hats do you think would be best for a critical thinking sequence?
2. What combinations of hats might be useful if the leader wanted to break the larger group up into pairs and why? For example, what kind of thinking would result from putting Yellow and Red together, Black and White together, or Red and White together, and so on?
  3. Based on your preferred ways of thinking and your personality, which hat would be the best fit for you? Which would be the most challenging? Why?

## Reflective Thinking Process Exercise

### Reflective Thinking Process Exercise (Text version)

What is the first and most important step in the Reflective Thinking Process?

1. Identify the problem
2. Brainstorm Solutions
3. Evaluate Solutions

### Check your Answer:<sup>1</sup>

**Activity source:** “Quick Check 19.1” by Sarah Billington & Shirene McKay is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

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## Notes

1. 1. Identify the problem.

