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## Chapter 8

# Supporting Ideas and Building Arguments

Every day, all around the country, people give speeches that contain generalities and vagueness. Students on your campus might claim that local policies are biased against students, but may not explain why. Politicians may make claims in their speeches about “family values” without defining what those values are or throw out statistics without giving credit to where they found those numbers. Indeed, the nonpartisan websites FactCheck.org and Politifact.com are dedicated to investigating and dispelling the claims that politicians make in their speeches.



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In this chapter, we explore the nature of supporting ideas in public speaking and why support is essential to effective presentations. We will then discuss how to use support to build stronger arguments within a speech.

## 8.1 Using Research as Support

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define the term “support.”
2. Understand three reasons we use support in speeches.
3. Explain four criteria used to evaluate support options.

In public speaking, the word “**support**<sup>1</sup>” refers to a range of strategies that are used to develop the central idea and specific purpose by providing corroborating evidence. Whether you are speaking to inform, persuade, or entertain, using support helps you create a more substantive and polished speech. We sometimes use the words “support” or “evidence” synonymously or interchangeably because both are designed to help ground a speech’s specific purpose. However, “evidence” tends to be associated specifically with persuasive speeches, so we opt to use the more general term “support” for most of this chapter. In this section, we are going to explore why speakers use support.



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### Why We Use Support

Speakers use support to help provide a foundation for their message. You can think of support as the legs on a table. Without the legs, the table becomes a slab of wood or glass lying on the ground; as such, it cannot fully serve the purpose of a table. In the same way, without support, a speech is nothing more than fluff. Audience members may ignore the speech’s message, dismissing it as just so much hot air. In addition to being the foundation that a speech stands on, support also helps us clarify content, increase speaker credibility, and make the speech more vivid.

### To Clarify Content

The first reason to use support in a speech is to clarify content. Speakers often choose a piece of support because a previous writer or speaker has phrased something in a way that evokes a clear mental picture of the point they want to make. For example, suppose you’re preparing a speech about hazing in college fraternities. You may read your school’s code of student conduct to find out how

1. The range of strategies a public speaker can use to develop the central idea and specific purpose by providing corroborating evidence.

your campus defines hazing. You could use this definition to make sure your audience understands what hazing is and what types of behaviors your campus identifies as hazing.

### To Add Credibility

Another important reason to use support is because it adds to your credibility as a speaker. The less an audience perceives you as an expert on a given topic, the more important it is to use a range of support. By doing so, you let your audience know that you've done your homework on the topic.

At the same time, you could hurt your credibility if you use inadequate support or support from questionable sources. Your credibility will also suffer if you distort the intent of a source to try to force it to support a point that the previous author did not address. For example, the famous 1798 publication by Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, has been used as support for various arguments far beyond what Malthus could have intended. Malthus's thesis was that as the human population increases at a greater rate than food production, societies will go to war over scarce food resources. Malthus, T. R. (1798). *An essay on the principle of population as it affects the future improvement of society, with remarks on the speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and other writers*. London, England: J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Churchyard. Some modern writers have suggested that, according to the Malthusian line of thinking, almost anything that leads to a food shortage could lead to nuclear war. For example, better health care leads to longer life spans, which leads to an increased need for food, leading to food shortages, which lead to nuclear war. Clearly, this argument makes some giant leaps of logic that would be hard for an audience to accept.

For this reason, it is important to evaluate your support to ensure that it will not detract from your credibility as a speaker. Here are four characteristics to evaluate when looking at support options: accuracy, authority, currency, and objectivity.

### Accuracy

One of the quickest ways to lose credibility in the eyes of your audience is to use support that is inaccurate or even questionably accurate. Admittedly, determining the accuracy of support can be difficult if you are not an expert in a given area, but here are some questions to ask yourself to help assess a source's accuracy:

- Does the information within one piece of supporting evidence completely contradict other supporting evidence you've seen?

- If the support is using a statistic, does the supporting evidence explain where that statistic came from and how it was determined?
- Does the logic behind the support make sense?

One of this book’s authors recently observed a speech in which a student said, “The amount of pollution produced by using paper towels instead of hand dryers is equivalent to driving a car from the east coast to St. Louis.” The other students in the class, as well as the instructor, recognized that this information sounded wrong and asked questions about the information source, the amount of time it would take to produce this much pollution, and the number of hand dryers used. The audience demonstrated strong listening skills by questioning the information, but the speaker lost credibility by being unable to answer their questions.

### Authority

The second way to use support in building your credibility is to cite authoritative sources—those who are experts on the topic. In today’s world, there are all kinds of people who call themselves “experts” on a range of topics. There are even books that tell you how to get people to regard you as an expert in a given industry. See, for example, Lizotte, K. (2007). *The expert’s edge: Become the go-to authority people turn to every time*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. Today there are “experts” on every street corner or website spouting off information that some listeners will view as legitimate.

So what truly makes someone an expert? Bruce D. Weinstein, a professor at West Virginia University’s Center for Health Ethics and Law, defined **expertise**<sup>2</sup> as having two senses. In his definition, the first sense of expertise is “knowledge *in or about* a particular field, and statements about it generally take the form, ‘S is an expert *in or about* D.’... The second sense of expertise refers to domains of demonstrable skills, and statements about it generally take the form, ‘S is an expert *at skill* D.’” Weinstein, B. D. (1993). What is an expert? *Theoretical Medicine*, 14, 57–93. Thus, to be an expert, someone needs to have considerable knowledge on a topic or considerable skill in accomplishing something.

As a novice researcher, how can you determine whether an individual is truly an expert? Unfortunately, there is no clear-cut way to wade through the masses of “experts” and determine each one’s legitimacy quickly. However, **Table 8.1 “Who Is an Expert?”** presents a list of questions based on the research of Marie-Line Germain that you can ask yourself to help determine whether someone is an expert. Germain, M. L. (2006). *Development and preliminary validation of a psychometric measure of expertise: The generalized expertise measure (GEM)*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Barry University, Florida.

2. Knowledge in or about a particular field or domains of demonstrable skills.

Table 8.1 Who Is an Expert?

Questions to Ask Yourself	Yes	No
1. Is the person widely recognizable as an expert?		
2. Does the person have an appropriate degree/training/certification to make her or him an expert?		
3. Is the person a member of a recognized profession in her or his claimed area of expertise?		
4. Has the person published articles or books (not self-published) on the claimed area of expertise?		
5. Does the person have appropriate experience in her or his claimed area of expertise?		
6. Does the person have clear knowledge about her or his claimed area of expertise?		
7. Is the person clearly knowledgeable about the field related to her or his claimed area of expertise?		
8. When all is said and done, does the person truly have the qualifications to be considered an expert in her or his claimed area of expertise?		

You don't have to answer "yes" to all the preceding questions to conclude that a source is credible, but a string of "no" answers should be a warning signal. In a *Columbia Journalism Review* article, Allisa Quart raised the question of expert credibility regarding the sensitive subject of autism. Specifically, Quart questioned whether the celebrity spokesperson and autism advocate Jennifer McCarthy (<http://www.generationrescue.org/>) qualifies as an expert. Quart notes that McCarthy "insists that vaccines caused her son's neurological disorder, a claim that has near-zero support in scientific literature." Quart, A. (2010, July/August). The trouble with experts: The web allows us to question authority in new ways. *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.cjr.org> Providing an opposing view is a widely read blog called *Respectful Insolence* (<http://scienceblogs.com/insolence/>), whose author is allegedly a surgeon/scientist who often speaks out about autism and "antivaccination lunacy." *Respectful Insolence* received the 2008 Best Weblog Award from *MedGadget: The Internet Journal of Emerging Medical Technologies*. We used the word "allegedly" when referring to the author of *Respectful Insolence* because as the website explains that the author's name, Orac, is the "nom de blog of a (not so) humble pseudonymous surgeon/scientist with an ego just big enough to delude himself that someone, somewhere might actually give a rodent's posterior about his miscellaneous verbal meanderings, but just barely small enough to admit to himself that few will." ScienceBlogs LLC (n.d.). Who (or what) is Orac? [Web log post].

Retrieved from <http://scienceblogs.com/insolence/>; see also <http://scienceblogs.com/insolence/medicine/autism>

When comparing the celebrity Jenny McCarthy to the blogger Orac, who do you think is the better expert? Were you able to answer “yes” to the questions in [Table 8.1 "Who Is an Expert?"](#) for both “experts”? If not, why not? Overall, determining the authority of support is clearly a complicated task, and one that you should spend time thinking about as you prepare the support for your speech.

### Currency

The third consideration in using support to build your credibility is how current the information is. Some ideas stay fairly consistent over time, like the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor or the mathematical formula for finding the area of a circle, but other ideas change wildly in a short period of time, including ideas about technology, health treatments, and laws.

Although we never want to discount classic supporting information that has withstood the test of time, as a general rule for most topics, we recommend that information be less than five years old. Obviously, this is just a general guideline and can change depending on the topic. If you’re giving a speech on the history of mining in West Virginia, then you may use support from sources that are much older. However, if you’re discussing a medical topic, then your support information should probably be from the past five years or less. Some industries change even faster, so the best support may come from the past month. For example, if you are speaking about advances in word processing, using information about Microsoft Word from 2003 would be woefully out-of-date because two upgrades have been released since 2003 (2007 and 2010). As a credible speaker, it is your responsibility to give your audience up-to-date information.

### Objectivity

The last question you should ask yourself when examining support is whether the person or organization behind the information is objective or biased. **Bias**<sup>3</sup> refers to a predisposition or preconception of a topic that prevents impartiality. Although there is a certain logic to the view that every one of us is innately biased, as a credible speaker, you want to avoid just passing along someone’s unfounded bias in your speech. Ideally you would use support that is unbiased; [Table 8.2 "Is a Potential Source of Support Biased?"](#) provides some questions to ask yourself when evaluating a potential piece of support to detect bias.

3. A predisposition or preconception of a topic that prevents impartiality.

Table 8.2 Is a Potential Source of Support Biased?

Questions to Ask Yourself	Yes	No
1. Does the source represent an individual's, an organization's, or another group's viewpoint?		
2. Does the source sound unfair in its judgment, either for or against a specific topic?		
3. Does the source sound like personal prejudices, opinions, or thoughts?		
4. Does the source exist only on a website (i.e., not in print or any other format)?		
5. Is the information published or posted anonymously or pseudonymously?		
6. Does the source have any political or financial interests related to the information being disseminated?		
7. Does the source demonstrate any specific political orientation, religious affiliation, or other ideology?		
8. Does the source's viewpoint differ from all other information you've read?		

As with the questions in [Table 8.1 "Who Is an Expert?"](#) about expertise, you don't have to have all "no" or "yes" responses to decide on bias. However, being aware of the possibility of bias and where your audience might see bias will help you to select the best possible support to include in your speech.

### To Add Vividness

In addition to clarifying content and enhancing credibility, support helps make a speech more vivid. **Vividness**<sup>4</sup> refers to a speaker's ability to present information in a striking, exciting manner. The goal of vividness is to make your speech more memorable. One of the authors still remembers a vivid example from a student speech given several years ago. The student was speaking about the importance of wearing seat belts and stated that the impact from hitting a windshield at just twenty miles per hour without a seat belt would be equivalent to falling out of the window of their second-floor classroom and landing face-first on the pavement below. Because they were in that classroom several times each week, students were easily able to visualize the speaker's analogy and it was successful at creating an image that is remembered years later. Support helps make your speech more interesting and memorable to an audience member.

4. A speaker's ability to present information in a striking, exciting manner.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The strategies a public speaker can use to provide corroborating evidence for the speech's central idea and specific purpose are called support.
- There are three primary reasons to use support: to clarify content, to increase speaker credibility, and to make the speech more vivid.
- A good piece of support should be accurate, authoritative, current, and unbiased.

### EXERCISES

1. Find an article online about a topic on which you are interested in speaking. Examine it for the four aspects of effective sources (e.g., accuracy, authority, currency, and objectivity). Do you think this source is credible? Why?
2. Find a speech on the Vital Speeches of the Day website (<http://www.vsotd.com>) and try to identify the types of support the speaker utilized. Is the speaker's use of support effective? Why or why not?

## 8.2 Exploring Types of Support

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand how speakers can use statistics to support their speeches.
2. Differentiate among the five types of definitions.
3. Differentiate among four types of supportive examples.
4. Explain how narratives can be used to support informative, persuasive, and entertaining speeches.
5. Differentiate between the two forms of testimony.
6. Differentiate between two types of analogies that can be used as support.

Now that we've explained why support is important, let's examine the various types of support that speakers often use within a speech: facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimony, and analogies.



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### Facts and Statistics

As we discussed in [Chapter 7 "Researching Your Speech"](#), a fact is a truth that is arrived at through the scientific process. Speakers often support a point or specific purpose by citing facts that their audience may not know. A typical way to introduce a fact orally is “Did you know that...?”

Many of the facts that speakers cite are based on statistics. **Statistics**<sup>5</sup> is the mathematical subfield that gathers, analyzes, and makes inferences about collected data. Data can come in a wide range of forms—the number of people who buy a certain magazine, the average number of telephone calls made in a month, the incidence of a certain disease. Though few people realize it, much of our daily lives are governed by statistics. Everything from seat-belt laws, to the food we eat, to the amount of money public schools receive, to the medications you are prescribed are based on the collection and interpretation of numerical data.

5. The mathematical subfield that gathers, analyzes, and makes inferences about collected data.

It is important to realize that a public speaking textbook cannot begin to cover statistics in depth. If you plan to do statistical research yourself, or gain an understanding of the intricacies of such research, we strongly recommend taking a

basic class in statistics or quantitative research methods. These courses will better prepare you to understand the various statistics you will encounter.

However, even without a background in statistics, finding useful statistical information related to your topic is quite easy. [Table 8.3 "Statistics-Oriented Websites"](#) provides a list of some websites where you can find a range of statistical information that may be useful for your speeches.

Table 8.3 Statistics-Oriented Websites

Website	Type of Information
<a href="http://www.bls.gov/bls/other.htm">http://www.bls.gov/bls/other.htm</a>	Bureau of Labor Statistics provides links to a range of websites for labor issues related to a vast range of countries.
<a href="http://www.fedstats.gov">http://www.fedstats.gov</a>	Federal Stats provides information on the US federal government.
<a href="http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov">http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov</a>	Bureau of Justice Statistics provides information on crime statistics in the United States.
<a href="http://www.census.gov">http://www.census.gov</a>	US Census Bureau provides a wide range of information about people living in the United States.
<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/datawh.htm">http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/datawh.htm</a>	National Center for Health Statistics is a program conducted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It provides information on a range of health issues in the United States.
<a href="http://www.stats.org">http://www.stats.org</a>	STATS is a nonprofit organization that helps people understand quantitative data. It also provides a range of data on its website.
<a href="http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu">http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu</a>	Roper Center for Public Opinion provides data related to a range of issues in the United States.
<a href="http://www.nielsen.com">http://www.nielsen.com</a>	Nielsen provides data on consumer use of various media forms.
<a href="http://www.gallup.com">http://www.gallup.com</a>	Gallup provides public opinion data on a range of social and political issues in the United States and around the world.
<a href="http://www.adherents.com">http://www.adherents.com</a>	Adherents provides both domestic and international data related to religious affiliation.
<a href="http://people-press.org">http://people-press.org</a>	Pew Research Center provides public opinion data on a range of social and political issues in the United States and around the world.

Statistics are probably the most used—and misused—form of support in any type of speaking. People like numbers. People are impressed by numbers. However, most people do not know how to correctly interpret numbers. Unfortunately, there are many speakers who do not know how to interpret them either or who intentionally manipulate them to mislead their listeners. As the saying popularized by Mark Twain goes, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.” Twain, M. (1924). *Autobiography* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Harper & Bros., p. 538.

To avoid misusing statistics when you speak in public, do three things. First, be honest with yourself and your audience. If you are distorting a statistic or leaving out other statistics that contradict your point, you are not living up to the level of honesty your audience is entitled to expect. Second, run a few basic calculations to see if a statistic is believable. Sometimes a source may contain a mistake—for example, a decimal point may be in the wrong place or a verbal expression like “increased by 50 percent” may conflict with data showing an increase of 100 percent. Third, evaluate sources (even those in [Table 8.3 "Statistics-Oriented Websites"](#), which are generally reputable) according to the criteria discussed earlier in the chapter: accuracy, authority, currency, and objectivity.

## Definitions

Imagine that you gave a speech about the use of presidential veto and your audience did not know the meaning of the word “veto.” In order for your speech to be effective, you would need to define what a veto is and what it does. Making sure everyone is “on the same page” is a fundamental task of any communication. As speakers, we often need to clearly define what we are talking about to make sure that our audience understands our meaning. The goal of a definition is to help speakers communicate a word or idea in a manner that makes it understandable for their audiences. For the purposes of public speaking, there are four different types of definitions that may be used as support: lexical, persuasive, stipulative, and theoretical.

### Lexical Definitions

A **lexical definition**<sup>6</sup> is one that specifically states how a word is used within a specific language. For example, if you go to Dictionary.com and type in the word “speech,” here is the lexical definition you will receive:

6. “Dictionary” definition that specifically states how a word is used within a specific language.

–noun

1. the faculty or power of speaking; oral communication; ability to express one's thoughts and emotions by speech sounds and gesture: *Losing her speech made her feel isolated from humanity.*
2. the act of speaking: *He expresses himself better in speech than in writing.*
3. something that is spoken; an utterance, remark, or declaration: *We waited for some speech that would indicate her true feelings.*
4. a form of communication in spoken language, made by a speaker before an audience for a given purpose: a fiery speech.
5. any single utterance of an actor in the course of a play, motion picture, etc.
6. the form of utterance characteristic of a particular people or region; a language or dialect.
7. manner of speaking, as of a person: *Your slovenly speech is holding back your career.*
8. a field of study devoted to the theory and practice of oral communication.

Lexical definitions are useful when a word may be unfamiliar to an audience and you want to ensure that the audience has a basic understanding of the word. However, our ability to understand lexical definitions often hinges on our knowledge of other words that are used in the definition, so it is usually a good idea to follow a lexical definition with a clear explanation of what it means in your own words.

### Persuasive Definitions

**Persuasive definitions**<sup>7</sup> are designed to motivate an audience to think in a specific manner about the word or term. Political figures are often very good at defining terms in a way that are persuasive. Frank Luntz, a linguist and political strategist, is widely regarded as one of the most effective creators of persuasive definitions. Luntz, F. (2007). *Words that work: It's not what you say, it's what people hear.* New York, NY: Hyperion. Luntz has the ability to take terms that people don't like and repackage them into persuasive definitions that give the original term a much more positive feel. Here are some of Luntz's more famous persuasive definitions:

- Oil drilling → energy exploration
- Estate tax → death tax
- School vouchers → opportunity scholarships
- Eavesdropping → electronic intercepts
- Global warming → climate change

7. Definition designed to persuade an audience into thinking in a specific manner about the word or term.

Luntz has essentially defined the terms in a new way that has a clear political bent and that may make the term more acceptable to some audiences, especially those who do not question the lexical meaning of the new term. For example, “oil drilling” may have negative connotations among citizens who are concerned about the environmental impact of drilling, whereas “energy exploration” may have much more positive connotations among the same group.

### Stipulative Definitions

A **stipulative definition**<sup>8</sup> is a definition assigned to a word or term by the person who coins that word or term for the first time. In 1969, Laurence Peter and Raymond Hull wrote a book called *The Peter Principle: Why Things Always Go Wrong*. In this book, they defined the “Peter Principle” as “In a Hierarchy Every Employee Tends to Rise to His [sic] Level of Incompetence.” Peter, L. J., & Hull, R. (1969). *The Peter principle: Why things always go wrong*. New York, NY: William Morrow & Company, p. 15. Because Peter and Hull coined the term “Peter Principle,” it was up to them to define the term as they saw fit. You cannot argue with this definition; it simply is the definition that was stipulated.

### Theoretical Definitions

**Theoretical definitions**<sup>9</sup> are used to describe all parts related to a particular type of idea or object. Admittedly, these definitions are frequently ambiguous and difficult to fully comprehend. For example, if you attempted to define the word “peace” in a manner that could be used to describe all aspects of peace, then you would be using a theoretical definition. These definitions are considered theoretical because the definitions attempt to create an all-encompassing theory of the word itself.

In an interpersonal communication course, one of our coauthors asked a group of random people online to define the term “falling in love.” Here are some of the theoretical definitions they provided:

I think falling in love would be the act of feeling attracted to a person, with mutual respect given to each other, a strong desire to be close and near a person,...and more.

Being content with the person you are with and missing them every minute they are gone.

Um...falling in love is finding a guy with lots of credit cards and no balances owing.

8. Definition given to a word or term the first time that word or term is coined by someone.

9. Definition used to describe all parts related to a particular type idea or object.

Falling in love is when you take away the feeling, the passion, and the romance in a relationship and find out you still care for that person.

Meeting someone who makes your heart sing.

Skydiving for someone's lips.

Definitions are important to provide clarity for your audience. Effective speakers strike a balance between using definitions where they are needed to increase audience understanding and leaving out definitions of terms that the audience is likely to know. For example, you may need to define what a “claw hammer” is when speaking to a group of Cub Scouts learning about basic tools, but you would appear foolish—or even condescending—if you defined it in a speech to a group of carpenters who use claw hammers every day. On the other hand, just assuming that others know the terms you are using can lead to ineffective communication as well. Medical doctors are often criticized for using technical terms while talking to their patients without taking time to define those terms. Patients may then walk away not really understanding what their health situation is or what needs to be done about it.

## Examples

Another often-used type of support is examples. An example is a specific situation, problem, or story designed to help illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon. Examples are useful because they can help make an abstract idea more concrete for an audience by providing a specific case. Let's examine four common types of examples used as support: positive, negative, nonexamples, and best examples.

### Positive Examples

A **positive example**<sup>10</sup> is used to clarify or clearly illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon. A speaker discussing crisis management could talk about how a local politician handled herself when a local newspaper reported that her husband was having an affair or give an example of a professional baseball player who immediately came clean about steroid use. These examples would provide a positive model for how a corporation in the first instance, and an individual in the second instance, should behave in crisis management. The purpose of a positive example is to show a desirable solution, decision, or course of action.

10. Form of example used to clarify or clearly illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon.

### Negative Examples

**Negative examples**<sup>11</sup>, by contrast, are used to illustrate what *not* to do. On the same theme of crisis management, a speaker could discuss the lack of communication from Union Carbide during the 1984 tragedy in Bhopal, India, or the many problems with how the US government responded to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The purpose of a negative example is to show an undesirable solution, decision, or course of action.

### Nonexamples

A **nonexample**<sup>12</sup> is used to explain what something is *not*. On the subject of crisis management, you might mention a press release for a new Adobe Acrobat software upgrade as an example of corporate communication that is not crisis management. The press release nonexample helps the audience differentiate between crisis management and other forms of corporate communication.

### Best Examples

The final type of example is called the **best example**<sup>13</sup> because it is held up as the “best” way someone should behave within a specific context. On the crisis management theme, a speaker could show a clip of an effective CEO speaking during a press conference to show how one should behave both verbally and nonverbally during a crisis. While positive examples show appropriate ways to behave, best examples illustrate the best way to behave in a specific context.

Although examples can be very effective at helping an audience to understand abstract or unfamiliar concepts, they do have one major drawback: some audience members may dismiss them as unusual cases that do not represent what happens most of the time. For example, some opponents of wearing seat belts claim that *not* wearing your seat belt can help you be thrown from a car and save you from fire or other hazards in the wrecked automobile. Even if a speaker has a specific example of an accident where this was true, many audience members would see this example as a rare case and thus not view it as strong support.

11. Form of example used to illustrate how people should not behave.
12. Form of example used to explain what something is not.
13. Form of example used to explain the best way someone should behave within a specific context.

Simply finding an example to use, then, is not enough. An effective speaker needs to consider how the audience will respond to the example and how the example fits with what else the audience knows, as discussed under the heading of accuracy earlier in this chapter.

## Narratives

A fourth form of support are **narratives**<sup>14</sup>, or stories that help an audience understand the speaker's message. Narratives are similar to examples except that narratives are generally longer and take on the form of a story with a clear arc (beginning, middle, and end). People like stories. In fact, narratives are so important that communication scholar Walter Fisher believes humans are innately storytelling animals, so appealing to people through stories is a great way to support one's speech. Fisher, W. R. (1987). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value, and action*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

However, you have an ethical responsibility as a speaker to clearly identify whether the narrative you are sharing is real or hypothetical. In 1981, *Washington Post* reporter Janet Cooke was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for her story of an eight-year-old heroin addict. Cooke, J. (1980, September 28). Jimmy's world. *The Washington Post*, p. A1. After acknowledging that her story was a fake, she lost her job and the prize was rescinded. Green, B. (1981, April 19). The confession: At the end, there were the questions, then the tears. *The Washington Post*, p. A14. In 2009, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal gave a nationally televised speech where he recounted a story of his interaction with a local sheriff in getting help for Hurricane Katrina victims. His story was later found to be false; Jindal admitted that he had heard the sheriff tell the story after it happened but he had not really been present at the time. Finch, S. (2009, Feb 27). Bobby Jindal's fishy Katrina story. *Daily Kos*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2009/02/27/702671/-Bobby-Jindals-Fishy-Katrina-Story>

Obviously, we are advocating that you select narratives that are truthful when you use this form of support in a speech. Clella Jaffe explains that narratives are a fundamental part of public speaking and that narratives can be used for support in all three general purposes of speaking: informative, persuasive, and entertaining. Jaffe, C. (2010). *Public speaking: Concepts and skills for a diverse society* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage.

## Informative Narratives

Jaffe defines **informative narratives**<sup>15</sup> as those that provide information or explanations about a speaker's topic. Jaffe, C. (2010). *Public speaking: Concepts and skills for a diverse society* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage. Informative narratives can help audiences understand nature and natural phenomena, for example. Often the most complicated science and mathematical issues in our world can be understood through the use of story. While many people may not know all the mathematics behind gravity, most of us have grown up with the story of how Sir Isaac Newton

14. An illustrative story or extended example with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

15. Type of narrative used to provide information or explanations about a speaker's topic.

was hit on the head by an apple and developed the theory of gravity. Even if the story is not precisely accurate, it serves as a way to help people grasp the basic concept of gravity.

### Persuasive Narratives

**Persuasive narratives**<sup>16</sup> are stories used to persuade people to accept or reject a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior. Religious texts are filled with persuasive narratives designed to teach followers various attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Parables or fables are designed to teach people basic lessons about life. For example, read the following fable from Aesop (<http://www.aesopfables.com>): “One winter a farmer found a snake stiff and frozen with cold. He had compassion on it, and taking it up, placed it in his bosom. The Snake was quickly revived by the warmth, and resuming its natural instincts, bit its benefactor, inflicting on him a mortal wound. ‘Oh,’ cried the Farmer with his last breath, ‘I am rightly served for pitying a scoundrel.’” This persuasive narrative is designed to warn people that just because you help someone in need doesn’t mean the other person will respond in kind.

### Entertaining Narratives

**Entertaining narratives**<sup>17</sup> are stories designed purely to delight an audience and transport them from their daily concerns. Some professional speakers make a very good career by telling their own stories of success or how they overcame life’s adversities. Comedians such as Jeff Foxworthy tell stories that are ostensibly about their own lives in a manner designed to make the audience laugh. While entertaining narratives may be a lot of fun, people should use them sparingly as support for a more serious topic or for a traditional informative or persuasive speech.

### Testimony

Another form of support you may employ during a speech is testimony. When we use the word “testimony” in this text, we are specifically referring to expert opinion or direct accounts of witnesses to provide support for your speech. Notice that within this definition, we refer to both expert and eyewitness testimony.

#### Expert Testimony

Expert testimony accompanies the discussion we had earlier in this chapter related to what qualifies someone as an expert. In essence, **expert testimony**<sup>18</sup> expresses the attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors recommended by someone who is an

16. Type of narrative used to persuade people to accept or reject a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior.

17. Type of narrative designed purely to delight an audience and transport them from their daily concerns.

18. Account relating the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of someone who is recognized as an expert on a given topic.

acknowledged expert on a topic. For example, imagine that you're going to give a speech on why physical education should be mandatory for all grades K–12 in public schools. During the course of your research, you come across *The Surgeon General's Vision for a Fit and Healthy Nation* (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/obesityvision/obesityvision2010.pdf>). You might decide to cite information from within the report written by US Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin about her strategies for combating the problem of childhood obesity within the United States. If so, you are using the words from Dr. Benjamin, as a noted expert on the subject, to support your speech's basic premise. Her expertise is being used to give credibility to your claims.

### Eyewitness Testimony

**Eyewitness testimony**<sup>19</sup>, on the other hand, is given by someone who has direct contact with the phenomenon of your speech topic. Imagine that you are giving a speech on the effects of the 2010 “Deepwater Horizon” disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps one of your friends happened to be on a flight that passed over the Gulf of Mexico and the pilot pointed out where the platform was. You could tell your listeners about your friend's testimony of what she saw as she was flying over the spill.

However, using eyewitness testimony as support can be a little tricky because you are relying on someone's firsthand account, and firsthand accounts may not always be reliable. As such, you evaluate the credibility of your witness and the recency of the testimony.

To evaluate your witness's credibility, you should first consider how you received the testimony. Did you ask the person for the testimony, or did he or she give you the information without being asked? Second, consider whether your witness has anything to gain from his or her testimony. Basically, you want to know that your witness isn't biased.

Second, consider whether your witness' account was recent or something that happened some time ago. With a situation like the BP oil spill, the date when the spill was seen from the air makes a big difference. If the witness saw the oil spill when the oil was still localized, he or she could not have seen the eventual scope of the disaster.

19. Account given by someone who has direct contact with the phenomenon of your speech topic.

Overall, the more detail you can give about the witness and when the witness made his or her observation, the more useful that witness testimony will be when attempting to create a solid argument. However, never rely completely on

eyewitness testimony because this form of support is not always the most reliable and may still be perceived as biased by a segment of your audience.

## Analogies

An analogy is a figure of speech that compares two ideas or objects, showing how they are similar in some way. Analogies, for public speaking purposes, can also be based in logic. The logical notion of analogies starts with the idea that two ideas or objects are similar, and because of this similarity, the two ideas or objects must be similar in other ways as well. There are two different types of analogies that speakers can employ: figurative and literal.

### Figurative Analogies

**Figurative analogies**<sup>20</sup> compare two ideas or objects from two different classes. For the purposes of understanding analogies, a “class” refers to a group that has common attributes, characteristics, qualities, or traits. For example, you can compare a new airplane to an eagle. In this case, airplanes and eagles clearly are not the same type of objects. While both may have the ability to fly, airplanes are made by humans and eagles exist in nature.

Alternatively, you could attempt to compare ideas such as the struggle of The Church of Reality ([http://www.churchofreality.org/wisdom/welcome\\_home/](http://www.churchofreality.org/wisdom/welcome_home/), a group that sees the use of marijuana as a religious sacrament) to the struggle of the civil rights movement. Is a church’s attempt to get marijuana legalized truly the same as the 1960s civil rights movement? Probably not, in most people’s view, as fighting for human rights is not typically seen as equivalent to being able to use a controlled substance.

Figurative analogies are innately problematic because people often hear them and immediately dismiss them as far-fetched. While figurative analogies may be very vivid and help a listener create a mental picture, they do not really help a listener determine the validity of the information being presented. Furthermore, speakers often overly rely on figurative analogies when they really don’t have any other solid evidence. Overall, while figurative analogies may be useful, we recommend solidifying them with other, more tangible support.

20. Comparison between two ideas or objects from two different classes.

21. Comparison between two objects or ideas that clearly belong to the same class.

### Literal Analogies

**Literal analogies**<sup>21</sup>, on the other hand, compare two objects or ideas that clearly belong to the same class. The goal of the literal analogy is to demonstrate that the two objects or ideas are similar; therefore, they should have further similarities

that support your argument. For example, maybe you're giving a speech on a new fast-food brand that you think will be a great investment. You could easily compare that new fast-food brand to preexisting brands like McDonald's, Subway, or Taco Bell. If you can show that the new start-up brand functions similarly to other brands, you can use that logic to suggest that the new brand will also have the same kind of success as the existing brands.

When using literal analogies related to ideas, make sure that the ideas are closely related and can be viewed as similar. For example, take the Church of Reality discussed in [Section 8 "Expert Testimony"](#). You could compare the Church of Reality's use of marijuana to the Native American Church's legal exemption to use peyote in its religious practices. In this instance, comparing two different religious groups' use of illegal drugs and demonstrating that one has legal exemption supports the idea that the other should have an exemption, too.

As with figurative analogies, make sure that the audience can see a reasonable connection between the two ideas or objects being compared. If your audience sees your new fast-food brand as very different from McDonald's or Subway, then they will not accept your analogy. You are basically asking your audience to confirm the logic of your comparison, so if they don't see the comparison as valid, it won't help to support your message.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Speakers often use facts and statistics to reinforce or demonstrate information. Unfortunately, many speakers and audience members do not have a strong mathematical background, so it is important to understand the statistics used and communicate this information to the audience.
- Speakers use definitions—which may be lexical, persuasive, stipulative, or theoretical—to clarify their messages. Lexical definitions state how a word is used within a given language. Persuasive definitions are devised to express a word or term in a specific persuasive manner. Stipulative definitions are created when a word or term is coined. Theoretical definitions attempt to describe all parts related to a particular type of idea or object.
- Examples—positive, negative, non, and best—help the audience grasp a concept. Positive examples are used to clarify or clearly illustrate a principle, method, or phenomenon. Negative examples show how not to behave in a specific situation. Nonexamples are used to express what something is not. Best examples show the best way someone should behave in a situation.
- Narratives can be used in all three general purposes of speaking: informative, persuasive, and entertaining. Informative narratives provide information or explanations about a speaker’s topic. Persuasive narratives are stories a speaker can use to get his or her audience to accept or reject a specific attitude, value, belief, or behavior. Entertaining narratives are stories that are designed purely to delight an audience. Speakers have an ethical obligation to let the audience know whether a narrative is true or hypothetical.
- Expert testimony is an account given by someone who is a recognized expert on a given topic. Eyewitness testimony is an account given by an individual who has had firsthand experience with a specific phenomenon or idea. Explaining the context of the testimony is important so your audience can evaluate the likelihood that the testimony is accurate, current, and unbiased.
- Analogies, both figurative and literal, can help audiences understand unfamiliar concepts. Figurative analogies compare two ideas or objects from two different classes. Conversely, literal analogies compare two objects or ideas that clearly belong to the same class. Speakers using analogies need to make sure that the audience will be able to see the similarity between the objects or ideas being compared.

## EXERCISES

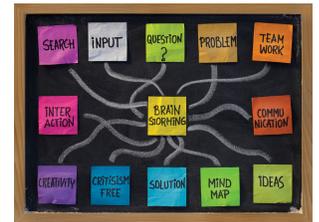
1. Look at the speech you are currently preparing for your public speaking class. What types of support are you using? Could you enhance the credibility of your speech by using other types of support? If so, what types of support do you think you are lacking?
2. Find and analyze a newspaper op-ed piece or letter to the editor that takes a position on an issue. Which types of support does the writer use? How effective and convincing do you think the use of support is? Why?
3. You've been asked to give a speech on child labor within the United States. Provide a list of possible examples you could use in your speech. You should have one from each of the four categories: positive, negative, non, and best.
4. Of the three types of narratives (informative, persuasive, and entertaining), which one would you recommend to a friend who is giving a sales presentation. Why?

## 8.3 Using Support and Creating Arguments

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how to distinguish between useful and nonuseful forms of support.
2. Understand the five ways support is used within a speech.
3. Describe the purpose of a reverse outline.
4. Clarify why it is important to use support for every claim made within a speech.
5. Evaluate the three-step process for using support within a speech.

Supporting one’s ideas with a range of facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimony, and analogies can make the difference between a boring speech your audience will soon forget and one that has a lasting effect on their lives.



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Although the research process is designed to help you find effective support, you still need to think through how you will use the support you have accumulated. In this section, we will examine how to use support effectively in one’s speech, first by examining the types of support one needs in a speech and then by seeing how support can be used to enhance one’s argument.

### Understanding Arguments

You may associate the word “argument” with a situation in which two people are having some kind of conflict. But in this context we are using a definition for the word **argument**<sup>22</sup> that goes back to the ancient Greeks, who saw arguments as a set of logical premises leading to a clear conclusion. While we lack the time for an entire treatise on the nature and study of arguments, we do want to highlight some of the basic principles in argumentation.

First, all arguments are based on a series of statements that are divided into two basic categories: premises and conclusions. A **premise**<sup>23</sup> is a statement that is designed to provide support or evidence, whereas the **conclusion**<sup>24</sup> is a statement

22. A set of logical premises leading to a clear conclusion.
23. Part of an argument represented by a statement or series of statements designed to provide support or evidence for a conclusion.
24. Part of an argument represented that can be clearly or logically drawn from the provided premises.

that can be clearly drawn from the provided premises. Let's look at an example and then explain this in more detail:

Premise 1: Eating fast food has been linked to childhood obesity.

Premise 2: Childhood obesity is clearly linked to early onset type 2 diabetes, which can have many negative health ramifications.

Conclusion: Therefore, for children to avoid developing early onset type 2 diabetes, they must have their fast-food intake limited.

In this example, the first two statements are premises linking fast food to childhood obesity to diabetes. Once we've made this logical connection, we can then provide a logical conclusion that one important way of preventing type 2 diabetes is to limit, if not eliminate, fast food from children's diets. While this may not necessary be a popular notion for many people, the argument itself is logically sound.

How, then, does this ultimately matter for you and your future public speaking endeavors? Well, a great deal of persuasive speaking is built on creating arguments that your listeners can understand and that will eventually influence their ideas or behaviors. In essence, creating strong arguments is a fundamental part of public speaking.

Now, in the example above, we are clearly missing one important part of the argument process—support or evidence. So far we have presented two premises that many people may believe, but we need support or evidence for those premises if we are going to persuade people who do not already believe those statements. As such, when creating logical arguments (unless you are a noted expert on a subject), you must provide support to ensure that your arguments will be seen as credible. And that is what we will discuss next.

### **Sifting Through Your Support**

When researching a topic, you're going to find a range of different types of supporting evidence. You may find examples of all six types of support: facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimony, and analogies. Sooner or later, you are going to have to make some decisions as to which pieces of support you will use and which you won't. While there is no one way to select your support, here are some helpful suggestions.

### **Use a Variety of Support Types**

One of the most important parts of using support is variety. Nothing will kill a speech faster than if you use the same type of support over and over again. Try to use as much support as needed to make your point without going overboard. You might decide to begin with a couple of definitions and rely on a gripping piece of eyewitness testimony as your other major support. Or you might use a combination of facts, examples, and narratives. In another case, statistics and examples might be most effective. Audience members are likely to have different preferences for support; some may like statistics while others really find narratives compelling. By using a variety of forms of support, you are likely to appeal to a broader range of audience members and thus effectively adapt to your audience. Even if your audience members prefer a specific form of support, providing multiple types of support is important to keep them interested. To use an analogy, even people who love ice cream would get tired of it if they ate only ice cream every day for a week, so variety is important.

### **Choose Appropriate Forms of Support**

Depending on the type of speech you are giving, your speech's context, and your audience, different types of evidence may or may not be appropriate. While speeches using precise lexical definitions may be useful for the courtroom, they may not be useful in an after-dinner speech to entertain. At the same time, entertaining narratives may be great for a speech whose general purpose is to entertain, but may decrease a speaker's credibility when attempting to persuade an audience about a serious topic.

### **Check for Relevance**

Another consideration about potential support is whether or not it is relevant. Each piece of supporting material you select needs to support the specific purpose of your speech. You may find the coolest quotation, but if that quotation doesn't really help your core argument in your speech, you need to leave it out. If you start using too many irrelevant support sources, your audience will quickly catch on and your credibility will drop through the floor.

Your support materials should be relevant not only to your topic but also to your audience. If you are giving a speech to an audience of sixty-year-olds, you may be able to begin with "Think back to where you were when you heard that President Kennedy had been shot," but this would be meaningless with an audience of twenty-five-year-olds. Similarly, references to music download sites or the latest popular band may not be effective with audiences who are not interested in music.

### Don't Go Overboard

In addition to being relevant, supporting materials need to help you support your speech's specific purpose without interfering with your speech. You may find three different sources that support your speech's purpose in the same way. If that happens, you shouldn't include all three forms of support. Instead, pick the form of support that is the most beneficial for your speech. Remember, the goal is to support your speech, not to have the support become your speech.

### Don't Manipulate Your Support

The last factor related to shifting through your support involves a very important ethical area called **support-manipulation**<sup>25</sup>. Often speakers will attempt to find support that says exactly what they want it to say despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of evidence says the exact opposite. When you go out of your way to pull the wool over your audience's eyes, you are being unethical and not treating your audience with respect. Here are some very important guidelines to consider to avoiding support-manipulation:

- Do not overlook significant factors or individuals related to your topic.
- Do not ignore evidence that does not support your speech's specific purpose.
- Do not jump to conclusions that are simply not justified based on the supporting evidence you have.
- Do not use evidence to support faulty logic.
- Do not use out-of-date evidence that is no longer supported.
- Do not use evidence out of its original context.
- Do not knowingly use evidence from a source that is clearly biased.
- Make sure you clearly cite all your supporting evidence within your speech.

### Using Support within Your Speech

Now that we've described ways to sift through your evidence, it's important to discuss how to use your evidence within your speech. In the previous sections of this chapter, we've talked about the various types of support you can use (facts and statistics, definitions, examples, narratives, testimonies, and analogies). In this section, we're going to examine how these types of evidence are actually used within a speech. Then we will discuss ways to think through the support you need for a speech and also how to actually use support while speaking.

25. The unethical practice of finding and using support designed to enhance one's argument in a devious manner.

## Forms of Speech Support

Let's begin by examining the forms that support can take in a speech: quotations, paraphrases, summaries, numerical support, and pictographic support.

### Quotations

The first common form of support utilized in a speech is direct quotation. **Direct quotations**<sup>26</sup> occur when Speaker A uses the exact wording by another speaker or writer within his or her new speech. Quotations are very helpful and can definitely provide you a tool for supporting your speech's specific purpose. Here are five tips for using quotations within a speech:

1. Use a direct quotation if the original author's words are witty, engaging, distinct, or particularly vivid.
2. Use a direct quotation if you want to highlight a specific expert and his or her expertise within your speech.
3. Use a direct quotation if you are going to specifically analyze something that is said within the quotation. If your analysis depends on the exact wording of the quotation, then it is important to use the quotation.
4. Keep quotations to a minimum. One of the biggest mistakes some speakers make is just stringing together a series of quotations and calling it a speech. Remember, a speech is your unique insight into a topic, not just a series of quotations.
5. Keep quotations short. Long quotations can lose an audience, and the connection between your support and your argument can get lost.

### Paraphrases

The second form support takes on during a speech is paraphrasing. **Paraphrasing**<sup>27</sup> involves taking the general idea or theme from another speaker or author and condensing the idea or theme in your own words. As we described in [Chapter 7 "Researching Your Speech"](#), a mistake that some speakers make is dropping a couple of words or rearranging some words within a direct quotation and thinking that is a paraphrase. When paraphrasing you need to understand the other speaker or author's ideas well enough to relate them without looking back at the original. Here are four tips for using paraphrases in your speeches:

1. Paraphrase when you can say it more concisely than the original speaker or author.

26. Repeating the exact wording of another speaker or writer within a speech.

27. Taking the central idea or theme from another speaker or author and adapting it in one's own words.

2. Paraphrase when the exact wording from the original speaker or author won't improve your audience's understanding of the support.
3. Paraphrase when you want to adapt an example, analogy, or narrative by another speaker or author to make its relevance more evident.
4. Paraphrase information that is not likely to be questioned by your audience. If you think your audience may question your support, then relying on a direct quotation may be more effective.

### Summaries

Whereas quotations and paraphrases are taking a whole text and singling out a couple of lines or a section, a **summary**<sup>28</sup> involves condensing or encapsulating the entire text as a form of support. Summaries are helpful when you want to clearly spell out the intent behind a speaker's or author's text. Here are three suggestions for using summaries within your speech.

1. Summarize when you need another speaker or author's complete argument to understand the argument within your speech.
2. Summarize when explaining possible counterarguments to the one posed within your speech.
3. Summarize when you need to cite a number of different sources effectively and efficiently to support a specific argument.

### Numerical Support

Speakers often have a need to use **numerical support**<sup>29</sup>, or citing data and numbers within a speech. The most common reason for using numerical support comes when a speaker needs to cite statistics. When using data to support your speech, you need to make sure that your audience can accurately interpret the numbers in the same way you are doing. Here are three tips for using numerical support:

1. Clearly state the numbers used and where they came from.
2. Make sure you explain what the numbers mean and how you think they should be interpreted.
3. If the numbers are overly complicated or if you use a variety of numbers within a speech, consider turning this support into a visual aid to enhance your audience's understanding of the numerical support.

28. An encapsulation or condensation of the entire text from another speaker or author.

29. The use of numbers, data, or statistics within a speech to support a point.

## Pictographic Support

The last form of support commonly used in speeches we label pictographic support, but it is more commonly referred to as visual aids. **Pictographic support**<sup>30</sup> is any drawn or visual representation of an object or process. For the purposes of this chapter, we call visual aids pictographic support in order to stress that we are using images as a form of support taken from a source. For example, if you're giving a speech on how to swing a golf club, you could bring in a golf club and demonstrate exactly how to use the golf club. While the golf club in this instance is a visual aid, it is not pictographic support. If you showed a diagram illustrating the steps for an effective golf swing, the diagram is an example of pictographic support. So while all forms of pictographic support are visual aids, not all visual aids are pictographic support. Here are five suggestions for effectively using pictographic support in your speech.

1. Use pictographic support when it would be easier and shorter than orally explaining an object or process.
2. Use pictographic support when you really want to emphasize the importance of the support. Audiences recall information more readily when they both see and hear it than if they see or hear the information.
3. Make sure that pictographic support is aesthetically pleasing. See [Chapter 15 "Presentation Aids: Design and Usage"](#) on using visual aids for more ideas on how to make visual aids aesthetically pleasing.
4. Pictographic support should be easy to understand, and it should take less time to use than words alone.
5. Make sure everyone in your audience can easily see your pictographic support. If listeners cannot see it, then it will not help them understand how it is supposed to help your speech's specific purpose.

## Is Your Support Adequate?

Now that we've examined the ways to use support in your speech, how do you know if you have enough support?

### Use a Reverse Outline

One recommendation we have for selecting the appropriate support for your speech is what we call a reverse outline. A **reverse outline**<sup>31</sup> is a tool you can use to determine the adequacy of your speech's support by starting with your conclusion and logically working backward through your speech to determine if the support you provided is appropriate and comprehensive. In essence, we recommend that you think of your speech in terms of the conclusion first and then work your way

30. Photographic, diagrammatic, or other visual representation of an object or process.

31. Tool used to determine the adequacy of support by starting with a speaker's conclusion and logically working backward through the speech to determine if the support provided is appropriate and comprehensive.

backward showing how you get to the conclusion. By forcing yourself to think about logic in reverse, you're more likely to find missteps along the way. This technique is not only helpful for analyzing the overall flow of your speech, but it can also let you see if different sections of your speech are not completely supported individually.

### Support Your Claims

When selecting the different types of support for your speech, you need to make sure that every claim you make within the speech can be supported within the speech. For example, if you state, "The majority of Americans want immigration reform," you need to make sure that you have a source that actually says this. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, too often people make claims within a speech that they have no support for whatsoever. When you go through your speech, you need to make sure that each and every claim that you make is adequately supported by the evidence you have selected to use within the speech.

### Oral Presentation

Finally, after you have selected and evaluated your forms of support, it is time to plan how you will present your support orally within your speech. How will you present the information to make it effective? To help you think about using support, we recommend a three-step process: setup, execution, and analysis.

### Setup

The first step in using support within a speech is what we call the setup. The **setup**<sup>32</sup> is a sentence or phrase in which you explain to your audience where the information you are using came from. Note that if you found the information on a website, it is not sufficient to merely give your audience the URL. Depending on the source of your support, all the following information could be useful: name of source, location of source, date of source, name of author, and identification of author. First, you need to tell your audience the name of your source. Whether you are using a song or an article from a magazine, you need to tell your audience the name of the person who wrote it and its title. Second, if your source comes from a larger work, you need to include the location of the source. For example, a single article (name of source) may come from a magazine (the location). Third, you need to specify the date of the source. Depending on the type of source you are using, you may need to provide just a year or the day and month as well. You should provide as much information on the date as is provided on the copyright information page of the source.

32. Step in the oral presentation of support process in which the speaker explains to the audience where the information being used came from.

Thus far we've talked only about the information you need to provide specifically about the source; let's now switch gears and talk about the author. When discussing the author, you need to clearly explain not only who the author is but also why the author is an expert (if appropriate). Some sources are written by authors who are not experts, so you really don't need to explain their expertise. In other cases, your audience will already know why the source is an expert, so there is less need to explain why the source is an expert. For example, if giving a speech on current politics in the United States, you probably do not need to explain the expertise of Barack Obama or John Boehner. However, when you don't provide information on an author's expertise and your audience does not already know why the source is an expert, your audience will question the validity of your support.

Now that we've explained the basic information necessary for using support within a speech, here are two different examples:

1. According to Melanie Smithfield in an article titled "Do It Right, or Do It Now," published in the June 18, 2009, issue of *Time Magazine*...
2. According to Roland Smith, a legendary civil rights activist and former chair of the Civil Rights Defense League, in his 2001 book *The Path of Peace*...

In the first example we have an author who wrote an article in a magazine, and in the second one we have an author of a book. In both cases, we provided the information that was necessary to understand where the source was located. The more information we can provide our audiences about our support, the more information our audiences have to evaluate the strength of our arguments.

### Execution

Once we have set up the support, the second part of using support is what we call execution. The **execution**<sup>33</sup> of support involves actually reading a quotation, paraphrasing a speaker or author's words, summarizing a speaker or author's ideas, providing numerical support, or showing pictographic support. Effective execution should be seamless and flow easily within the context of your speech. While you want your evidence to make an impact, you also don't want it to seem overly disjointed. One mistake that some novice public speakers make is that when they start providing evidence, their whole performance changes and the use of evidence looks and sounds awkward. Make sure you practice the execution of your evidence when you rehearse your speech.

33. Step in the oral presentation of support process in which the speaker delivers a quotation, paraphrase, or summary; provides numerical support; or shows pictographic support.

### Analysis

The final stage of using support effectively is the one which many speakers forget: **analysis**<sup>34</sup> of the support. Too often speakers use support without ever explaining to an audience how they should interpret it. While we don't want to "talk down" to our listeners, audiences often need to be shown the connection between the support provided and the argument made. Here are three basic steps you can take to ensure your audience will make the connection between your support and your argument:

1. Summarize the support in your own words (unless you started with a summary).
2. Specifically tell your audience how the support relates to the argument.
3. Draw a sensible conclusion based on your support. We cannot leave an audience hanging, so drawing a conclusion helps complete the support package.

34. Step in the oral presentation of support process in which the speaker explains to the audience how they should interpret the support provided.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Systematically think through the support you have accumulated through your research. Examine the accumulated support to ensure that a variety of forms of support are used. Choose appropriate forms of support depending on the speech context or audience. Make sure all the support is relevant to the specific purpose of your speech and to your audience. Don't go overboard using so much support that the audience is overwhelmed. Lastly, don't manipulate supporting materials.
- Speakers ultimately turn support materials into one of five formats. Quotations are used to take another speaker or author's ideas and relay them verbatim. Paraphrases take a small portion of a source and use one's own words to simplify and clarify the central idea. Summaries are used to condense an entire source into a short explanation of the source's central idea. Numerical support is used to quantify information from a source. Pictographic support helps audience members both see and hear the idea being expressed by a source.
- Use a reverse outline to ensure that all the main ideas are thoroughly supported. Start with the basic conclusion and then work backward to ensure that the argument is supported at every point of the speech.
- Every claim within a speech should be supported. While some experts can get away with not supporting every claim, nonexperts must show they have done their homework.
- To present support in a speech, use a three-step process: setup, execution, and analysis. The setup explains who the speaker or author is and provides the name of the source and other relevant bibliographic information to the audience. The execution is the actual delivery of the support. Lastly, a speaker needs to provide analysis explaining how an audience should interpret the support provided.

## EXERCISES

1. Choose and analyze a speech from the top one hundred speeches given during the twentieth century (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>). How does this speaker go through the three-step process for using support?
2. Think about your upcoming speech and audience. What forms of support could you use to enhance your speech? Why did you select those options? Could you use other options?
3. As you prepare your next speech, script out how you will use the three-step process for ensuring that all your support is used effectively.

## 8.4 Chapter Exercises

### SPEAKING ETHICALLY

While preparing a speech on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Aban runs across a website that has a lot of useful information. The website has numerous articles and links that all discuss the importance of the different functions of the DHS. Being a good speaker, Aban delves into the website to determine the credibility of the information being provided.

Aban quickly realizes that the group sponsoring the website is a fringe-militia group that believes no immigrants should be allowed into the United States. While the information Aban is interested has nothing to do with immigration, he wonders if all the information provided on the website has been distorted to support the organization's basic cause.

1. Should Aban use the useful information about DHS even though the other information on the website is from an extremist group?
2. Are all sources on the extremist group's website automatically suspect because of the group's stated anti-immigration stance?
3. Is it ethical for Aban to use any of the information from this website?
4. If Aban was a friend of yours and he showed you the website, how would you tell him to proceed?

END-OF-CHAPTER ASSESSMENT

1. Which of the following is *not* a potential source of bias that a speaker or author may have?
  - a. organizations to which the speaker or author belongs
  - b. political affiliations of the speaker or author
  - c. financial interests of the speaker or author
  - d. information that is widely cited and supported by other sources
  - e. information that is only found on the speaker's or author's website
  
2. During a speech, Juanita says the following: "In his book *The Dilbert Principle*, Scott Adams defines the Dilbert principle as the idea 'that companies tend to systematically promote their least-competent employees to management (generally middle management), in order to limit the amount of damage they are capable of doing.'" What type of definition is Juanita using?
  - a. lexical
  - b. persuasive
  - c. précising
  - d. stipulative
  - e. theoretical
  
3. Edward was delivering a speech on using the Internet for job hunting. In his speech he uses the example of his friend Barry, who was able to network using LinkedIn and other social networking sites to find his dream job. What type of example has Edward used?
  - a. positive
  - b. negative
  - c. non
  - d. circular
  - e. best
  
4. Which of the following is *not* a potential form of support manipulation?

- a. overlooking significant factors or individuals related to your topic
  - b. ignoring evidence that does not support your speech's specific purpose
  - c. using evidence in its original context
  - d. using evidence to support faulty logic
  - e. using evidence from clearly biased sources
5. During her speech about rodents, Anna shows a series of slides explaining the lifecycle of chipmunks. What form of support has Anna used within her speech?
- a. pictographic
  - b. quotation
  - c. paraphrase
  - d. numerical
  - e. summary

**ANSWER KEY**

1. d
2. d
3. e
4. c
5. a