CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

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INTRODUCTION

Learning about your audience before your speech helps you tailor your message and present it successfully. In order to deliver information in a way that is easy for your audience to receive and understand, you need to recognize the characteristics of the group in attendance. The connection you establish will help you succeed as a speaker.

In this project, you will learn about identifying different audience types, and how to address them effectively.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to connect with an unfamiliar audience.

Overview: Develop a 5- to 7-minute speech on a topic that is unfamiliar to the majority of your audience. Because you deliver this speech in your Toastmasters club, you are familiar with the audience members' preferences and personalities. Selecting a topic that is new or unfamiliar to your club members will allow you to practice adapting as you present. As you speak, monitor the audience's reaction to your topic and adapt as necessary to maintain engagement.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.

Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.

Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.

Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.

Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

5	4	3	2	1
EXEMPLARY	EXCEL	ACCOMPLISHED	EMERGING	DEVELOPING

Pre-Project	Statement	Post-Project
5 4 3 2 1	I know how to tailor my message to a particular audience.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I understand the ways in which audiences can differ.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I know how to connect with different audience types.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I know how to project knowledge and expertise while speaking.	5 4 3 2 1
5 4 3 2 1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5 4 3 2 1

COMPETENCIES

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Use knowledge of audience characteristics to tailor your message.

- Identify the ways in which audiences differ.

- Build rapport with different types of audiences.

- Project knowledge and expertise when speaking.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Whenever you speak, you encounter varying audiences. There are several ways of identifying the attributes of a group. Recognizing characteristics allows you to better connect with your audience.

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

When possible, know the demographics of your audience before you select your topic.

Demographics include age, gender, cultural background, political or religious affiliation, ethnicity, ability, economic status, and employment status. Identifying the demographic variables in your audience helps you tailor the content of your speech to be relevant and interesting to that particular group.

STEREOTYPES

Understand the difference between demographics and stereotypes. Demographics are facts that identify a group. They do not define the individuals within the group.

Individuals are often members of several different demographic groups. Even though they can be categorized, they are unique.

AVOID STEREOTYPING

Stereotyping ignores individual differences and oversimplifies the definition of a group of people.

Assuming individuals in a demographic group are the same is the definition of a stereotype. When writing your speech, avoid stereotypes.

Values

A value is the measure of importance that a person gives to something in her life. Examples include other people (such as friends and family), places, concepts, ideals, and material possessions.

Beliefs

A belief is a feeling that something is good, right, or valuable. Some examples of belief systems include religions and political affiliations. Being aware of the general values and beliefs of your audience helps you create a speech that informs without offending.

Characteristics

Different audiences have varying values and beliefs. For instance, the audience at a Toastmasters meeting will find value in topics that relate to self-improvement, helping others, and ongoing education. A book club may find value in storytelling, socializing, expanding their knowledge of the arts, and literature. An astronomy club may value science, exploration of space, and education.

Research

Research the organization or group you are addressing before giving a presentation. If you have the opportunity, ask your point of contact some clarifying questions before writing your speech.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

With any topic, you must consider your audience's prior knowledge of the material. Identify how much explanation you need to provide your audience so that you can tailor your speech for them.

TAILOR YOUR MESSAGE

Tailoring your speech doesn't mean changing your message to what the audience wants to hear. Instead, you might alter some of the language in your presentation to increase the audience's understanding and engagement.

Apply your research of audience demographics, their prior knowledge, and their values and beliefs to create and deliver the best speech for each audience.

Meet Nang

Nang has been traveling and speaking to different groups about the benefits of exercise. This week, she is speaking to an audience at a women's college.

Nang always tailors her presentation to match the audience traits and needs by considering the following: demographics, prior knowledge, values, and beliefs.

Audience Demographics

Nang knows she is speaking to an audience of women, primarily between the ages of 18 and 22. Instead of focusing on the benefits of exercise for people over 55, Nang will concentrate on how exercise benefits women from the ages of 18 to approximately 25. This will connect to her younger audience more effectively.

Personality

While audience members are young and have a lot of energy, Nang understands that they may be hesitant to listen to a speech about the positive effects of exercise. Nang knows she must win her audience over quickly, so she will use humor in her introduction to engage the audience.

Prior Knowledge

The benefits of exercise have been well-documented. Nang realizes that audience members have heard similar messages throughout their lives. It will be imperative for Nang to find current statistics and interesting facts so her message does not seem uninteresting to her audience.

Values

Nang knows that friendship is an important part of any college student's life. She decides to talk about how exercise can help young women create new friendships by participating in team sports.

Beliefs

Nang realizes that most members of the audience believe that practicing habits such as regular exercise will help them live longer, healthier lives. She uses statistics to reinforce this belief.

FOCUS ON THE OUTCOMES

As you create your speech, consider what you want your audience to gain.

- List your expectations of how the audience will be affected by your message.

- Share your desired outcomes with your audience during the introduction of your speech.

- Explain your intention and the reason your speech is worth the investment of their time and attention.

- Define how they will benefit from the information in your speech.

CREDIBILITY

Cite sources for the information you present. Having relevant, cited sources will increase your confidence in your presentation and give you credibility with the audience. Be prepared to share your sources with interested audience members after the club meeting or event.

REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- How can audiences differ?

- What are some strategies for building a rapport with your audience?

- What are some strategies for showing your knowledge and expertise while you present?

- How can you best tailor your message to each individual audience?

COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

Review: Return to page 3 to review your assignment.

Organize: Use the Project Checklist on page 12 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

Schedule: Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.

Prepare: Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 13–15 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.

PROJECT CHECKLIST
Connect with Your Audience

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to connect with an unfamiliar audience.

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This project includes:

- A 5- to 7-minute speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

☐ Select a topic that is unfamiliar to your audience. If you are unsure what topic to choose, meet with your mentor or other experienced club member to help you choose an appropriate topic.

☐ Schedule your speech with the vice president education.

☐ Write your speech.

☐ Rehearse your speech.

☐ After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your speech, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

Member Name _____   Date _____

Evaluator _____   **Speech Length:** 5 – 7 minutes

Speech Title

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is for the member to practice the skills needed to connect with an unfamiliar audience.

Notes for the Evaluator

The member completing this project is practicing the skills needed to connect with an unfamiliar audience. To do this, the member presents a topic that is new or unfamiliar to your club members.

Listen for: A topic that is unusual or unexpected in your club. Take note of the member's ability to present the unusual topic in a way that keeps the audience engaged. This speech is not a report on the content of the "Connect with Your Audience" project.

General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	**4** EXCELS	**3** ACCOMPLISHED	**2** EMERGING	**1** DEVELOPING

Clarity: Spoken language is clear and is easily understood

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Vocal Variety: Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Eye Contact: Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Gestures: Uses physical gestures effectively

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Audience Awareness: Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Comfort Level: Appears comfortable with the audience

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Interest: Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

Topic: Topic is new or unusual for audience members and challenges speaker to adapt while presenting

   5   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

Comment:

EVALUATION CRITERIA
Connect with Your Audience

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

Clarity

5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood

4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word

3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood

2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand

1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection

4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools

3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools

2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice

1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response

4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response

3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience

2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement

1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Gestures

5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech

4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech

3 – Uses physical gestures effectively

2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures

1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Audience Awareness

5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs

4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively

3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs

2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice

1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

Comfort Level

5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience

4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience

3 – Appears comfortable with the audience

2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience

1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

Interest

5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content

4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content

3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content

2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting

1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

Topic

5 – Exemplary use of topic that challenges speaker to adapt to audience needs and level of understanding

4 – Makes excellent use of topic to practice delivering a challenging speech that requires regular adaptations to accommodate audience

3 – Topic is new or unusual for audience members and challenges speaker to adapt while presenting

2 – Topic is somewhat unfamiliar to audience members, but does not challenge speaker to adapt while presenting

1 – Topic is highly familiar to audience members and does not challenge speaker to adapt while presenting