

## Criteria Used for Evaluating Speeches

The following lists give you the general criteria by which you will be evaluated for each assignment. The grades you earn are based on your performance according to these criteria as well as your ability to meet the specific requirements of the assignment.

An *average (C)* speech is an adequate speech. It is usually organized and clear, but it may lack audience impact or interest, strong support material, sustained eye contact, and effective non-verbal delivery. It typically matches the following description:

1. It conforms to the kind of speech assigned.
2. It is ready for presentation on the assigned date.
3. It meets the time limit.
4. It fulfills any special requirements of the assignment--such as preparing an outline, using a visual aid, or citing the appropriate number and type of sources. [See assignment sheets for these criteria.]
5. It has a clear specific purpose and central idea.
6. It has an identifiable introduction, body, and conclusion.
7. It follows one of the patterns of organization reasonably well.
8. It shows reasonable directness and competence in delivery.
9. It is relatively free of repeated errors in grammar, pronunciation, and word usage.

An *above average (B)* speech is a good speech. It has significant content, good organization, and proficient delivery. It should meet all of the criteria for the *average* speech (above) and also match the following description:

1. It fulfills all major functions of a speech introduction and conclusion.
2. It displays clear organization of main points and support materials.
3. Its main points are supported with evidence that meets the tests of accuracy, relevance, objectivity, and sufficiency.
4. It exhibits proficient use of connectives.
5. It is delivered skillfully enough so as not to distract attention from the speaker's message.
6. It demonstrates skill in winning understanding of challenging concepts, events, objects or processes; or in either winning agreement from auditors initially inclined toward apathy or disagreement or in winning action from auditors.

A *superior (A)* speech stands out from the crowd. It has superior content, excellent organization and distinctive delivery. In short, it represents the speaker's best creative effort. An **A** speech gets nearly everyone in the audience thinking, excited, concerned, desirous to hear more, read more, or do something about what was said. It should meet all the criteria for the *average* and *above average* speeches and also match the following description:

1. It constitutes a genuinely individual contribution by the speaker to the knowledge or beliefs of the audience.
2. It meets the assignment exactly.
3. It contains elements of vividness and special interest in the use of language.
4. It is delivered in a fluent, polished manner that strengthens the impact of the speaker's message.
5. It illustrates mastery of the use of connectives.
6. It exhibits creative thinking about and logical analysis of the topic.

For the record, it is also possible to earn less than a C on speech assignment.

A *below average* (**D**) speech is deficient in significant ways. It is characterized by one or more of the following:

1. It fails to clearly conform to any of the patterns of organization.
2. It is delivered in a way that ignores the audience (e.g., it is read to the audience).
3. It is delivered late with prior approval of your instructor.
4. It fails to conform to the time limit.
5. It fails to use or cite support materials as required by the assignment.

A *failing* (**F**) speech is seriously deficient and is characterized by one or more of the following:

1. It is not delivered on the day assigned and the speaker has not contacted his/her instructor prior to class.
2. It has serious ethical flaws such as plagiarizing another person's speech, using sources without proper citation, or manufacturing support material and citations.
3. It does not correspond to the definition of the assignment (e.g., it is persuasive when the assignment calls for an informative speech).
4. It does not come close to conforming to the time limit.
5. It insults, humiliates, or demeans the audience or members of the community at large or is in other ways inappropriate for a presentation in a university classroom.

In addition to her experience with the public speaking course, the author relied on the following sources when creating this list of grading criteria: Oliver, Robert. "The Eternal (And Infernal) Problem of Grades." The Speech Teacher, IX (1960): 8-11; Lucas, Stephen. Instructor's Manual to Accompany the Art of Public Speaking. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995; Dwyer, Karen. Public Speaking Workbook. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996; and Atkins, Martha. "Fundamentals of Speech Communication," course packet, ISU, Spring 1993.