
OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCE TEXTBOOK REVIEWS

Review of *Advanced Public Speaking*

Karla Jennings

Georgia Southern University
kjennings@georgiasouthern.edu

Meade, Lynn (n.d.). *Advanced Public Speaking*. Creative Commons. University of Arkansas.

<https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/>

Advanced Public Speaking by Lynn Meade was created in response to student feedback and frustration with how frequently traditional textbooks become outdated. Meade used handouts and video examples that were originally developed as supplements to course materials as the basis for the new text that covers much more ground than a traditional text. An initiative at Meade's institution (University of Arkansas) to make content accessible and affordable for students led to selection of the OER format. *Advanced Public Speaking* is currently available as a website (<https://uark.pressbooks.pub/speaking/>) and downloadable as an EPUB, digital PDF, print PDF, and MOBI using the Pressbooks online book-publishing platform.

The richness and breath of Meade's resources, all in one comprehensive website, is the strength of *Advanced Public Speaking*. This text consists of 62 chapters broken down into six major sections that cover basic course concepts such as delivery methods, nervousness, and organization patterns while also including instruction on more nuanced skills such as speaking with a microphone, data visualization, and professional speechwriting. There are countless

current speech examples included via hyperlinks, everything from TED Talks to speeches given at Toastmasters International competitions and more.

The first section – Writing a Speech (Chapters 1 – 14) – covers basic concepts such as the purpose of public speaking, brainstorming, and audience engagement. It is a “how to” guide that takes students step by step through the process of speech creation: the opening, the closing, organizational patterns, citing sources, and transitions. Meade adds to the basics with chapters on the power of story (Chapter 6) and ceremonial speaking (Chapter 11). The chapter about feedback (Chapter 7), notes in the title that “Giving and Receiving Feedback: It is harder than you think.” There are three professional speechwriting chapters (Chapters 12, 13, and 14) which cover word choice in depth with explanations and examples that are clear and engaging. In Chapter 12 “Using Colorful Language in Your Speech,” Meade offers numerous examples of alliteration, parallel construction, tricolon, personification, and other figurative language techniques. President Obama’s eulogy for John Lewis is offered as an example in the section “A Recipe for a Powerful Antithesis.” Meade quotes Obama’s words, “Not from turning on each other, but by turning towards one another” to illustrate the two necessary ingredients for antithesis: “statements that are opposites” and “statements that are evenly balanced.” In Chapter 13, Meade explores the idea of theme in Ronald Reagan’s speech following the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, recalling the way the President used the theme of exploration with such words as “pioneer, daring, and brave” as he memorialized the astronauts. In Chapter 14, Angelina Jolie’s 2009 address on World Refugee Day is identified as a strong speech that uses vividness to make it distinctive. Meade suggests making a list of all the vivid and sensory words in Jolie’s speech and then categorizing them based on the sense they activate.

The second section – Presenting a Speech (Chapters 15 – 22) – starts by addressing communication apprehension and provides brain and body hacks that include practical exercises in cognitive restructuring, stress relief, and deep breathing. One chapter (Chapter 17) specifically addresses eye contact, movement, and gestures, following up bad advice (“Imagine the audience naked”) with better advice to achieve effectiveness in these three key areas. A chapter on the voice (Chapter 19) provides instruction in vocal warm-up, articulation, and projection. This section also includes content on topics that are not commonly addressed in a basic public speaking textbook. Chapter 20 takes a deep dive into speaking online and teaches students what is needed when speaking to a camera, such as lighting, framing, and – most importantly – eye contact. Chapter 21 provides instruction on each type of speech delivery, including memory techniques and how to present with a group. Last in this section, Chapter 22 focuses on how to speak effectively using a manuscript. Meade says, “It is harder to speak with a manuscript than it is to give a speech with brief notes and it requires considerable more practice to get it right.” To help students “get it right,” Meade shows how to arrange the words on the page and how many words per line work best.

The third section (Chapters 23 – 25) covers presentation aids in depth. Meade starts by discussing the ins and outs of using props when speaking (Chapter 24). This is followed by a chapter called “Don’t Ruin a Great Presentation with Terrible Slides” (Chapter 25), which includes numerous examples of ineffective and effective slides. The final chapter of this section is devoted to charts and statistics (Chapter 26), citing the popular and hilarious TED Talk by Tim Urban *Inside the mind of a master procrastinator* as one of many examples.

In the section titled simply “Speeches” (Chapters 26 – 35), Meade uses the freedom of the OER format to provide instruction on 10 different types of speeches. While Meade does

include instruction covering the typical informative (Chapter 35) and persuasive (Chapter 26) speeches, eight other speech types are also included, everything from the toast (Chapter 29) to the eulogy (Chapter 32). Meade covers the career speech (Chapter 27) – useful for preparing for an interview – and the elevator and career fair pitch (Chapter 28) particularly well, again with many examples.

The fifth and final section of the *Advanced Public Speaking* that is written for students covers specific considerations when speaking, like using appropriate and non-offensive language (Chapter 36) and an overview of rhetorical history (Chapter 37). Meade’s explanations of logical fallacies (Chapter 38) are supplemented with video examples from politicians such as Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin and even a clip from *The Simpsons*. The final chapter in the section is about persuasion and provides summaries and examples of persuasive theories such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Social Judgment Theory, ending with a thorough discussion of ethics in persuasion.

Included at the end of *Advanced Public Speaking* is a collection of classroom activities and additional resources for instructors. Meade developed the “Student Engagement: Tips for Teachers” chapter (Chapter 40) as a training resource for new teaching assistants. Other chapters offer resources for teaching specific topics as well as activities that can be used as icebreakers and practice speeches (Chapter 49). Meade’s resources in this section are mostly speech examples from sources such as movie speeches (Chapter 41), spoken word poetry (Chapter 46), and storytelling (Chapter 53). This section in particular is a work in progress. Meade invites contributions from readers at the end of every chapter, and additional contributions from instructors will continue to make the resources in this section stronger.

With *Advanced Public Speaking*, Meade desired to share a vast collection of knowledge and resources. The intention was not that an instructor would use every chapter but that instructors of public speaking could pick and choose which resources were most useful for teaching their particular course. Because *Advanced Public Speaking* is an OER, Meade was able to include more topics and examples than a traditional text.

Meade also wanted to provide a resource that would be useful for those outside of the communication discipline. For instance, when instructors are asked for assistance in writing a eulogy or preparing slides for a presentation, individual chapters can be easily referenced, providing tools for those who may not be familiar with formats as well as best practices.

Advanced Public Speaking would be strengthened by the addition of more examples using speakers of color and a chapter that discusses inclusiveness in the public speaking context. A chapter about writing a speech for someone else, capturing another's "voice" in writing a speech, would also be useful. The ethics of ghostwriting speeches and the long history of the use of professional speechwriters would follow nicely as well, with interviews from professional speechwriters.

As a text that can be changed and updated easily, *Advanced Public Speaking* will remain current long past a traditional text that is outdated by the time it survives the publishing process. Meade's use of feedback from readers will ensure its accuracy and the accuracy of the hundreds of weblinks provided. While new texts for the basic public speaking course are published each year, this is currently the only advanced text available as an open educational resource (OER).

Advanced Public Speaking covers the basics of public speaking and goes well beyond, making it a valuable resource for an advanced class.