**Writing a great speech**

<http://www.slideshare.net/athenamilis/principles-of-writing-a-great-persuasive-speech>

**Ethos: The Appeal to the Speaker’s or Writer’s Character or Reputation**

If you wish to persuade, you need to establish credibility and authority with your audience. You may have the most logical and well-thought-out argument, but if your audience doesn’t think you are trustworthy or even worth listening to, all your arguments will be for naught.

For Aristotle, a speaker’s *ethos* consists of appearing knowledgeable about the topic you are speaking about and being a person of good character. Aristotle and Cicero thought that a speaker could only appeal to her/her ethos within the speech itself and that an orator should spend the first part of the speech establishing credibility. The classical rhetorician Isocrates believed that developing one’s ethos and credibility with the audience began even *before* the speaker opened his/her mouth. Audiences naturally approach speakers and writers with some suspicion, so they’ll look to your past for evidence that you are trustworthy and knowledgeable about what you’re speaking or writing about.

A speaker or writer can use *ethos* in several ways.

* First, you can simply begin your speech or text by referring to your expertise on the subject. Share how long you’ve studied the subject, mention how many articles you’ve published and where you published them, and refer to awards or recognition you’ve received in relation to the subject at hand.
* A nuanced way to establish credibility and rapport with your audience is to *downplay* your accomplishments. People don’t like a braggart or one-upper. In some cases, having a highfalutin’ resume might hinder people from trusting you. A bit of modesty can go a long way to getting the audience to trust and like you, and consequently, be persuaded by what you have to say.
* Another powerful way to establish ethos with your audience is to find common ground with them. Human beings are social animals. We have a tendency to trust others that are like us (or at least appear like us). You can establish common ground by acknowledging shared values or beliefs. You can establish common ground by simply recognising a shared history. You see this all the time with presidential candidates. They’ll visit a state they have no immediate connection to, but they’ll find some story from their distant past that connects them to the state. Maybe their great-great-grandfather passed through the area in a covered wagon. That commonality, however slight or silly it may be, helps the audience feel connected to the speaker, and, consequently, makes him more trustworthy.
* Living a [life of virtue](http://books.google.com/books?id=ZaEaAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+autobiography+of+benjamin+franklin&source=bl&ots=SeBoVjxw21&sig=LUl5ijqJ0Svz5XX4EWmI8F-vzv0&hl=en&ei=akkRTdrrMomasAPCtMiXCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&sqi=2&ved=0CFYQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q&f=false) is perhaps the best way to develop ethos. The very hint of hypocrisy will doom even the most eloquent speech. Conversely, when you are virtuous, honest, and earnestly committed to that which you speak of, this inner-commitment will tinge each word you utter with sincerity. The audience will feel the depth of your commitment and will listen far more intently then when they know it is mere claptrap.

**Pathos: The Appeal to Emotion**

People have a tendency to dismiss the power of emotion, especially men who often think you should only persuade through pure reason and logic. But in a battle between emotion and rationality, emotion usually wins, hands down. This isn’t cynicism, it’s just an acknowledgment of the reality of human nature.

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt created a powerful metaphor that depicts the tension between our emotional and rational side: The Elephant and the Rider -

*Our emotional side is the Elephant and our rational side is the Rider.  Perched atop the Elephant, the Rider holds the reins and seems to be the leader.  But the Rider’s control is precarious because the Rider is so small relative to the Elephant.  Anytime the six-ton Elephant and the Rider disagree about which direction to go, the Rider is going to lose.  He’s completely overmatched.*

The battle between the Rational Rider and the Emotional Elephant is why we see doctors who smoke and are overweight. They know their behaviour isn’t rational and that they should change. They’re doctors for goodness sake! But it doesn’t matter. Unless they have a powerful emotional motivation to change, they’ll keep puffing and eating away.

Advertisers understand emotion’s power. Turn on your TV and watch some commercials. How many of them use hard facts and figures to convince you to buy their product? I bet it’s a big fat zilch. Advertisers want you to *feel* a certain way when you think about their product.

What specific things can you do to inject some more emotion into your arguments?

1. **Metaphors and storytelling (anecdotes) are powerful tools of persuasion.** People are more likely to remember stories than facts because stories tap into our emotions. Next time you give a presentation, instead of just slapping up some bar charts and bullet points in a PowerPoint presentation, make the extra effort to weave those facts and figures into an engaging story with conflicts and a cast of characters.
2. You can also call upon several [**figures of speech**](http://rhetoric.byu.edu/figures/Groupings/of%20Pathos.htm) that are designed to provoke an emotional response. Here is a sampling of the dozens you can use:

* **antithesis**-Figure of balance in which two contrasting ideas are intentionally juxtaposed, usually through parallel structure (“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will *not be judged by the color of their skin* but *by the content of their character.* I have a dream today!”-MLK)
* **aposiopesis**- Breaking off suddenly in the middle of speaking, usually to portray being overcome with emotion.
* **assonance**-Figure of repetition in which different words with the same or similar vowel sounds occur successively in words with different consonants. (“I feel the *need*, the *need* for *speed*.” -Maverick in *Top Gun*)
* **conduplicatio**- The repetition of a word or words in adjacent phrases or clauses, either to amplify the thought or to express emotion. (“So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a *prayer* for the family of Martin Luther King — yeah, it’s true — but more importantly to say a *prayer* for our own country, which all of us love — a *prayer* for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.” -Robert Kennedy)
* **enargia**- Enargia, or vivid description, can be inherently moving, especially when depicting things graphic in nature.
* **energia**- Energia, the vigor with which one expresses oneself, can obviously be emotionally affecting.
* **epistrophe**-Figure of repetition that occurs when the last word or set of words in one sentence, clause, or phrase is repeated one or more times at the end of successive sentences, clauses, or phrases. (“…and that government *of the people*, *by the people*, *for the people*, shall not perish from the earth.” -A. Lincoln)

**Logos: The Appeal to Reason**

Finally, we come to *logos*, or the appeal to reason. Aristotle believed *logos* to be the superior persuasive appeal and that all arguments should be won or lost on reason alone. However, he recognised that at times an audience would not be sophisticated enough to follow arguments based solely on scientific and logical principles and so the other appeals needed to be used as well.

**Formal Logic** - In *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that appealing to reason means allowing “the words of the speech itself” to do the persuading. This was accomplished through making inferences using deductive reasoning, usually in the form of a formal syllogism. You’ve seen these before. You start with two premises and end with a conclusion that naturally follows the premises. For example:

*All men are mortal.  Socrates is a man.  Therefore, Socrates is mortal.*

Easy, huh? When forming syllogistic arguments, one should ensure that they’re *sound.* An argument is sound if (1) the argument is valid, and (2) all of its premises are true.

So, for an argument to be sound, it needs to be valid. What’s a valid argument? A valid argument is one that has a conclusion that necessarily follows the premises.  If we switched things up in our above argument, we can make it invalid. Check it:

*All men are mortal.  Socrates is mortal.  Therefore, Socrates is a man.*

At first sight, it looks like a decent argument. But read it carefully. Just because Socrates is mortal, doesn’t necessarily mean he’s a man. He could be a squirrel for all we know. Thus, the argument is invalid.

Determining whether premises are true will depend on observation and your knowledge.

**Syllogisms** are a powerful rhetorical tool. It’s hard to manipulate and argue against a formally laid out, sound syllogism.

**Formal Logic -** In addition to formal logic, a rhetorician should be adept in informal logic. What’s informal logic? Well, there’s no clear-cut answer. Philosophers still debate what exactly makes up informal logic, but a rough answer would be that informal logic encompasses several disciplines from formal logic to psychology to help individuals think more critically about the input they receive every day.

A big component of informal logic are fallacies. A “fallacy is a pattern of poor reasoning which appears to be (and in this sense mimics) a pattern of good reasoning.” There’s a whole slew of logical fallacies and chances are you’re familiar with a few of them: *ad hominems*, slippery slopes, red herrings. It’s important to be familiar with as many fallacies as possible so a) you don’t use them and thus lose credibility (ethos!) with your audience, and b) you don’t get sucked into arguments with scalawags who use them.