Elements of Political Communication

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

T

here are generally two ways to address political communication: as it should be and as it is.

One side of this argument often comprises writers and intellectuals. Frustrated with those who manipulate language for personal and political gain, they often complain about the nebulous language and misleading strategies of those who represent them. Among those in this group are writers like George Orwell, who bemoaned the purposeful misuse of language to manipulate and confuse rather than inform.[1] These complaints are nothing new; in Petronius' *Satyricon*, written in the late first century AD, the narrator expresses the views of the writer:

> Our rhetoricians tormented by another species of Furies when they cry, "I received these wounds while fighting for the public liberty; I lost this eye in your defense: give me a guide who will lead me to my children, my limbs are hamstrung and will not hold me up!" Even these heroics could be endured if they made easier the road to eloquence; but as it is, their sole gain from this ferment of matter and empty discord of words is, that when they step into the Forum, they think they have been carried into another world [. . .] every word a honied drop, every period sprinkled with poppy-seed and sesame. Those who are brought up on such a diet can no more attain to wisdom than a kitchen scullion can attain to a keen sense of smell or avoid stinking of the grease. [. . .] With your well modulated and empty tones you have so labored for rhetorical effect that the body of your speech has lost its vigor and died.[2]

On the other side are the pragmatists, who place more emphasis on the ability to convince than to clarify. Political strategists like Niccolò Machiavelli, Saul Alinsky, and Frank Luntz, though they each express very different
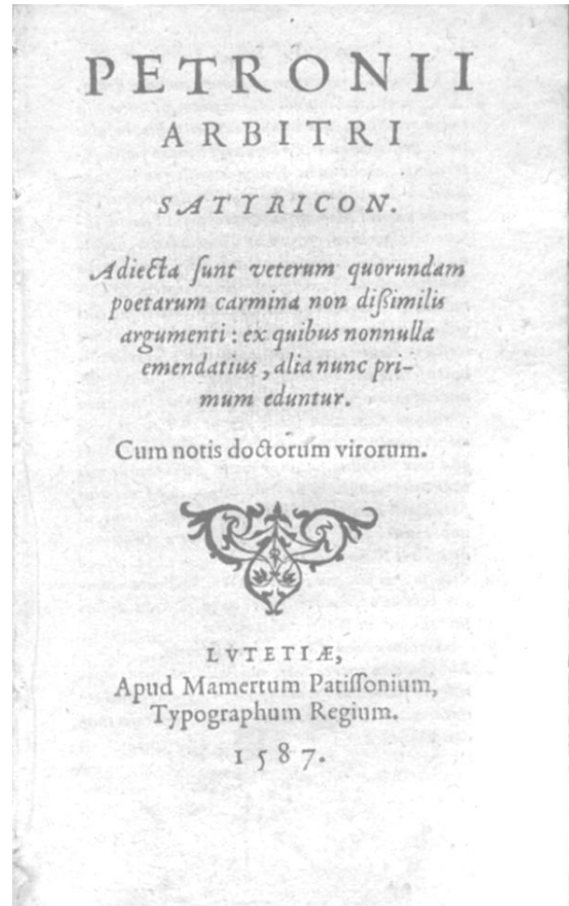
1587 Copy of The Satyricon *by Petronius*

views, fall into this category. The methods of this second group have dominated the modern political marketplace, but they did not originate from a contemporary source either. Quintis Tullus Cicero, in his *Commentariolum petitionis*, wrote:

> I have heard a man say about certain orators, to whom he had offered his case, "that he had been better pleased with the words of the one who declined, than of the one who accepted." So true it is that men are more taken by look and words than by actual services.[3]

Though this is clearly an oversimplification of the conflict, both perspectives offer important insight. Neither purely clear and concise nor clever and careful political messaging is enough to appease the average voter, regardless of his or her ideology. This guide is an attempt to bridge the gap between these two schools of thought.

1.1.1   Notes

[1] Orwell, "Politics and the English Language".

[2] Arbiter, *Satyricon*, 1-2.

[3] Q. T. Cicero to M. T. Cicero, *Commentariolum petitionis*.

1.2   Style

Elements of Political Communication does not address most basic grammatical and stylistic issues; therefore, use the information in this wikibook as an addendum to more comprehensive style guides. Don't obsess over obscure rules; an Internet search solves most dilemmas. If you find yourself in a situation in which you must make a choice between breaking the rules or creating an unclear or awkward message, break the rules. Some of the information in this guide may contradict or overlap with these readings, but the guidance they provide will generally apply to all forms of political communication:

- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law 2012*, 47th Edition, by the Associated Press

- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition, by the University of Chicago Press

- *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition, by William B. Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White

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- Images or other media used are licensed under the Creative Commons or in the public domain.

- Chapter and section names are in sentence case (only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized).

- Chapters do not typically have their own table of contents.

- Citations are in short form on their respective pages, but they link to full references on a separate page, which use citation templates.

- Short form citations, which reference a full citation in the bibliography, are located at the end of their respective chapters.

Chapter 2

General guidelines

2.1 Accuracy

Every element of a political message must be accurate.

Your organization or campaign publishes thousands of words, both printed and spoken. Without an accurate message, careful audiences can judge you as careless, apathetic, or worst of all, ignorant. Candidates and organizations must carefully consider the consequences of every element of the messages they create. Therefore, be truthful and correct. In most cases, you are not expected to cite your sources, but you should be certain your information is clear and correct before you publish it. Otherwise, audiences may question the validity of your entire piece.[1]

Some research has indicated that the reliability of sources has little effect on a reader's long-term acceptance or rejection of a position;[2] however, the general trend of research over the past five decades indicates that highly credible sources are far more effective in terms of changing an audience's attitude or behavior.[3] Since incorrect assertions are more easily republished (and fact-checked) in today's media environment, you should err on the side of caution when citing specific information. Quoting advocacy groups' studies or polls does little to help your argument. No group is universally accepted as a definitive source, so consider the cost–benefit ratio of using the findings before you include them. If you quote an authority, know the person's views and speciality intimately. Avoid referencing trendy intellectuals; name dropping of this kind will turn off a portion of your audience.

2.1.1 Review

Which of these quoted studies is likely to be the most persuasive?

A: According to the American Moralistic Society, 69 percent of Americans believe that our moral values are getting worse.

B: According to a poll conducted on example.com, 69 percent of Americans believe that our moral values are getting worse.

C: According to the annual Gallup Values and Beliefs Poll from May 2011, 69 percent of Americans believe that our moral values are getting worse.

D: Almost 70 percent of Americans believe that our moral values are getting worse.

Answer: **C.** Source:[4] Regardless if the information is correct or not, critical readers will immediately be turned off by the partisan nature nature of the first source and the informal nature of the second (regardless of the site). Find a study from a reputable group instead.

Which is the most appropriate use of a quote?

A: Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote that "there is always some madness in love. But there is always, also, some method in madness."[5] He was right.

B: Shakespeare once wrote that "love was lost in the winter air/lo, it strideth from here to there."[6] He was right.

C: Ray Bradbury once wrote that "We know what we love, we are what we love."[7] He was

right.

D: Pat Benetar once sang that "love is a battlefield". She was right.

Answer: **D.** Though the quote from Nietzsche is accurate and correctly attributed, Nietzsche is not regarded as an authority on love, given his personal history. Quoting an inappropriate authority, even correctly, can demean your own cause. Although Shakespeare could be considered authority on the subject of love, the quote here is completely fabricated, as often happens with famous figures. Using quotes from authoritative subjects is very risky; before using a quote, ensure that the person actually said it. Bradbury did write something to the effect of the third quote in *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, but some words here have been switched, altering the intended meaning entirely. Pat Benetar's quote, although taken from pop culture, is accurate, effective, and pertinent to the subject at hand. Using an easily relatable example should not be beneath you. Appeal directly to your audience members, whomever they may be.

Which of these statements is the most accurate?

A: Sarah Palin quit her job as governor because of ethics violations and her association with the felon Ted Stevens.

B: Sarah Palin quit her job as governor amid a series of ethics investigations.

C: Sarah Palin quit her job as governor to stymie the partisan, trumped-up charges against her.

D: Sarah Palin quit her job as governor for mysterious reasons.

Answer: **B.** Though Palin did quit during a series of ethics investigations, it is unclear whether this was her primary motivation for leaving office. Ted Stevens may have been convicted of a felony, but a judge has since overturned his conviction and thus he should not be referred to as a felon.[8] The third example goes to the other extreme, making assumptions about the motives that can't be proven. The final choice hints at the possibility of a correlation, but the vague language feels stilted.

2.1.2   Notes

[1] Huckfeldt et al., "Ambiguity, Distorted Messages, and Nested Environmental Effects", 1025–1026.

[2] Hovland and Weiss, "Influence of Source Credibility", 649–650.

[3] Pornpitakpan, "Persuasiveness of Source Credibility", 247.
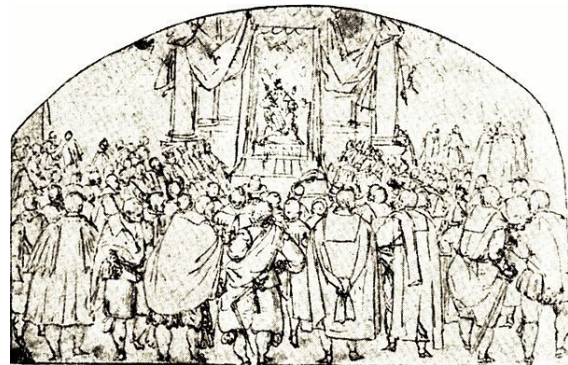
[4] Saad, "Fewer Americans Down".

[5] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 39.

[6] Completely fabricated quote, as the answer indicates.

[7] Correct quote: "We love what we know, we love what we are." From Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, 1962.

[8] Vicini, "More Prosecutor Misconduct".

2.2   Audience

Political figures have always had a keen interest in their audience, and for good reason.

Find your audience and address it directly. Adapt to its needs and interests, but use a consistent tone and style in whatever you produce. Informal or anecdotal pieces are fine, but don't start with an informal introduction and finish with a formal analysis of the subject. Avoid colloquialisms, but don't try to impress your audience by using words or phrases you don't fully comprehend, since educated readers will notice any malapropisms. Conversely, don't be afraid to use words or concepts that some readers might not understand. In the proper context, the use of slightly more esoteric (yet relevant) concepts can give your audience a sense of accomplishment and education.

2.2.1   Review

Which of these uses the most consistent tone?

A: We saw their tired faces each Sunday when they held their bowl up to get their meager helping of soup. Seventy-two percent of those on the other side voted for HB XX, which will reduce funding for indigent persons by 34.39

percent.

B: We've seen the long-term trend of homelessness shift upwards dramatically. This bill will cut off the legs of our neediest citizens.

C: We saw their tired faces each Sunday when they held their bowl up to get their meager helping of soup. Now they have introduced HB XX, which will cut off the legs of our neediest citizens.

D: We've seen the long-term trend of homelessness shift upwards dramatically. Seventy-two percent of those on the other side voted for HB XX, which will reduce funding for indigent persons by 34.39 percent.

Answer: **C.** or **D.** While the first and second choices mix informal, anecdotal rhetoric with exact statistics, the third and fourth are more consistent. Sometimes, a personal connection to the story is necessary. Sometimes hard data is more important. Use what works in that situation.

Which of these uses the most consistent style?

A: The judge is biased against the African-American community and his black constituents are tired of his antics.

B: The judge is biased against the black community and his black constituents are tired of his antics.

C: The judge is biased against the black community and his African-American constituents are tired of his antics.

D: The judge is biased against the African-American community and his African-American constituents are tired of his antics.

Answer: **B.** or **D.** In this case, this is not an issue of political correctness. Either "African-American" or "black" is acceptable, but choose one or the other, whichever you are most comfortable using, and use it consistently.

Which of these sentences is the most effective?

A: The answer to this problem seems easy: *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*.

B: The answer to this problem seems easy: The simplest solution is usually the best.

C: The answer to this problem seems easy: Occam's Razor.

D: The answer to this problem seems easy: Simplicity.

Answer: **B.** Although most readers would understand the concept of Occam's Razor, they may perceive or remember the exact definition as one of many variations. Most will perceive the Latin phrase, literally meaning "entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity", as a contrived approach. Although the single word "simplicity" is indeed the simplest approach, it does not convey the complete meaning in the clearest possible way.

Which of these sentences is correct?

A: A group of citizens has banded together to oppose our policies.

B: A group of citizens has banned together to oppose our policies.

C: A group of citizens has bandied together to oppose our policies.

D: A group of citizens has band together to oppose our policies.

Answer: **A.** A malapropism is the use of a word that sounds similar to another yet carries a different meaning from the one the author intended.[1] In this case, citizens have not banned (outlawed) or bandied (tossed) together; rather, they banded together. Although the two words sound similar and are often used interchangeably in casual conversation, they have different meanings.

Which of these is the most effective?

A: If our leaders aren't giving us a clear example of Parkinson's Law of Triviality, I don't know what else you could call it.

B: Our leaders are purposefully trying to distract us from a larger issue by having us

argue about the details of a petty one. Can you say "Parkinson's Law of Triviality"?

C: In a classic example of Parkinson's Law of Triviality, our leaders are purposefully trying to distract us from a larger issue by having us argue about the details of a petty one.

D: Parkinson's Law of Triviality, which states that "the time spent on any item of the agenda will be in inverse proportion to the sum involved," is clearly in effect here.

Answer: **C.** Parkinson's Law of Triviality does indeed state that "the time spent on any item of the agenda will be in inverse proportion to the sum involved,"[2] though most audiences are probably not familiar with the concept. If a person cannot reasonably understand the definition from the context (see the first choice), or if it may be misinterpreted as a separate concept (see the second choice), the allusion may distract from, rather than enhance, your message. If publishing on a website, you can also provide an inline link to a definition.

2.2.2   Notes

[1] Laplante, *Technical Writing*, 22.

[2] Parkinson, *Parkinsons Law*, 9.

2.3   Fairness

Negative comments about the opposing side are acceptable, but hit pieces on candidates and causes rarely help anyone. Although some evidence suggests that repeated negative campaign advertisements can increase turnout in local elections,[1] long-term analysis indicates that many of the most commonly held assumptions about negativity in political communication (i.e. that negative political advertisements are more effective than positive) are unsupported by the extensive research conducted on this subject.[2]

Instead, compare your candidate or cause in a positive light. Keep barbs to a minimum and keep them relevant. Remember that your objective is to convince the reader to join your side, not to inflame those who disagree. Hyperbolic jabs tend to incite online comment wars rather than facilitate reasonable discussion. Though often lambasted, politically correct terminology is almost always preferable over colloquialisms or pejorative terms. This includes references to minorities or those on the other side of an issue.

2.3.1   Review

Which of these sentences is the most effective?

A: Candidate Y is a lying, conniving, sniveling puppet of the opposing party, unfit to lead even the smallest unit of government.

B: Candidate Y is a liar. Even though the things he says are untrue, he continues to say them precisely because they aren't, and that's the true mark of any liar.

C: Candidate Y may not want to tell the truth, but our candidate does, and that is why he is the best fit for this elected office.

D: Candidate Y is one of "them", and "they" are against us.

Answer: **C.** In the first example, those on the fence about Candidate Y will be turned off by your comments, and those who already concur don't need to be told again. The second example contains only awkward, circular logic and doesn't arrive at any real point. The third choice changes the primary focus from the opposing candidate to the person you're supporting. It is still negative, but in a way that contrasts those qualities with the positives of the opposition.

Which of these sentences is the most appropriate?

A: We must stand with the Arabs.

B: We must stand with the Middle Eastern community.

C: We must stand with the Muslims.

D: We must stand with those people.

Answer: **B.** As a general rule, "community" is a safe word in most contexts. The other three examples are either incorrect, offensive, or both. Ethnicity and religion are not interchangeable terms.

2.3.2   Notes

[1] Niven, "Effects of Negative Campaign Mail", 203.

[2] Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner, "Effects of Negative Campaigns", 1176.

2.4 Format

Lorem Ipsum dolor fit amet consecteter *adipiscing elit*, sed diam nonummy nibh euismo tincidunt ut flaoret dolore magna aliquam volutpaft.

Ut wisi enim ad Minim Veniam, quis nochtrud exerci tation uffamcorper suscipit *lobochtis* niffi ut aliquip ex Commodo Consequat.

Lorem Ipsum dolor fit amet consecteter *adipiscing elit*, sed diam nonummy nibh euismo tincidunt ut flaoret dolore magna aliquam volutpaft.

Ut wisi enim ad Minim Veniam, quis nochtrud exerci tation uffamcorper suscipit *lobochtis* niffi ut aliquip ex Commodo Consequat.

So long as it remains consistent, correct, and accessible, don't worry about the minute details of formatting.

Don't get frustrated with the details of formatting. Write in whatever medium you're comfortable using, but submit it in the appropriate format to whomever is responsible for publication. Use quotation marks to differentiate "buzzwords" sparingly. Avoid italicizing, bolding, underlining, or capitalizing to emphasize words or phrases. Writers can exclude portions of their audience by writing in an unfamiliar or awkward format. Instead, convey the meaning in your content without using awkward formatting. Use a readable typeface and avoid using only colors to differentiate text, especially red for editing marks (7 percent of American males cannot detect the difference between red and green.)[1] Do not use all caps. This is especially true when writing for traditional print media. Editors will ignore most of your formatting marks, and these changes can alter the meaning of your sentence. Rewrite any sentences with this kind of formatting to ensure this doesn't happen.

2.4.1 Review

Which of these sentences is formatted correctly?

A: Those supposed "party members" are extremists.

B: Those supposed party members are extremists.

C: Those "party members" are extremists.

D: Those party members are extremists.

Answer: **D.** Adding the word "supposed" or putting a word or phrase in quotation marks (unless referring to the word itself, as in this sentence) is not a legitimate way to call something into question. Additionally in this case, the assonance from the words "those" and "supposed" sounds awkward. See the chapter on sound

for more information.

Which of these is formatted correctly?

A: The *Daily Tribune* was wrong about one thing in their article titled "Johnson Gets Life": The truth is that he has been a **patriot** *throughout* the campaign.

B: The *Daily Tribune* was wrong about one thing in their article titled "Johnson Gets Life": The truth is that he has been a PATRIOT throughout the campaign.

C: The *Daily Tribune* was wrong about one thing in their article titled "Johnson Gets Life": The truth is that he has been a patriot throughout the campaign.

D: The *Daily Tribune* was wrong about one thing in their article titled "Johnson Gets Life": The truth is that he has been a patriot *throughout the campaign.*

Answer: **C.** The other examples all include some kind of formatting error, either misuse of bold or italics or use of all-caps. Newspapers are always italicized; article titles are always in quotes. There are some exceptions to this rule for websites.

Which of these uses the most consistent format?

A: She did three things. Firstly, she did not vote the way we expected. 2nd, she fought against the people we wanted her to support, and finally, she accepted money from groups we opposed.

B: She did three things: Firstly, she did not vote the way we expected. Secondly, she fought against the people we wanted her to support. Thirdly, she accepted money from groups we opposed.

C: She did 3 things: 1st, didn't vote way we expected. 2nd, fought people we wanted her to support. 3rd, accepted money from groups we opposed.

D: She did three things: First, she didn't vote the way we expected; second, she fought people we wanted her to support; and third,

she accepted money from groups we opposed.

Answer: **C.** or **D.** Though the final choice is probably the most correct, the third may be useful in situations where space is limited, such as a social media post. The version here is approximately 138 characters long, just under the limit for a tweet.

2.4.2   Notes

[1] Montgomery, "Color Blindness".

2.5   Importance

Stress the importance of your topic. Apply the issue broadly to reach as much of the audience as possible, but understand that simply stating "this is important" is not enough. Convince readers and listeners of the importance of your subject by putting the issue in their "back yard", especially when referring to local issues. Apply the issue on a personal level to the reader, not the writer. Exaggeration (though not to the extreme) may help your case. For partisan issues in which a consensus or compromise may be necessary, indirectly approach the topic to appeal to those who might typically be on the other side of the issue.

2.5.1   Review

Which of these sentences stresses the importance of a local topic most effectively?

A: Men and women on a city council must be pragmatic facilitators who must base their decisions on needs like water treatment centers, not misapplied ideological preferences.

B: Men and women on a city council are very important, and they must base their decisions on things that will affect us directly.

C: Men and women on a city council tell you where you will live, how you will live, and why you will live.

D: Men and women on a city council do lots of things, some of which may affect you.

Answer: **A.** The second and fourth choices state the importance of the issue, but they don't give the reader

any specific idea as to why it is important. The third choice is a vague hyperbole. The first choice illustrates the importance of the local issue by giving at least two examples (albeit generic, in this case) that most readers should relate to. In this case, water management is an especially important and relatable issue that promises to become more prominent in the coming years.[2]

Which of these sentences stresses the importance of a international topic most effectively?

A: Our leader plans to disrupt the flow of aid to other countries, and this is horrible!

B: Our leader plans to rip apart the fabric of the international society we have tried so hard to sustain.

C: Our leader plans to reduce food aid by 35 percent, which will negatively affect the people who so badly need help across the world.

D: Our leader plans to dismantle our food aid programs for other countries, and I worry that the negative publicity from this act will only invigorate the groups that want to harm us.

Answer: **D.** Although a humanitarian appeal such as one in the third choice makes sense in some contexts, the approach used in the final example brings the focus back to the reader and illustrates how the issue will affect him or her. This appeal to selfishness, although lamentable, is more effective in a political context.

2.5.2   Notes

[1] Kennedy, "We choose to go to the moon".

[2] Mollinga, "Water, Politics, and Development", 7.

2.6   Sound

When writing, repeat phrases to emphasize themes or ideas, but avoid repeating the same word or sound inadvertently. Casual writers frequently misuse idioms. A careful reading, however, can often help to identify these issues before they are published. Before submission or publication, read the piece aloud slowly and pronounce every word. Do this a few times and make any necessary corrections, then read it to a family member or friend and ask if any part needs clarification. If he or she would like

to proofread the piece by reading it in print, share it after you've read it aloud.

2.6.1 Review

Which of these sentences sounds the best?

> A: Our program is community-based, so residents can actively direct the program.

> B: Our program is community-based, so the community can actively direct the program.

> C: Our program is community-activated, so the community can actively direct the program.

> D: Our community is program-based, so the community can actively direct the program.

Answer: **A.** Repetition of certain words and phrases is fine, but using the same word repetitively sounds odd, and readers may assume your vocabulary is limited or that you are using buzzwords to generate interest.

Which of these sentences sounds the best?

> A: The President's opponents used a proposed parliamentary procedure to postpone the partisan vote.

> B: The President's foes used a proposed motion to delay the vote.

> C: The President's political opponents used a proposed parliamentary procedure to postpone the partisan vote.

> D: The President's political opponents used a parliamentary procedure, which was planned and prepared, to postpone the partisan vote.

Answer: **B.** Again, alliteration works well in certain circumstances, but when its use is inadvertent, it sounds awkward even when it is not read aloud. Rather than relying on a thesaurus, use simpler words that contain fewer syllables to avoid this kind of awkward alliteration.

2.6.2 Notes

[1] Bryan, *Imperialism*, 338–339.

2.7 Succinctness

Use an assertive tone and state facts directly. Remove sentence beginnings like "I personally believe that...". Readers and listeners already know you believe it is true because you're the author. Spending the first half of a sentence establishing the subjectivity of an issue and the second half trying to prove that one position is superior, such as "this is just my opinion, but..." is a self-defeating task. Read and reread your piece and make necessary corrections. Remove redundant phrases, sentences, and paragraphs; nothing is written in stone. Never say in six words would you could in three: Take this sentence.

2.7.1 Review

Which of these sentences is more succinct?

> A: Preparatory to anything else Mr Bloom brushed off the greater bulk of the shavings and handed Stephen the hat and ashplant and bucked him up generally in orthodox Samaritan fashion, which he very badly needed.[2]

> B: Mr. Bloom helped Stephen up.

> C: Preparatory to anything else, Mr. Bloom helped Stephen up.

> D: Mr. Bloom helped Stephen up in orthodox Samaritan fashion.

Answer: **B.** This should be obvious. The example, from the opening of a chapter in James Joyce's *Ulysses* that parodies wordy writers, is humorously overwritten. The second example is a more direct expression.

Which sentence uses an appropriate tone?

> A: While our party has been trying in vain to pass this bill, the opposing side is wasting time and resources on purely political legislation.

> B: Personally, I believe wholeheartedly that the opposing party is destroying this country willy–nilly.

> C: This is just my opinion, but the opposing side is wasting time and resources on purely political legislation.

D: IMHO, while our party has been trying in vain to pass this bill, the opposing side is wasting time and resources on purely political legislation.

Answer: **A.**

2.7.2   Notes

[1] Lincoln, "Gettysbug Address".

[2] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 569.

Chapter 3

Traditional media guidelines

3.1 Op-eds and letters to the editor

However you choose to write your letter, use these tips to ensure its publication.

A letter to the editor is a short (~200 words) piece that addresses a particular article or subject from a recent edition of the publication. An op-ed, by the strictest definition, is a medium-length piece (~500 words) solicited by the publication to oppose the position of the editorial board. This is where the term "op-ed" comes from: the "opposite of the editorial", not "opinion-editorial". That said, the lines in today's media are blurry. A letter to the editor can be much longer in some instances and an op-ed need not be solicited or be the opposite opinion of the editorial board. Your situation will determine how you structure your piece. The editor may change it anyway.

3.1.1 Content

Know your audience and what they can do to help your cause. Do not just express an opinion; advocate a position and give the reader the tools needed to take the next step. Advocating a position involves expressing your opinion and suggesting what the reader should do about it. If Problem X exists, advocate how to correct it. If Candidate X is the best person for the job, suggest ways to support that person. Examples of support include visiting a campaign or issue website, volunteering, or just by voting a particular way. Address the readership of the publication, not an individual or niche. Each publication has its own demographics, so don't submit the same piece to multiple places. Writing to *The New York Times* regarding a local election is obviously a waste of time, but so is writing a partisan piece on a national issue for the local newspaper. Editors typically favor the expression of individual ideas over general talking points, and they are more likely to publish letters that include a story involving self-interest.[1] Introduce a personal perspective to relate to the audience why your opinion is valid. You may be tempted to create a laundry list of facts and statistics, but that is not the purpose of an op-ed or letter to an editor. Rhetorical devices such as metaphors, short anecdotes, or reasonable appeals to emotion are more effective at convincing people of your point of view than an assortment of statistics.

3.1.2 Format

Your piece should be between 200-500 words long. Shorter pieces are acceptable but will not take up as much space on the published page. Details like font, margins, and other formatting options are not important unless your document uses non-traditional or awkward markup. Making the process more difficult for the editor (such as submitting in .pdf format or via snail mail) makes it less likely your piece will be published. Paragraph breaks will be determined by the editor, as will the headline.

How-to

Begin writing an op-ed or letter to the editor by concisely expressing how you feel about the issue in one or two sentences. In a few more sentences, explain the importance of the issue, though this may not be necessary if you're writing about a national issue currently in the spotlight. Then, in one or two short paragraphs, elaborate on your reasons for having this opinion. Express what you believe your audience can do to further this particular cause. This call to action is important; without it, readers may not feel propelled to do anything, even if they agree with your point of view, unless you guide them in the right direction.

Go back to the beginning of your piece and briefly explain

who you are and explain any relevant details. If possible, find a unique perspective from which you can view the issue and include it the introduction to gain readers' attention. Write a very brief conclusion, preferably a one sentence zinger that calls back to the unique perspective in the introduction. Writers often express their frustration with creating effective introductions and conclusions, but this strategy makes writing these sections an easier task.

Before submitting your piece, check to see if it answers the following questions:

- Who are you and how do you relate to X?

- Why is X important?

- What is your view on X?

- Why do you think that about X?

- What can we do about X?

This structure is not set in stone, but it will help the struggling writer reach 200-500 words. Experiment to find your voice.

3.1.3   Examples

Generic candidate support letter

> The other day, I ran through my subdivision in Town X, where I have lived for the past few years. As I weaved between mailboxes and skipped up curbs, I noticed a headline on the front of the *Town Gazette*. It said "Candidate Y to Challenge Candidate X in Election".
>
> This election will determine who will represent our community for many years to come. Representatives from this area vote on important problems that affect our lives, so we cannot afford to ignore these pressing issues.
> I am for Candidate X. I am against Candidate Y.
> Candidate X has many years of experience volunteering for his community by serving on various boards and committees. This includes a few years on the Pertinent Review Board, which addressed the important issue of pertinence last year. He has consistently voted to help our citizens, as opposed to his opponent, who has avoided addressing the issues repeatedly. I strongly recommend that voters research these candidates and their positions on these important issues by visiting this publication's voter's guide on the election. Anyone can contact Candidate X's campaign by visiting example.com, facebook.com/example, or

twitter.com/example.
> I doubt if my words will change how the candidates run their campaigns, but I can assure you they will affect how I run my workouts: From now until election day, I will be running through Town X in my "Elect Candidate X" T-shirt.
> -Name

This example is very generic, but this allows the writer to ensure he or she includes everything, and it allows for a broader application. Whenever possible, be specific about your positive points. For example, replace "many years" in the above letter with however many years of experience the candidate actually has (assuming the length is reasonable for the position sought).

Generic issue support letter

> Dear editor,
>
> Boy, it's hot outside! These are the days that make us stay inside and soak up that wonderfully cool air from our air conditioners.
> But not everyone has this convenience. Sometimes it's scary to think about the folks out there who may not be able to escape from the oppressive sun during heat waves like the one we're experiencing. The elderly, especially, often have trouble in times like these. I call my grandmother every day now to make sure she's okay and well hydrated.
> Other people around town are suffering as well. It seems like our society ought to be able to come up with a solution to this problem, but it always catches us by surprise.
> That's why I support the expansion of the Generic Home Fund Grant program in our city. The city disburses the grants to lower income residents trying to upgrade their homes to pay for things like efficient air conditioning units.
> We all take things for granted, sometimes, but the next time you're enjoying your cool home, think about your fellow neighbors. Contact your city councilman today by visiting the city's website, example.com, and ask them to expand this program. This isn't just for grandma; it's a good idea for our community.
> -Name

This letter is less formal, but still concerns a serious subject in a respectful manner. The sentence beginning with "But" in the second paragraph signals a shift to a more serious tone, but the style remains consistent.

3.1.4 Review

Which sentence is the most effective?

> A: I believe Candidate X is the right person for the job.

> B: Candidate X is the right person for the job.

> C: Vote for candidate X for Smith County Dog Catcher, Place 1 on November 2nd.

> D: Candidate X is the right person for the job, and I encourage voters to vote for him/her for Smith County Dog Catcher, Place 1 on November 2nd.

Answer: **D.** The first and second choices offer an opinion, but no action for the reader to take. The third offers action, but no real opinion.

Which salutation is the most appropriate?

> A: Journalist X, your article last month was biased...

> B: Dear Hispanic readers of *The Morning News*,...

> C: Dear readers,...

> D: To whom it may concern:...

Answer: **C.** Salutations are rarely necessary for letters to the editor, and never needed in op-eds. If one is appropriate, however, use one that applies to all of your audience (or simply "Dear editor"). Newspapers rarely publish letters that address only a segment of their readers.

Which personal narrative is the most effective?

> A: I have lived in Town X for 12 years. For eight of those, I have served this community by volunteering for Foundation Y. During this session, the city council will consider HB XXXX, which will cut state funding for this wonderful program.

> B: I have lived in Town X for 12 years, the last eight of which I have spent volunteering for

various organizations including Foundation A, Foundation B, Foundation Y, and many other organizations. During this session, the city council will consider HB XXXX, which will cut funding for Foundation Y, which is a great program.

> C: During this session, the city council will consider HB XXXX, which will cut state funding for Foundation Y, for which I have volunteered at during the last eight years. I have lived in Town X for 12 years.

> D: I have lived in Town X for 12 years. For eight of those, I have served this community by volunteering for Foundation Y, but during this session, the city council will consider HB XXXX, which will cut state funding for this program I've worked so hard for.

Answer: **A.** The second choice adds superfluous information that can distract from the flow of the narrative. Assume that readers are only interested in the essential parts of your story. The third choice is backwards: The personal aspect should function as a segue into your point, not the other way around. The fourth choice is too personal, in that it leads the reader to believe that the issue is really about you, not the foundation.

Which appeal is the most effective?

> A: During the 2007–2008 school year, the UIL conducted 10,117 tests for anabolic steroids, including 6,455 males and 3,662 females. There were two confirmed positive results. 2008 Fall: 18,817 tests, 7 CPs. 2009 Spring: 16,260 tests, 8 CPs. 2009 Fall: 3,133 tests, 2 CPs. 2010 Spring: 3,308 tests, 0 CPs. 2010 Fall: 2,083 tests, 1 CP.

> B: Imagine spending millions of dollars every year to test tens of thousands of people for a condition you didn't think they had. That's high school steroid testing in a nutshell.

> C: Imagine spending millions of dollars in 2007 to test 6,455 male and 3,662 female high school athletes at random for steroids.

> D: We spent millions of dollars to conduct 10,117 tests for anabolic steroids in high school athletes in 2007, and we found only two positives. We almost doubled that in 2008, and then we've cut the program substantially

since then.

Answer: **B.** Although not as precise, the second choice offers a shorter, more rhetorical version of the first sentence.   If necessary, embed the most important statistics in the remainder of the piece.

3.1.5   Notes

[1] Wahl-Jorgensen, "Letters to the Editor as a Forum", 314–318.

3.2   Press releases

Your relationship with traditional media outlets is important.

Press releases are official releases from your organization regarding specific news, issues, or events. The purpose of a press release can vary widely; this chapter will focus on using this tool to communicate with professional news media outlets. Press releases are often written with a style that mimics that of local and major publications with the hope that the recipient will reprint the release verbatim.[1] The likelihood of an outlet publishing a straight news release decreases as the publication increases in size. That said, even if the release is not printed verbatim, it may influence the coverage of a particular topic or event.[2]

3.2.1   Content

Avoid editorial comments in press releases; state only the facts and pertinent information regarding the issue, such as the time, date, and location of an event. Always include personal contact information at the top and bottom of the release. This should be an individual within your organization that has an excellent understanding of the topic and will be available to communicate with interested publications. Journalists and editors choose which stories to explore; therefore, an accurate and descriptive headline and lead section may earn their attention. Finally, include a very brief boilerplate, a final paragraph that contains basic information about your organization, including a broad description of your activities. Consider writing at least two versions of the boilerplate: one for organizations that clearly already know what your organization does, and another for those that may be less familiar.[3]

3.2.2   Format

Though there is no required length, the average press release is between 300 and 500 words long. The importance and complexity of your subject will determine the length of your release, but in general, the entire document should be able to fit on a single page. Although the *Associated Press Stylebook* does not contain a set format for press releases, there are some formatting points to note.[4] Use a readable, 12-point typeface. Contrary to popular belief, typefaces such as Times New Roman do not increase readability;[5] however, it is advisable to use a widely-accepted font throughout the release. Avoid all instances of formatting for emphasis except where noted in the template. Include a centered "# # #" at the end of the release.

Ensure that any images you include in the release are prepared for publication. Use a popular digital format, such as .PNG or .JPG. Since most digital cameras take larger pictures than are necessary for publication, resize the image to no more than 700 pixels wide. Include attribution information for the image, and only images for which you have explicit permission to use, both from the photographer and the subjects photographed.[6]

3.2.3   Examples

Template

Include the elements below in your release. The organization logo is optional, but all other information should be included in the correct format.

> [Organization logo]
> FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
> Contact:
> [Contact name]
> [Contact phone number]
> [Organization name]
> [Contact email address]
> [URL of organization website]
> **[Headline]**
> [CITY, State] (Month DD, YYYY) - [Message]
> For additional inquiries please contact [Contact name] at [contact email address] or [Contact phone number].
> **About [Organization name]**

[boilerplate]

# # #

Website launch

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Contact:
Fake Name
(940) 555-5555
Local Political Party
email@example.org
http://www.example.org
Local Political Party launches new website at Executive Committee meeting
CITY, State (September 16, 2011) - The Local Political Party revealed its new website, at http://www.example.org, on Tuesday. The site includes information and resources, but also emphasizes engagement from residents.

Among many new functions, the site allows readers to share or comment on individual articles through social media networks. The first of its kind among political sites in the area, the "Speak Up" page connects residents with the editorial pages of local publications, allowing citizens to express their views quickly and efficiently.

The redesign is the first part of a communications strategy from the Local Political Party to engage constituents and create an open political environment in which political organizations respond to constituents' viewpoints openly.

For additional inquiries, please contact Fake Name at email@example.com, (555) 555-5555.

About the Local Political Party
As Local Politicians, we seek personal freedom in the framework of a just society and political freedom in the framework of meaningful participation by all citizens. Our mission is to promote ideals and values within our communities through grassroots organization, education of the public, and election of qualified candidates through the use of ethical campaign methods. Together, we help shape a stronger America in which every citizen has the means to succeed through our community values: liberty, quality, and opportunity.

# # #

3.2.4 Notes

[1] Jacobs, *Preformulating the News*, 305.

[2] Tewksbury et al., "Interaction of News and Advocate Frames", 804.

[3] Treadwell and Treadwell, *Public Relations Writing*, 219.

[4] For an example of a press release from the Associated Press itself, see Associated Press, "2012 AP Stylebook Adds Fashion".

[5] Delange, Esterhuizen, and Beatty, "Performance Differences", 241.

[6] It is generally good practice to acquire explicit consent from a non-public figure before distributing an image of the person. See Krages, "The Photographer's Right"

Chapter 4

Digital media guidelines

4.1 Social media

Note: Much like words themeselves, social media formats are always in flux. As a result, the information in this guide may not always be entirely up to date.

Various forms of social media allow you and your organization to perform an extremely important task: communicate with constituents, other citizens, and elected leaders in a regular and back-and-forth fashion. When used correctly, these formats afford political organizations a plethora of opportunities to reach a wider audience, but digital media posts are not just shorter official releases; simply having an account on these sites and using them for blanketing simple press releases is not enough to appease your audience. By using these tools properly, you can distribute information efficiently and increase the number of impressions your message creates. Generally speaking, social media submissions and posts should still follow most of the general guidelines, but they should also attempt to engender audience participation. The information in this chapter is meant as a primer for those not familiar with using social media and websites from an organization's perspective.

4.1.1 Content

Even though social media users can choose their own content streams, the average Twitter user, for example, considers only 41 percent of the tweets in their feed "worth reading". Therefore, social media updates should be as current and topical as possible. Users often react well to direct questions, objective information sharing, and links to new website content. Content considered "boring", such as when a user retweets his or her own tweets, is not viewed favorably. Users also react negatively when an account overuses hashtags or when a link is given out of context.[1] Note that you cannot limit someone else's use of a hashtag, regardless of where it originates. Create new tags at your own risk, knowing that they could be misused by the other side. To enhance your organization's credibility, include an accurate biography at the top of your user profile or page and post about what you are familiar with.[2]

Internet applications like Seesmic and TweetDeck allow you to post messages on various forms of social media simultaneously. This is referred to as "blanketing", and it is appropriate in some circumstances, but not in others. Twitter is more appropriate for short, informal, and irregular bursts of information. Facebook is more appropriate for regular releases of pertinent articles and posts. Fixing a mistake posted simultaneously across multiple mediums is an awkward and sometimes embarrassing chore. Staggering the release of the message throughout a 24- or 48-hour period gives your supporters a steady stream of content, rather than an inundation across multiple formats. Social media tools like Twitter function like a news source to many users,[3] and regular releases indicate a sense of transparency to your audience.[4] There is an overload level at which point followers may become frustrated with your quantity of output, but it is higher than what most would assume. Regularly analyze your list of followers to see the demographics of your audience. Cater your content to these followers, or adjust it to match the needs of your target audience.

4.1.2 Economy

Word economy is essential in traditional media, but it is even more so in digital formats. Tweets, for example, must contain fewer than 140 characters, including links. Writers addressing political subjects often claim they struggle to express their views while staying within these boundaries. Refusing to post because you cannot

stay within them, however, is not acceptable. Choosing not to use a particular communication tool, especially when it is free, limits your audience. You may find yourself in a situation in which you cannot reasonably express the message unless you abbreviate certain words or phrases. After removing superfluous words, abbreviate common words and phrases. Since contractions are perfectly acceptable in both print and digital media, using them can help you stay under the 140 character limit for a tweet and eliminate some of the staleness that often pervades political messages. Before posting, have someone read it and ask if he or she understood its meaning.

4.1.3 Interaction

People want to be interacted with, not lectured to; therefore, use these messages not as platforms for talking points but rather as stepping stones for conversation and action. Encourage your supporters to share your posts and information frequently, reply to comments and replies respectfully, thank people for their help individually, and answer questions directly. Though many national candidates and organizations do not respond directly to their followers using social media tools, users expect a back-and-forth exchange of ideas from local candidates and organizations. This kind of "reciprocal listening" will allow you to sample from your audience to learn about their needs and concerns, and refusing to do so will limit your audience.[5] The more your followers share something using these tools, the more people will see it. Twitter provides your organization with many advantages, including the ability to informally contact supporters and ask questions of elected leaders. Between 7 and 9 percent of the population uses Twitter, but that small segment is considered influential because of its sharing habits.[6]

4.1.4 Potential drawbacks

No conversation about the effects of social media in the political realm is complete without at least mentioning a few of the drawbacks associated with these tools. Since these tools are constantly changing, so too are the people who use them. Therefore, there is little accurate and contemporary research about how effective their use can be, and there are no set style guidelines governing their use.[7] Though the simplest and best way to expand your audience is to have your supporters share and participate, this is easier said than done. Most users on social networks like Twitter are passive followers, and getting them to amplify your message is a difficult task.[8] This means that other members of your organization may be skeptical of their use, especially in local campaigns. Generally, the larger a particular campaign is, the longer it has to build a base of supporters. This means that more local campaigns, such as candidates for city-level positions or those supporting or opposing local ballot initiatives, have less time to build a base of supporters and followers, since

they often start only a few months before voting begins. That said, there is nothing to indicate that you would have fewer supporters if you did not use digital media. Supporter activation and interest are conducive to attaining a larger audience. Additionally, candidates and campaigns often stop providing updates for their supporters once the election has passed. As a local candidate or organization, be prepared to maintain your digital presence after you win or lose an election.

4.1.5 Review

Which of these is most appropriate for blanketing across multiple social media formats?

> A: We're in #TownX with @congressmanY for #congressmaYtownhall and we'll be tweeting it live.

> B: We're in Town X for a Town Hall-style meeting with Congressman Y. You can read about it by going to example.com or you can follow us on Twitter. Our username is @example and we're using the hashtag #congressmanYtownhall.

> C: We're in Town X for a Congressman Y Town Hall. Read about it on example.com or follow us, Twitter username @example. We're using the hashtag #congressmanYtownhall.

> D: We r n #townx with @congressmany for #congressmanytownhall, n we b tweeting it live.

Answer: **C. or A.** The first example is most appropriate for Twitter, but since Facebook now allows hashtags, it should be acceptable on that medium. The second example may work on Facebook, even though you're cross-promoting your Twitter handle, but it's far too long to tweet. Blanketing services will still allow you to post updates longer than 140 characters on Twitter, but the service will cut your message off. This can lead to an awkward message, especially if the cut-off point is in the middle of a word or phrase. The third example is not exclusive to one particular form, and contains fewer than 140 characters, but if possible, you'll still want to post it on each format individually to stagger the release.

Which of these tweets uses hashtags effectively?

> A: We're going to #standup for #liberty, #freedom, and #justice. #bold #vote #America

B: We're going to #standup for liberty, freedom, and justice.

C: We're going to stand up for #liberty, #freedom, and #justice.

D: We're going to #stand up for liberty, freedom, and justice.

Answer: **B.** In this case, using the hashtag #standup is an attempt to get others to use the phrase on Twitter. While similar in content, the fourth example contains a space, which only tags "stand", too generic for a hashtag. The first example is a clear example of hashtag stuffing. Not only does it use a hashtag for almost every word, it's also nearly unreadable.

Which of these sentence is the most economically phrased?

A: We'll be at the festival between 7 and 8 p.m. tomorrow. If you're going to be there, please let us know so we can plan ahead.

B: We will be attending the festival between seven and eight in the evening tomorrow, so if you are interested in coming, please let us know via email or phone so that we can plan for your arrival.

C: We'll be at the festival between 7 and 8. Please let us know so we can plan ahead.

D: Please let us know if you'll be at the festival tomorrow between 3 and 4 p.m. so we can plan ahead.

Answer: **A.** Numbers between one and nine, though commonly spelled out in text, can be in numeral form in informal posts or when referring to the time. The second choice is simply a more wordy version of the first. The third has the fewest words, but it doesn't express all of the information you're trying to get across. What day is the festival? Is that a.m. or p.m.?

4.1.6   Notes

[1] André, Bernstein, and Luther, "Who Gives a Tweet?".

[2] Morris et al., "Tweeting is Believing?"

[3] Kwak et al., "What is Twitter".

[4] Qualman, *Socialnomics*, 77.

[5] Crawford, "Following You", 530.

[6] Standage, "Bulletins from the future".

[7] The Associated Press claims that their 2012 *Stylebook* will fill in some of these gaps. See Associated Press, "2012 AP Stylebook Adds Fashion".

[8] Romero, Galuba, Asur, and Huberman "Influence and Passivity", 18.

4.2   Websites

In many ways, campaign and organization websites function as an intermediary between older forms of online communication (like email) and new media tools (like social media).[1] The conventional view of political websites is that people visit them to learn basic information about a campaign or organization. To some extent, they do; however, visitors have no reason to return to your site unless it contains new content. Posting regular, topical updates connects your organization to a network of people with similar interests and increases your visibility to news outlets.[2] Therefore, you should regularly post pertinent news and information about your cause.

Quite a bit has been written about the basic structure and function of informational websites elsewhere; therefore, this chapter should only be considered as a brief overview of political websites. More information on this subject can be found in the websites section of the "Further reading" chapter.

4.2.1   Content

Generally speaking, posts on candidates' websites more often focus on acclaims for the candidate; negative accusations for the other side are more likely to be released through the website of a political organization.[3] When writing basic site information (such as an "About Us" page) or new entries, use the general writing and opinion guidelines. Ask supporters to use the information and opinions you post in their own entries. Even if the supporter's blog is typically nonpolitical in nature, these "stealth" messages can be an effective tool to incorporate your message into a larger network.[4]

4.2.2   Format

Website content management systems (CMS) vary considerably in their interfaces, and will take time and dedication to master, but there are some general formatting points to note for any political website:

- Whenever appropriate and possible, considering providing inline links to your sources for more controversial claims. Your reader may not visit your source to see if your statement is factual or to learn more, but the presence of a link to a reliable source can boost his or her trust in your organization. When linking to an external source, use a link that will open a new browser tab.

- Though detailed statistics may not be appropriate in a letter or op-ed, a clear and accurate chart or graph can aid your argument on a website post.

- Consider writing and editing new posts as a group with a cloud-based office suite like Google Docs. This avoids the confusion that often surrounds the editing process when writers send attachments through email or hard copy.

- When writing blog posts with a What You See is What You Get (WYSIWYG) web editor, using copy and paste (Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V, or ⌘+C and ⌘+V on a Mac) sometimes results in awkward formatting. Work around this issue by using Google Chrome as a browser and pressing Ctrl+Shift+V (⌘+Shift+Option+V on a Mac) to perform an unformatted paste.

- One of the major benefits of using digital media formats correctly is that many services allow an organization to learn specific demographic information about its supporters. Use a website tracking tool such as Open Web Analytics to measure website traffic and visitor habits. Review this information carefully to see which posts and pages your readers are visiting more often.

4.2.3 Notes

[1] Nielsen, "Mundane Internet Tools", 755.

[2] Drezner and Farrell, "Power and Politics", 23.

[3] Wicks et al., "Tracking the Blogs", 651.

[4] Kaid and Postelnicu, "Credibility of Political Messages on the Internet", 162.

Chapter 5

Spoken message guidelines

5.1 Speeches

Gauging the audience's reaction to a speech is difficult, but necessary.

The writing and execution of political speeches require numerous elements of political communication. When writing preliminary drafts, speech writers should generally follow the general guidelines, but should consider other important elements while revising. Although there is much debate about which parts of this process are the most essential, there is no doubt that your organization should place as much emphasis as possible on every detail, including composition and delivery.

Although political speeches can generally serve many purposes, this chapter will focus on the creation of informational prepared speeches as they relate to political communication. For more information about the creation of persuasive or spontaneous speeches, see the chapter on debates. Since so much has been written about the study of rhetoric in political speech, this chapter should only be considered as a brief overview. Further reading beyond the referenced works in this chapter can be found in the speech guides section of the "Further reading" chapter.

5.1.1 Content

Carefully composed speeches can affect an audience's behavior, even if it is less than sympathetic towards your cause. Studies show that an audience's reaction to the rhetorical composition of a speech is "independent of political party, the political status of the speaker, and the popularity of the message."[2] Audiences are far more likely to applaud at the appropriate times when the speech includes one or more of the following devices:

- Contrasting statements, such as a negative–positive comparison between "us" and "them" or "then" and "now".

- Three-part lists

- Puzzle–solution statements, such as the kind that list political issues and then proposed solutions to those problems.

- Headline–punch line statements, which foreshadow to the audience that the speaker will say something important and cue listeners to applaud.[3]

- Well-crafted metaphors.[4]

Longer pauses are far more prevalent in planned political speeches than in casual interviews or extemporaneous political dialogue.[5] Include these pauses at appropriate breaks in the prepared remarks. In the long term, the audience is most likely to remember information presented near the beginning of a presentation;[6] Ensure that the most important points are covered near the beginning of the speech.

5.1.2 Delivery

Whoever is giving the speech should oversee not just its creation but also its execution, because the speaker's method of delivery can have just as much effect on the audience's reception as the rhetoric it contains.[7] Case studies have indicated that hand gestures during speeches often affect the audience's reaction, inducing applause and silence where appropriate.[8] However, since only about 61% of applause is planned in political speeches, the speaker should be prepared to adapt to mistimed audience reactions.[9]

5.1.3 Notes

[1] Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Speech".

[2] Heritage and Greatbatch, "Generating Applause", 110.

[3] Ibid., 122–129.

[4] Boosman, "Persuasive Effects of Political Metaphors", 97.

[5] Duez, "Silent and Non-Silent Pauses", 11.

[6] Murdock, "Serial Position Effect", 482.

[7] Bull, "Invited and Uninvited Applause", 563.

[8] Bull, "Use of Hand Gesture", 115–117.

[9] Bull and Noordhuizen, "Mistiming of Applause", 275.

5.2 Debates

Local forums have many different qualities. These factors will affect the style and substance of the debate.

Quite a bit of material exists on the effects of national political debates, and the results are fairly conclusive: They often reach a larger audience than any other campaign event.[1] Understand, however, that the venues and audiences of local political debates will vary widely and will differ significantly from those on national television. Although local election debates and candidate forums do not often help your campaign attract the wider audience associated with national races, they do allow you to reach a more engaged audience; this group is often much more likely to be composed of active voters and donors. These events are formal opportunities to communicate your political message to that specific audience.

This chapter focuses on the issues related to local political debates or forums in particular. Further reading on this issue beyond the referenced works in this chapter can be found in the speech guides section of references.

5.2.1 Preparation

Often, event organizers may not know the answers to more specific questions, but pressing for answers often reveals important information. Learn as much as possible about the conditions of the event before it begins. Questions should include:

- Where will the event be held?

- Will candidates be speaking directly to the audience, or will they address a moderator?

- Are questions pre-written, or will the audience submit them in writing?

- How much time will each candidate have to answer each question?

- What kinds of questions have been asked at this event in previous years?

- Understand your objective in reaching this audience: Are you trying to convince them just to vote for you, or to support your campaign in some other way?

Your candidate or representative should practice his or her performance in an environment similar to (or if possible, the same as) the debate environment. The more your candidate learns about election issues in this environment, the more likely he or she will be able to recite it during the debate.[2] At many local forums, audience members submit their own questions. If possible, have supporters prepare their own questions prior the debate. Questions should be directed at all candidates, and they should allow your candidate to emphasize his or her own strengths.

5.2.2 Notes

[1] McKinney and Carlin, *Handbook of Political Communication Research*, 204.

[2] Tulving and Thompson, "Encoding Specificity", 370.

Chapter 6

Appendices

6.1 Works cited

6.1.1 Academic articles and conference proceedings

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Chapter 7

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