

## Speaking Ethically

Public speaking is an incredibly strategic process. You are consistently communicating who you are and what you think without considering the implications of that action. When speaking in the public sphere, you actively exercise power and assume all responsibility for the consequences of what you do or do not say. You are capable of creating a concise and organized idea that manifests great change. You are equally capable of wasting away the time each audience member has given you with an unfocused and ill-prepared presentation. Undoubtedly, what you chose to say and not say reflects your character.

### Ethical Content:

1. **Ethical decision-making is rarely clear-cut.** Our personal ethics take shape from our values and these can frequently conflict with one another. “Right” and “wrong” concepts are complex and vary from individual to individual. Through experience and reflection, orators are obligated to think deeply about judgments and develop them thoroughly.
2. **Ethical decision-making varies given the context.** Speaking publicly puts yourself in an arena to display true beliefs through sincere statements. It is our job to fully understand the environment for which we speak and appropriately prepare for an ethical demonstration of your ideas.

### Things to stay away from:

1. **Plagiarism** – it is necessary to give credit where credit is due. When taking notes, *always* reference the primary source of your information. The University of Arkansas academic expectations can be found online at, <http://honesty.uark.edu/sanction-rubric/>.
2. **Misinformation and Disinformation** – making dishonest interpretations of information has major consequences. Do not make counterfactual statements, play word games to avoid truths, or manipulate facts/data to favor your argument by leaving out certain truths. The concept known as moral literacy explains that ethics sensitivity, ethical reasoning and moral imagination are all critical components of speaking appropriately (Tuana, 2007).
  - a. **Misinformation:** the unintended action of spreading false or inaccurate information. This can be achieved by providing things such as outdated studies, referencing unreliable sources of information, and/or
  - b. **Disinformation:** a purposeful manipulation of content to favor your argument. This comes in the form of aligning statistics and facts to highlight your ideas while simultaneously leaving out statistics and facts that do not highlight your stance. Similarly, fabricated statistics and facts that aid your argument are forms of disinformation.
3. **Oversimplification** – this often leads to logical fallacies such as the bandwagon fallacy, ad hoc fallacy, red-herring, and so on. By oversimplifying, you’re making it impossible for audience member’s to rationalize the information presented. For more information regarding logical fallacies, check the WCOB Communication Center list of resources.

Balance is the key to success:

1. Use language descriptively and inclusively *without* causing pain and/or offense.
2. Understand the spectrum ranging from *too little* emotional appeal to *abusive* emotional appeal.
3. Integrate compelling persuasive appeals (i.e. extended examples, metaphors, logos/ethos/pathos, etc.) in an attempt to avoid simplistic persuasive techniques (fallacies).