Public relations is a process that combines theories and principles to establish relationships. The communication process is instrumental in the success or failure of establishing positive relationships. Each relationship will be defined by this communication process. Public relations practitioners are expected to be at the forefront of a company’s communication efforts. They will often serve as the liaison between a company and its publics, both internal and external.

When preparing speech material, a public relations practitioner should answer the following:

- **Is the company/information credible?** If the information is incomprehensible, then it may change the meaning of the information or give the impression that the company is not reputable. If a company cannot perform the basic communication skills or it does not take the time and effort to insure accurate information, then the credibility of the company becomes questionable.

- **Is the information communicated on the appropriate level to insure the targeted audience will be able to comprehend it?**

- **Does the communication serve the purpose it was intended for?** Does it provide information, entertain, or persuade an audience as intended?

Oral communication is as important when it is implemented in a public relations plan or campaign. Much about a company will be decided based on the image it portrays. This image will often be based on the practices of public relations practitioners. Public relations practitioners will often be called upon to speak on behalf of a company. The public will often decide how to feel about a particular company, or will often base an opinion about a particular company on the performance of their public relations practitioner. For these reasons, a public relations practitioner must be able to:

- Speak to a variety of publics, sometimes within the same conversation,
- Represent the ideas, and actions of a company in oral communication so as to accurately communicate these to various publics.
- Serve as the voice of a company whenever the occasion may surface.
- Be a clear, calm communicator in the face of diversity.
- Handle oral communications with media outlets in both planned and spontaneous instances.

The basics of speaking are, for the most part, consistent across disciplines. Knowing the expectations of a discipline is an important part of adapting to your audience, however. The papers in the “Speaking, in my opinion…” series do not represent an official statement from the department. They do, however, give you an introduction to different faculty opinions on effective speaking.
Much of the perception of a company will be developed by individuals based on their impression of the public relations practitioner and how he or she performs; a positive impression of a practitioner will reflect positively on a company and vice versa. Public relations practitioners must be able to speak to a variety of audiences but also must be able to employ critical thinking skills extemporaneously. Practitioners are often in situations where they may be asked for information they may not have been prepared to convey, such as when dealing with media outlets in a crisis situation.

Public relations practitioners are also responsible for strategic planning and implementation of these plans. For this reason, practitioners should be able to incorporate and combine critical thinking, written communication and oral communication in order to successfully create, implement and execute these plans. Often it is the responsibility of the public relations practitioner to interview essential personnel as research in strategic planning. These individuals must be able to communicate in such a way that they can gain the necessary information, and interpret this information accurately in order to create the most effective strategic plan. Individuals must be able to communicate with others, to think critically in processing the information and assessing which information is pertinent and what additional information may be needed.

Once the practitioner completes his or her research, he or she must also be able to communicate orally the results of the research, the plan that has been developed, and the expectations of each involved party. The practitioner will also be expected to give oral updates and communications on evaluations of the success or detriment of the plan.

1. Do not make assumptions about your audience; tell them what you want them to know.
2. Speak in a conversational style, do not be patronizing or condescending.
3. Consumers expect transparency and full disclosure; therefore “no comment” is never an acceptable answer. If you do not know the answer simply say you do not have all of the information but will return with more information as soon as you receive it.
4. Everything is “on the record.”
5. Tell your audience what you want them to do.
6. When speaking, present appropriate evidence to support the information you are presenting to your audience.
7. Be clear, concise and brief. Do not “string out/along” speaking events-time is money for everybody.