Public Speaking Vocabulary Terms

1. abstract A summary of a magazine or journal article, written by someone other than the original author.

2. abstract words Words that refer to ideas or concepts.

3. acceptance speech A speech that gives thanks for a gift, an award, or some other form of public recognition.

4. active listening Giving undivided attention to a speaker in a genuine effort to understand the speaker's point of view.

5. ad hominem A fallacy that attacks the person rather than dealing with the real issue in dispute.

6. alliteration Repetition of the initial consonant sound of close or adjoining words.

7. analogical reasoning Reasoning in which a speaker compares two similar cases and infers that what is true for the first case is also true for the second.

8. articulation The physical production of particular speech sounds.

9. bandwagon A fallacy which assumes that because something is popular, it is therefore good, correct, or desirable.

10.bibliography A list of all the sources used in preparing a speech.

11. causal reasoning Reasoning that seeks to establish the relationship between causes and effects.

12. cliché A trite or overused expression.

13. commemorative speech A speech that pays tribute to a person, a group of people, an institution, or an idea.

14. comparative advantages order A method of organizing persuasive speeches in which each main point explains why a speaker's solution to a problem is preferable to other proposed solutions.

15. concrete words Words that refer to tangible objects.

16. connotative meaning The meaning suggested by the associations or emotions triggered by a word or phrase.

17. contrast A statement of the differences among two or more people, events, ideas, etc

18. conversational quality Presenting a speech so it sounds spontaneous no matter how many times it has been rehearsed.

19. creating common ground A technique in which a speaker connects himself or herself with the values, attitudes, or experiences of the audience.

20. credibility The audience's perception of whether a speaker is qualified to speak on a given topic.

21. crescendo ending A conclusion in which the speech builds to a zenith of power and intensity.

22. delivery cues Directions in a speaking outline to help a speaker remember how she or he wants to deliver key parts of the speech.

23. denotative meaning The literal or dictionary meaning of a word or phrase.

24. dialect A variety of a language distinguished by variations of accent, grammar, or vocabulary.

25. direct quotation Testimony that is presented word for word.

26. dissolve ending A conclusion that generates emotional appeal by fading step by step to a dramatic final statement.

27. either-or A fallacy that forces listeners to choose between two alternatives when more than two alternatives exist.

28. ethics The branch of philosophy that deals with issues of right and wrong in human affairs.

29. ethos The name used by Aristotle for what modern students of communication refer to as credibility.

30. evidence Supporting materials used to prove or disprove something.

31. example A specific case used to illustrate or to represent a group of people, ideas, conditions, experiences, or the like.

32. expert testimony Testimony from people who are recognized experts in their fields.

33. extemporaneous speech A carefully prepared and rehearsed speech that is presented from a brief set of notes.

34. fallacy An error in reasoning.

35. false cause An error in causal reasoning in which a speaker mistakenly assumes that because one event follows another, the first event is the cause of the second. This error is often known by its Latin name, post hoc, ergo propter hoc, meaning 'after this, therefore because of this.'

36. feedback The messages, usually nonverbal, sent from a listener to a speaker.

37. gestures Motions of a speaker's hands or arms during a speech.

38. hasty generalization An error in reasoning from specific instances, in which a speaker jumps to a general conclusion on the basis of insufficient evidence.

39. hypothetical example An example that describes an imaginary or fictitious situation.

40. identification A process in which speakers seek to create a bond with the audience by emphasizing common values, goals, and experiences.

41. imagery The use of vivid language to create mental images of objects, actions, or ideas.

42. impromptu speech A speech delivered with little or no immediate preparation.

43. inclusive language Language that does not stereotype, demean, or patronize people on the basis of gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other factors.

44. informative speech A speech designed to convey knowledge and understanding.

45. jargon The specialized or technical language of a trade, profession, or similar group.

46. logos The name used by Aristotle for the logical appeal of a speaker. The two major elements of logos are evidence and reasoning.

47. metaphor An implicit comparison, not introduced with the word 'like' or 'as,' between two things that are essentially different yet have something in common.

48. monotone A constant pitch or tone of voice.

49. nonverbal communication Communication based on a person's use of voice and body, rather than on the use of words.

50. parallelism The similar arrangement of a pair or series of related words, phrases, or sentences.

51. paraphrase To restate or summarize an author's ideas in one's own words.

52. patchwork plagiarism Stealing ideas or language from two or three sources and passing them off as one's own.

53. pathos The name used by Aristotle for what modern students of communication refer to as emotional appeal.

54. periodical database A research aid that catalogues articles from a large number of journals or magazines.

55. persuasive speech A speech designed to change or reinforce the audience's beliefs or actions.

56. plagiarism Presenting another person's language or ideas as one's own.

57. preparation outline A detailed outline developed during the process of speech preparation that includes the title, specific purpose, central idea, introduction, main points, subpoints, connectives, conclusion, and bibliography of a speech.

58. red herring A fallacy that introduces an irrelevant issue to divert attention from the subject under discussion.

59. repetition Reiteration of the same word or set of words at the beginning or end of successive clauses or sentences.

60. rhetorical question A question that the audience answers mentally rather than out loud.

61. simile An explicit comparison, introduced with the word 'like' or 'as,' between things that are essentially different yet have something in common

62. stereotyping Creating an oversimplified image of a particular group of people, usually by assuming that all members of the group are alike.

63. target audience The portion of the whole audience that the speaker most wants to persuade.

64. transition A word or phrase that indicates when a speaker has finished one thought and is moving on to another.

65. visualization Mental imaging in which a speaker vividly pictures himself or herself giving a successful presentation.

66. vocal variety Changes in a speaker's rate, pitch, and volume that give the voice variety and expressiveness.

67. vocalized pause A pause that occurs when a speaker fills the silence between words with vocalizations such as 'uh,' 'er,' and 'um.'\