

Self-Critique Assignment Description

By writing self-critiques, students should refine their abilities to:

- Critically analyze all aspects of speech composition and delivery
- Distinguish between weak and strong support
- Identify unclear speech arrangement and identify possible solutions
- Diagnose your delivery problems and propose remedies

Description

Like many other arts, the best public speakers are highly self-reflective about their skills. We all have certain strengths and areas that need improvement. These self-critiques are designed to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses. These are not arguments aimed at raising your grade. As such, you should honestly analyze your speech. It is often difficult to distance yourself from your speech in order to reflect on it critically, but you must. After you deliver your speech in class, you should view the DVD of your speech and write a 1 to 1½ page single-spaced (600-700 words) paper that critiques your speech content and delivery. Even though you're watching yourself on the DVD, don't obsess about your physical performance. A speech is everything going on between you and that audience—physical behaviors are important, but are only one part of the much larger communication transaction. Think about how you are explaining your evidence to that audience, or how you are highlighting the arrangement of your speech. You will write a self-critique after your impromptu speech and your persuasive speech.

How to view your DVD

1. You should plan to view your DVD on one of the two school-days after you speak. If you speak on a Tuesday, you should plan to visit Odegaard on Wednesday or Thursday. If you speak on a Thursday, you can watch your DVD over the weekend, but it will also be available on the following Monday and Tuesday.
2. To watch your DVD, go to the Media Center on the mezzanine level of Odegaard. To reach the Media Center walk in the front doors, up one flight of stairs, straight back to the glass service windows, and you're there. Request your DVD by your instructor's name, your class section, and the date on which you spoke.
3. The Media Center will check your DVD out to you for 2-4 hours, but you should try to review your speech immediately and return the DVD ASAP in case other people in your class need it. There's no need to hurry – take the time to complete your assignment thoroughly, but don't keep the DVD with you while you do other work in the library.
4. If your DVD is unavailable, chances are that someone else has it checked out. If you suspect that there is a problem with your DVD or that it is missing, please notify the Media Center and your instructor.

What to critique

As you view your performance DVD and write your self-critique, you should address the following questions:

1. What do you think you did well?
2. What didn't go as well as you had planned?
3. What will you do differently the next time you give a speech?

Please use the questions listed on the peer critique assignment description to guide your analysis of your speech. In writing your self-critique, please do not focus exclusively on your delivery (as is the tendency in such self-reflections). In addition to critiquing your physical and verbal performance, also think about your structure, evidence, and argument. Cite specific passages from your speech to support your critical claims. If you say that you had good transitions, provide an example of where you had a good transition. If you say that you needed more evidence, discuss a point that lacked sufficient evidence.

Your paper should be written in paragraph form (not a bullet point response). You should actually analyze your speech; do not simply write a single sentence observation about each aspect of your speech. This is a unique opportunity to see your speech as others saw it. Don't be too hard on yourself, but view this as another step in your ongoing improvement as a speaker.

Evaluation

A self critique will receive a \checkmark if:

1. the critique is an engaged investigation of the entire speech and its strengths and limitations
2. the critique analyzes invention, arrangement, and style, as well as delivery
3. the critique references specific parts of the observed speech
4. the critique identifies both strengths and weaknesses
5. the critique identifies specific things to improve

A self critique will receive a - if:

1. the critique fails to actively engage the speech as a critical object
2. the critique only discusses delivery
3. the critique is overly vague
4. the critique identifies only strengths or weaknesses
5. the critique fails to identify things to improve
6. the critique only provides a summary of the observed speech
7. the critique is turned in past the due date

SAMPLE SELF CRITIQUE

Myname Here
COM 220 – Section BH
Persuasive Speech Self Critique
DUE: November 17, 2005

NUCLEAR ENERGY IS A SAFE AND RELIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO FOSSIL FUELS

In general, I felt the speech went well, though upon viewing the DVD there are a number of areas I would like to improve upon. To further my thesis that nuclear energy a safe and reliable alternative to consuming fossil fuels, I decided to use the additional benefits model. I thought this was best for the amount of information I needed to provide. I had three main points: the existing concerns of opponents of nuclear energy, a response to the concerns, and the additional benefits of nuclear energy.

There were a number of things in this speech that went well, especially in terms of invention and delivery. I felt my argument incorporated a significant amount of *logos*. I addressed the concerns that the “fence-sitters” on nuclear energy have, and attempted to convince them that, while valid, their concerns have been naturally addressed with rapid technological advances. In order to show these were valid claims, I talked a bit about the threats posed by meltdowns, nuclear waste, and terrorism. I thought that I was quite fair to the environmentalist position and provided enough evidence to prove that these were actual concerns they held. In order to address these concerns, I responded to each concern in my second main point. I didn’t argue that these concerns about nuclear energy were wrong, but that technology had reduced each of the three main threats posed by nuclear energy. I was able to use a lot of evidence here to show that nuclear energy is now much safer than it once was. As a way of building on the second point, I wanted to demonstrate that a small risk was worth the significant benefits gained through using nuclear energy. All in all, this was a fair argument that tried to address fence-sitters and dispel some of the outdated myths about nuclear energy. In terms of delivery, I liked the way I was engaging the audience. I tried to do things to liven the conversation, considering I was talking about such a dry topic. I took pauses and asked rhetorical questions in order to provide “mental breaks” for the audience. I also liked the way I walked around during my speech, although next time I want to be more deliberate and practice walking at key points, phrases, or pauses.

There were a number of things that I would change if I were to deliver this speech again. Each point could have used more evidence. I thought my additional benefits section was strong, but it would have been stronger if I had provided more information about how nuclear energy is better for the environment than fossil fuels. I would have also liked to talk about desalination more. I forgot to add in my speech that desalination can be done with energy generated with oil but that it would still pollute the air. I don’t think I needed more statistics, but some examples would have helped make this issue easier to visualize. Each point was a bit dry in spots. I needed to step back from the evidence in each sub-point and summarize it for the audience. At times, it felt like I was simply moving from one piece of evidence to the next. I had done a lot of research and I wanted to be able to use all this research, but points two and three might have benefited from more summary. I liked my flying analogy in point two and I think I might have

used more of these types of explanations. Some things I didn't like about my delivery were that I said things that I told my self REPEATEDLY not to say, such as "You should support me." When I watched myself on the DVD, I noticed that I quickly caught myself saying such things, and had to correct myself. This just made things cumbersome and awkward. If I had practiced more, I would have been able to better avoid such statements. I also didn't like the transition I had between my first and second points. I didn't mean to sound sarcastic. I wanted to just take a second to provide some sort of comic relief after discussing serious and daunting information.

All in all, this was a strong speech, but for my next speech, I want to work more on developing and delivering parts of the speech that summarize the evidence more. Also, this speech was *logos* intensive. I would like to be able to incorporate more *ethos* and *pathos* into my speeches. The nature of the subject matter lends itself to *logos*, but some additional testimony or solid examples of the benefits of nuclear energy would add to overall persuasiveness of my position. I am comfortable with my delivery, but I would like to get over some of the rough spots where I seem to be reaching for a planned phrase.