

Developing Foundational Oral Communication Skills in Intermediate USP Communication (COM2) Courses

This document provides a variety of strategies for teaching foundational oral communication skills in COM2 courses. These strategies should provide ideas about the kinds of instruction and practice that are relevant as well as illustrating the ways that oral communication activities can be applied to all of the course outcomes.

Overview of the COM2 Course

Students will develop skills in written, oral, and digital communication as appropriate to specific disciplines and courses at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced level. Through repeated instruction, practice and feedback, the communication sequence will emphasize and progressively develop transferrable skills for students' academic work and future professions. Intermediate courses (*Com2*) will emphasize foundational oral and digital communication skills and build on writing skills.

Required Student Learning Outcomes. Courses must meet all seven of the COM2 learning outcomes:

- 1. Develop and share written, oral, and digital messages through a variety of assignments that include discipline-based or interdisciplinary purposes, forms, and audiences.**
 - Providing instruction and practice with messages that include different purposes such as informing, reporting, persuading, etc.
 - Understanding the style and conventions of oral messages in different forms, such as when presenting persuasive messages, proposals, academic papers, reports, etc.
 - Conducting audience analysis and understanding how attitudes, beliefs, values and other characteristics of the audience and the speaking situation influence argument structure, language and delivery.
- 2. Find, analyze, evaluate, and document information appropriately using a variety of sources.**
 - Finding, evaluating, and using appropriate and credible written, oral and digital resources.
 - Supporting points with adequate evidence from a variety of sources.
 - Citing credible references appropriately in oral assignments (and in visual aids)
- 3. Understand the different purposes of written, oral, and digital messages and employ appropriate organizational strategies, including developing thesis statements and main ideas.**
 - Explaining the differences/similarities in written and oral communication.
 - Explaining how digital communication is used to support written and oral messages.
 - Explaining how goal or purpose influences structure and strategy of a speech.
 - Developing clear and concise thesis statements and clear main points in support of the thesis.
 - Choosing appropriate organizational strategies that support the goal or purpose of the speech. (For example, organizing informative messages topically or chronologically; organizing persuasive messages by refutation, problem/solution, or comparison based on the goal of the speech.
- 4. Make effective use of multiple drafts, revisions, progressive assignments, computer technology, peer and instructor comments, and collaboration in the achievement of a final work of communication.**
 - Providing opportunities for progressively complex speaking and writing assignments.
 - Providing opportunities to develop organization patterns, main points and support through feedback and revision of outlines before presentations.

- Providing opportunity for peer and instructor feedback/critique on presentations or papers before moving on to more complex messages.
- Providing opportunities to critique others that can allow students to improve their own communication.

5. Observe the accepted conventions including spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery and documentation in oral, written, and digital messages.

- Teaching conventional elements of spelling, punctuation, and grammar in written presentation documents and visual aids.
- Providing instruction in conventional elements of introductions include gaining attention, credibility, thesis, and preview of thesis and points.
- Teaching conventional elements of conclusions include a summary of main points and an effort to provide closure.
- Teaching conventions of oral communication that focus on clarity and the ability of audiences to follow the message, including:
 - Clearly stated thesis and points
 - Simple and parallel sentence construction
 - Focused organization structures
 - Repetition through previews, main points, and reviews
 - Transitions

6. Deliver prepared presentations in a natural, confident, and conversational manner, displaying nonverbal communication that is consistent with and supportive of the oral message.

- Providing instruction and practice in “natural” conversational delivery, which includes using notes appropriately and interacting with audience rather than reading or memorizing speeches.
- Providing instruction and practice in “confident” delivery, as expressed through:
 - Appropriate vocal characteristics such as variety, rate, volume, and pronunciation.
 - Appropriate nonverbal characteristics such as eye contact, expression, gestures, posture, and appearance.

7. Interact effectively with audience members, engage opposing viewpoints constructively, and demonstrate active listening skills.

- Providing instruction and opportunities for practice in the following elements of effective interaction, including:
 - Recognizing audience member’s needs and concerns.
 - Tailoring messages in an ethical way towards audience attitudes, beliefs and values.
 - Noticing and responding to audience verbal and nonverbal feedback.
 - Engaging opposing viewpoints constructively in message preparation and when interacting with audience members.
 - Listening actively to other speakers and audience members.
 - Critically analyzing oral messages.