Persuasive Speaking

Consider your topic:
There are four primary goals for persuasive speaking:

1. Adoption: getting people to start to do something [adopt an exercise program]
2. Discontinuance: getting people to stop doing something [stop letting your kids watch violence on TV]
3. Continuance: motivate people to keep doing something [continue giving money to a specific charity]
4. Deterrence: getting people not to start doing something [avoid smoking and other people who do smoke]

The persuasive speech thesis statement takes the form of a proposition that requires proof. There are three kinds of propositions:

1. Proposition of fact: something either is or is not
   - Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone.
   - More than two cups of coffee a day increases the chance of pancreatic cancer.
2. Proposition of value: a thing is good or bad, wise or foolish, just or unjust, ethical or unethical, beautiful or ugly, competent or incompetent
   - It is wrong to try to avoid jury duty.
   - Charlie Parker was the greatest sax player ever.
3. Proposition of policy: a specific person or group should do a specific thing
   - The federal government should legalize certain drugs for private use.
   - You should send your children to private schools.

Consider your audience:
The key to success as a persuasive speaker is adapting your message to a specific audience, as well as incorporating specific appeals into your speech.

1. Apathetic, Undecided or Uninformed
   - Shift beliefs and attitudes in your direction. An emphasis on evidence and credibility with enough motive appeals to gain and maintain their interest
   - Demonstrate how issues affect vital interests of the audience
   - Take care to establish your credibility
   - Message should be clear and illuminate your position
   - Blend emotional appeals in with the logical appeals, but place a little more emphasis on convincing them of the correctness of your position
   - Once you win them over, motivate to action. For example, ask them to learn more about the issues and give them resources. Ask them to get more involved and tell them how

2. Uninterested
   - Make a special effort to relate the material to what they know and are concerned about
   - An emphasis on evidence and credibility with slightly stronger motive appeals to create an interesting and creative presentation that will keep them interested
   - Once you engage their interest, follow tips for interested audiences

3. Moderately Favorable
   - You must overcome the general tendency not to act
   - Use a balance of logical and motive appeals
   - Express good will toward the audience
   - Strengthen beliefs and attitudes (but don’t waste time arguing a point with which they already agree)
• Strengthen against counter-persuasion
• Design the speech to get the audience to take specific action – overt, observable behavior (write, vote, join, etc.). Ask for a little more than you think you might get.
  Give the audience clear and specific information on what they need to do
• Get a public commitment to take action. Consider using handouts and fact sheets
• Make the results of the solution/action seem real and possible

4. Highly Favorable
• Heighten existing attitudes, emotions and actions
• Liberal use of motive appeals and mild exaggeration possible
• Create a sense of identity and group cohesion. Make them feel good about your mission
• Openly acknowledge the role they have in solving the problem.
• Prepare them to carry your message to others. Give them new information, strategies and arguments that can be used to promote their cause.
• Be super-representative of their values and commitment.
• Make the results of the solution/action seem real and possible.
• Consider how best to direct their action. Do they need to recruit, get the word out, donate money, etc.?

5. Mildly to Moderately Opposed
• Set realistic goals for a single speech to change or shift beliefs and attitudes a small amount
• Know the opposition arguments as well as your own so that you can analyze whether the source of their opposition is from misinformation or based in values
• Begin with common beliefs or values (common ground)
• Carefully establish your credibility. Let them know that you have considered the question from their point of view
• Avoid being snide, defensive, arrogant, paranoid, sarcastic or patronizing
• Use extensive evidence from sources acceptable to the audience. Be certain your information is accurate
• Avoid exaggeration and motive appeals that might backfire. The very careful use of humor can ease tension.
• Acknowledge their point of view and concerns wherever possible without betraying your own values
• Have a limited and appropriate call for action

Consider yourself:
Have you established common ground and credibility with the audience:
  1. Competence – have you researched your subject, and brought your unique knowledge and expertise to the subject?
  2. Charisma – are you enthusiastic about your subject? Are you likeable? Are you speaking to each audience member?
  3. Character – are you honest and impartial? Can we trust you?

Another way of thinking about this is to use the Aristotle model of effective persuasion:
  1. Logos (logic, quality of evidence)
  2. Pathos (emotional quality, appeals [Maslow’s Hierarchy, Contemporary American Values])
  3. Ethos (the speaker’s perceived credibility)

Consider your content:
The content of your persuasive speech should reflect a clear understanding of the issues and use strong supporting evidence. You will be more effective if you:
  • Relate your argument to the lives of your audience
• Be certain of the accuracy of your supporting material
• Cite important sources
• Demonstrate commitment to your cause
• Use vivid and interesting material

Consider your Evidence:
Does your evidence (support for your problem and solution) measure up to the tests and types? An audience can be fickle, and always requires good evidence to be persuaded.

1. Test of Evidence  Accuracy
   a. Source
   b. Credibility
   c. Citations
   d. Current
   e. Sufficient
   f. Relevant
   g. Consistent
   h. Appropriate

2. Types of Evidence
   a. Narratives (anecdotes, etc.)
   b. Statistics
   c. Examples/Illustrations
   d. Testimony

Consider your Appeals:
What type of appeals are you making to the audience? These can occur throughout your speech to support any of your steps. Most common appeals include:

A. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
   a. Physiological (air, water, food, sleep, sex, comfort, health, etc.)
   b. Safety (home, family, stability and consistency, financial security)
   c. Love (love, belonging, friends, family, etc.)
   d. Esteem (success, recognition, competency, attention, admiration, altruism, etc.)
   e. Self-actualization (knowledge, peace, self-fulfillment, self-improvement, etc.)

B. Contemporary American Values
   a. A comfortable life (a prosperous life)
   b. An exciting life (a stimulating, active life)
   c. A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution)
   d. A world at peace (free of war and conflict)
   e. A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)
   f. Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
   g. Family security (taking care of loved ones)
   h. Freedom (independence, free choice)
   i. Happiness (contentedness)
   j. Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)
   k. Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
   l. National security (protection from attack)
   m. Pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
   n. Salvation (saved, eternal life)
   o. Self-respect (self-esteem)
   p. Social recognition (respect, admiration)
   q. True friendship (close companionship)
   r. Wisdom (mature understanding of life)
## Tips for a better persuasive speech!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attention Step</td>
<td>Involves the audience, creates information hunger. Exciting. Appropriate and related to the speech.</td>
<td>Simple rhetorical question, rushed, hurried, or non-existent. Often not related to the speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Step</td>
<td>The problem is well-defined, related to the audience, well-supported with examples and evidence.</td>
<td>Problem is not clear, unknown, or not defined. No support or examples used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction Step</td>
<td>The solution is well-defined, related to the audience, well-supported with examples and evidence; is realistic and measurable (something the audience could actually do)</td>
<td>The solution is unclear, unknown, not defined, or implied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization Step</td>
<td>This step is well-adapted to the audience and gives them a clear and vivid image of doing the solution – a clear “picture”</td>
<td>Skipped the visualization step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Step</td>
<td>The speaker provides specific steps or measures for the audience to do; gets them “on their way” to the solution.</td>
<td>Action is vague, unclear, or non-existent. The audience has no idea what you want them to do – now – at the end of the speech. “Think about…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Ground</td>
<td>Adapted to the needs and interests of the audience. Present yourself as “just one of you – the audience.”</td>
<td>No commonality provided. Audience can’t relate to you, the problem, or the solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Speaker demonstrates character, charisma and competence. Information, statistics, etc., supported with references.</td>
<td>Speaker lacks credibility. Sources not referenced; statistics not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>Sources are cited in an effective manner, giving proper credit to the authors and establishing credibility, reflecting research conducted.</td>
<td>Elementary citing of sources, or no mention of sources. “According to Pete Strauss in an article in the Seattle PI on page B-6 on February 12, 2001, which I retrieved from the web…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive &amp; Appeals</td>
<td>A variety of appeals were used (Maslow’s, Contemporary American Values, rational/emotional) in an ethical way to support the action and involve the audience.</td>
<td>Appeals exaggerated, unrealistic, unfounded or inappropriate. “You should do it – because.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>Transitions are used artfully between each section and main points of the speech. Internal summaries and previews are used to help guide the audience through the speech.</td>
<td>Transitions are bland, nor not used. “Now that I’ve told you about…, I’m going to tell you about…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Aids</td>
<td>(Optional) Visual aids are used effectively and appropriately to supplement and enhance the speech. Clear, concise, and easy to see and read.</td>
<td>Visual aids are confusing, inappropriate, or not used. (It’s clear that the visual aid is present for the sake of having a visual aid!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Needs Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
<td>Eye contact is made with each and every member of the audience</td>
<td>Eye contact is not made with the audience. (Looking up, down at notes, or speaking to 1 or 2 audience members, only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Respectful, considerate, and appropriate to the audience. Develops credibility.</td>
<td>Inappropriate to the audience due to slang, jargon, lack of definitions, colloquialisms, condescending, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Extemporaneous</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures</td>
<td>Not distracting – adds to the speech by supplementing the message.</td>
<td>Distracting – manipulators, repetitive gestures, hand wringing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posture</td>
<td>Upright stance, feet together; respect for self and audience (credibility)</td>
<td>Slouching, leaning, legs crossed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Not distracting – keeps audience involved, casual and comfortable</td>
<td>Distracting – nervous jiggling, rocking, stiff, rigid, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Attire is appropriate or coordinated with the presentation; if not applicable, business or business casual attire; displays respect for self and audience (credibility)</td>
<td>Attire appears to have not been considered; disheveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume</td>
<td>Voice is projected so that the entire audience can easily hear</td>
<td>Voice is quiet, mumbled, etc., or Voice is too loud and appears as though the speaker is yelling at the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Speaker is using a normal, casual rate of speech for delivery</td>
<td>Speaker is rushed or abnormally drawled, impeding the comprehensibility of the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch</td>
<td>Speaker’s pitch is at normal conversational level, with normal drop at end of sentences.</td>
<td>Speaker’s pitch is elevated (sometimes due to inadequate breathing) and/or rise at end of sentences similar to questioning (i.e., raised pitch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td>Pronunciation of words enhances understanding</td>
<td>Incomplete pronunciation of words, dropping of syllables, mispronunciation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disfluencies</td>
<td>Lack of distracting vocal mannerisms</td>
<td>Excessive vocal mannerisms including: uh, uhm, like, you know, I mean, basically, and stuff like that, and, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal Variety</td>
<td>Casual raising and lowering of voice to provide for emphasis</td>
<td>Monotone delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing</td>
<td>Normal breathing, allowing for unencumbered speech</td>
<td>Short, shallow breathing, causing elevated pitch, shortened and choppy sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>Speech flows from beginning to end</td>
<td>Speech is choppy throughout, caused by excessive pauses, disfluencies, undeveloped main points, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Aids</td>
<td>(Optional) Good interaction, showing practice and planning</td>
<td>Clumsy interaction, fumbling, distracting, or obstructing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Persuasive Speech Feedback

After each speaker during the persuasive speeches, I will solicit feedback from the audience by asking several of the following questions:

1. Did the speaker address 5 distinct steps in Monroe’s Motivated Sequence?
   a. Attention Step
   b. Need Step
   c. Satisfaction Step
   d. Visualization Step
   e. Action Step

2. Is the speaker’s problem (Need) clearly defined?

3. Do you know what the speaker wants you to do about the problem (Satisfaction)?

4. Can you see yourself doing the speaker’s proposed solution (Visualization)?

5. Did the speaker provide you with a specific action that you could do now (Action)?

6. Were you aware of the speaker’s movement (transitions) through the Motivated Sequence; did they provide a good “road map”?

7. How did the speaker establish credibility:
   a. charisma (enthusiasm, likeability or pathos)
   b. character (honesty, trustworthiness, or ethos)
   c. competence (knowledge, expertise, or logos)

8. Did the speaker establish common ground with the audience? Can you relate to or identify with the problems and solutions the speaker has provided?

9. What types of appeals did you hear the speaker make to the audience?
   a. emotional appeals
   b. rational appeals
   c. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
      i. Physiological needs
      ii. Safety needs
      iii. Love needs
      iv. Esteem needs
      v. Self-actualization needs
   d. Contemporary American Values

10. How did the speaker’s form (as opposed to content) help (or not help) to establish common ground and credibility?
    a. eye contact
    b. language choice and use
    c. gestures, posture, movement, impression management

11. What one piece of advice for the speaker’s form would you offer to help them with their group presentation?