

Lesson 2

Creating Better Speeches



Key Words

articulate
commemorative
demographics
dramatic statement
descriptive
eye contact
impromptu
logical
modulation
operational
persuasive
statement
tone
vocal qualities
volume

What You Will Learn to Do

- Write a speech for a specific purpose

Linked Core Abilities

- Communicate using verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written techniques

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Identify ways to create interesting speech introductions
- Compare different types of speeches and different occasions for which speeches are used
- Describe how to organize effective speeches
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

Throughout your life you will be asked to give speeches. These speeches may be formal presentations or just a few words at an informal occasion. Whatever the situation, you will probably feel nervous. Don't worry; this is natural. Most people become anxious when someone asks them to talk in front of a group. Relax, establish **eye contact** with your audience, and tell them what you want them to know in your own words. After the first minute, you should begin to feel more comfortable. You will then be well on your way to delivering a successful speech. This lesson shows you how to create effective speeches of all types.

One of the best ways to be a successful speaker is to be completely prepared. Although this may not be possible with an **impromptu** speech, preparing for other types of speeches, such as a **commemorative** speech, will require an organized and designed speech.

The six basic steps of preparing for public speaking are as follows:

- **Analyze the purpose and audience**
- **Conduct your research**
- **Support your points**
- **Organize your information**
- **Draft and edit your speech**
- **Practice, practice, practice**

Analyze Purpose and Audience

It's important to understand the purpose of your speech as well as to whom the speech is directed. Is your speech to sway opinion? Is it to report on a specific topic? Does your audience know anything about the topic, or are you presenting a new idea? This section discusses these issues when creating and presenting your speech.

Purpose

It is important to identify the purpose of your speech because it will keep you focused as you analyze your audience and begin to organize your speech.

The purpose of a speech depends on the type of speech you are giving (or required to give), your topic, and the audience level. In some cases, there may be a general purpose and/or a specific purpose. You may make decisions along the way based on the purpose of your speech. The general purpose for an informative speech might simply be to inform the audience about your topic. A specific purpose, however, states the main idea (or ideas) of the speech. The specific purpose should be written in one sentence to ensure that its intent is clear and concise. For example, if you are giving a speech to an eighth grade graduating class on the advantages of taking Army JROTC, the following statements could represent your topic, general purpose, and specific purpose:

Key Note Term

eye contact – looking someone directly in the eyes

Key Note Terms

impromptu – without planning or rehearsal

commemorative – honoring the memory of; speaking in honor of

- **Topic.** Army JROTC
- **General Purpose.** To inform eighth graders about JROTC
- **Specific Purpose.** To inform the graduating class at Center Middle School about the advantages of taking Army JROTC in their ninth grade year at Lakeview High School

Audience

The goal of every speech and speechmaker is to win a response from the listeners. To accomplish this, you need to have some basic knowledge about your audience, which might include the following:

- What knowledge does the audience already have about this topic?
- What additional information will the listeners most want to know about the topic?
- What particular aspects of the topic will be most relevant to the audience?
- What is the audience's attitude about this topic?
- How can you best gain and hold their interest and attention?
- What do you need to think about as far as language level of the audience?
- What interests do you share with your listeners?
- What is the occasion of the speech?
- How much time should you allow for your speech?

Additionally, you should try to learn some **demographics** about the audience. Demographics are statistical information about groups of people. These data tell you about group characteristics, not individuals. You can learn about the audience's:

- Age
- Occupation
- Religion
- Ethnic or cultural background
- Gender
- Physical characteristics
- Economic status
- Educational background
- Political affiliations

You can learn about your audience by personal observation, information from others, interviews, and questionnaires.

The more you know about your audience, the more you can gear your talk toward their needs and interests, and the less likely you will be to offend anyone.

The best speakers focus on the audience. Good speakers know that the best collection of information will not substitute for a good audience analysis.

Key Note Term

demographics – statistical information about groups of people used to deal with the vital and social conditions of people and cultures

Select a Topic

Sometimes a topic is assigned to you; other times you are given the opportunity to select your own topic. There are several methods that can be used to make a selection:

- **Analyze your own interests.**
- **List broad categories of topics or subtopics under one broad category.**
- **Engage in personal brainstorming to list as many topics as you can think of in a short amount of time.**
- **Identify current topics of interest in the news.**
- **Cluster topics to think of a concept or an idea about which you know something. Write and circle that topic in the middle of the page and then spend about ten minutes letting your mind freely associate other topics related to the concept. This is different from just listing various topics because with clustering, all the topics are related in some way. After you have finished, you can pick the pieces that can be developed into a speech. Ask yourself the following questions:**
 - **Are you interested in the topic?**
 - **Will you enjoy talking about this topic?**
 - **Do you want to entertain, inform, or persuade?**
 - **What can you do to make the topic more interesting?**
 - **Will the topic offend some members of your audience?**
 - **Does the occasion of the speech have a special purpose?**
 - **Do you know anything about this topic?**
 - **Do you have any interest in learning about this topic?**

After you have selected your topic, confirm whether it is appropriate for your audience and for yourself. Is it appropriate ethically, and is it appropriate for the occasion? Narrow the topic appropriately for your time constraints. You are now ready to conduct your research.

Getting Started

The general purpose and the specific purpose of the speech are developed early in the speech preparation process, usually before you conduct any research. You do, however, need to have a certain amount of information to write a thesis **statement**, such as:

- **Topic.** Army JROTC
- **General purpose.** To inform eighth graders about service learning
- **Specific purpose.** To inform the graduating class at Center Middle School about the advantages of participating in service learning and how they can get started
- **Thesis statement.** Participating in service learning will allow you to learn outside the traditional classroom environment and help fill a need in the community.

Key Note Term

statement – the act of stating, declaring, or narrating

The thesis statement is a one-sentence summary of the speech. It acts like the topic sentence in a written composition. It is a complete sentence that tells exactly what your speech is about. After you have your general and specific purposes and your thesis statement, you are ready to conduct your research.

Conduct Your Research

There are many ways to conduct research on your topic, such as the following:

- **Personal experience**
- **Newspapers**
- **Online newspapers**
- **Public libraries**
- **Library catalog**
- **Reference works**
- **Periodicals**
- **Nonprint materials**
- **Online libraries**
- **School libraries**
- **State/local agencies online**
- **Personal interviews**

Personal Interviews

Personal interviews can be helpful if they are easily obtainable. The information-gathering interview is an especially valuable form of research. The interview allows you to view your topic from an expert's perspective, to take advantage of that expert's years of experience, research, and thought. You can use an interview to collect facts and to stimulate your own thinking. Often the interview will save you hours of library research and allow you to present ideas that you could not have uncovered any other way. And because the interview is a face-to-face interaction with an expert, many ideas that otherwise would be unclear can become more understandable.

Why Research?

Research is used to increase speech effectiveness as well as to enhance your credibility. You will want to know the most recent information. Knowing about any new controversies and the latest information will help you understand the audience's attitudes and will assist you in developing strategies for the best approach.

Remember to write down where you are finding all your information. You may need to go back and find more data, and you also need to give credit to your sources during your speech.



Courtesy of CACI and the U.S. Army.

Support Your Points

Knowing the details that support the ideas within your speech will allow the audience to look at you as an expert. They will be more likely to give you their undivided attention. There is an art to giving a credible and well-supported speech. Support for your points can come in several forms.

Facts and Figures

Facts and figures are statements and verifiable units of information. You can impress an audience if you include a lot of facts and figures. You must make sure they are accurate.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics explain things in terms of size or distribution. These statistics are powerful because they give the impression that they are the result of a thorough scientific study. When evaluating statistics one should consider the source, seek multiple sources, cite the statistic completely, and try to use current and relevant statistics. For example, if you were naming someone as the greatest tennis player of all time, just making the statement is not as impressive as giving the statistics that support the statement.

Statements of Authority

Statements of authority let you “borrow” the credibility of the expert. In the previous example of naming the world’s greatest tennis player of all time, if you can also quote a well-known tennis player who agrees with your estimation, your writing would carry a lot more credibility.

Narratives

Narratives are examples in the form of stories. Audiences will often listen to narratives when they will not listen to anything else. Be sure that the audience sees the relationship between the story and the point you are making. Narratives should always have a beginning, middle, and end, and should be interesting, while avoiding unnecessary details and excessive length.

Definitions

There are three types of definitions: logical, descriptive, and operational. A **logical** definition is the dictionary definition. A **descriptive** definition describes how a word derives from the root word of its culture. **Operational** definitions tell how the object relates to how it works or operates.

Humor

If you are trying to build credibility, humor can be effective because people like to hear a good joke, and they are likely to remember it and associate it with serious ideas. Political candidates use humor in their speeches.

Key Note Terms

logical – the dictionary definition

descriptive – describes how a word derives from the root of its culture

operational – tells how the object relates to how it works or operates

Remember, use humor only at appropriate times during the speech, illustrated in Figure 6.2.1. There are clearly some speeches where the use of humor would not be appropriate at all. When explaining to a group of youngsters why their behavior was inappropriate, humor may be out of place.

Logic, Testimony, Statistics, and Facts

Logic, testimony, statistics, and facts are the support types that can prove your points. Without this support, the points you make in a speech will be less **persuasive**. Supporting information will also clarify, add interest to, and make memorable your points.

Key Note Term

persuasive – to have the power to persuade

Outline Your Information

After you have gathered information and found the supporting logic, facts, testimonies, or statistics, the next step is to create an outline of your information.

Outlining your points will help you see the main themes in your speech, let you add to your notes, and ensure your speech will flow naturally. You can write an outline in words and phrases or in complete sentences, but it is best to use as few complete sentences as possible. By avoiding complete sentences, you will limit the temptation to just read your speech from your notes.

When outlining your main points and supporting ideas, make sure that all of them support the goal and purpose of the speech.

Figure 6.2.1: Humor can be used as part of the introduction of a speech as well as a way to relax the speaker and the audience.

Courtesy of Larry Lawfer.



There are several ways to organize the information. Before you start, think about the various alternatives available to you.

- **Topical organization allows you to present several ideas related to one topic. These ideas follow a logical order. This is one of the most common ways to organize ideas.**
- **Chronological organization uses time sequence for the framework. Chronological organization is important for speeches that require background information.**
- **Spatial organization orders material according to physical space. You may use spatial order in speeches involving geographical locations.**
- **Classification puts topics into categories. This pattern fits many speeches.**
- **Problem/solution puts the problem in the first part of the outline, and the solution into the second part.**
- **Cause/effect organization describes the cause of a problem in the first part of the outline, and describes the effect in the second part.**

Regardless of how you format your outline, it should contain the following elements:

- **Title**
- **Specific purpose**
- **Thesis statement**
- **Introduction, which may be outlined or written in full**
- **Body of the speech in outline format**
- **Conclusion of the speech, which may be outlined or written in full**
- **Bibliography of sources or references consulted**

Write an Introduction

After you have an outline of the information that is the body of your speech, you need to think about how you will introduce the information. The introduction accomplishes the following:

- **Grabs the audience's attention**
- **Introduces the topic**
- **Shows the importance of the topic**
- **Presents the thesis of the topic**
- **Forecasts the major ideas**

There are many ways to get the attention of your audience. Some of the following may suit your needs:

Key Note Term

dramatic statement – a phrase or sentence meant to capture the attention of the audience

- Wait for silence
- Tell a joke
- Tell a story related to the topic or about your research
- Ask a question
- Quote a famous person
- Make a **dramatic statement**
- Use a gimmick
- Compliment the audience
- Point to a historical event
- Refer to the occasion

Different types of speeches require different types of introductions. You need to decide what will work for your topic and your audience.

Within the introduction, give a preview of your presentation. The preview is usually only a sentence or two long. Be brief and be clear. After the introduction, your audience should know exactly what you are talking about and, in some cases, why.

The Body of Your Speech

The body of your speech should take about 75 percent of the allotted time. In this main section of the speech you want to reinforce your general and specific purposes. Support your main idea with examples. These ideas should be carried throughout the speech in a logical order and be supported by data.

The main body of the speech is typically divided into main points, usually two to five. These main points should be similarly worded and approximately equal in importance.

Make sure you use words that your audience will understand. Eliminate complex sentences and try to speak as naturally as possible. Make the body of the speech similar to the body of a report: organized, concise, and to the point.

Write a Conclusion

The conclusion of a speech is also similar to the conclusion of a report. The conclusion should be short and review the main ideas. Wrap up your ideas and remember to leave time for your audience to ask questions. Do not rush through the conclusion. This is your final opportunity to tell the audience that you are an informed and confident speaker.

The conclusion can be very effective when it ends with a surprising statement. Such a statement can make your presentation unforgettable.

Transitions

Transitions are statements that connect different parts of your speech. Transitions look back at what you have stated and connect it with the next item you are discussing. It is especially important to have a transition between your introduction and the body of your speech, and the body of your speech and your conclusion. Adding transitions make your speech sound polished and prepared.

Use Visual Aids

Visual aids can be a stimulating part of your speech. They allow the speaker the freedom to use overheads, slides, charts, pictures, film, or anything else that helps your audience relate to the topic. Visual aids can be handwritten or drawn, or they can be computer generated. Usually, visual aids are prepared ahead of time. Occasionally, they can be drawn, on chart paper or a board, during the presentation. This is usually when input from the audience is required.

Visual aids are successful when they help keep the audience interested in the topic. You can use them to support any part of your speech. For example, visual aids can capture the audience's attention in the introduction, support your main idea(s) in the body, and leave the audience with a favorable impression during the conclusion.

If you decide to use visual aids, do not let them distract you. Prepare your visual aids ahead of time and practice with them. Do not display them until you are ready to use them. When you are finished with a visual aid, remove it or cover it so it does not distract your audience. Try to use only a few visual aids. Visual aids should add to your speech, not be the main substance of your speech.

When you give your speech, make sure you focus your attention on the audience. Do not talk to your visual aids, or turn your back to the audience. Make sure the point of the visual aid is clear to the audience. If you are giving out materials such as handouts, do not give them out during your speech. Distribute them before or after the speech.

Practice

You have probably heard the expression *Practice makes perfect*. This is definitely true in speech preparation. The more you practice, the more polished you will sound, and the less you will have to rely on your notes.

Practice in front of the mirror, your family, or one or more friends. If you can, do a dry run in the room in which you will deliver the actual speech. Use your visual aids to make sure they work. Perhaps you can even record yourself practicing and see how it sounds. You may hear some places where you are not communicating effectively. Each time you practice you will find ways to improve your speech.

Note

When you practice your speech, be sure to time how long it takes you. You might need to add more material, or cut some, depending on the length of time you have to present. And be sure to have your practice “audience” ask questions.

During the Presentation

If you have analyzed your audience, done your research, organized the information, written your outline or notes, and practiced your delivery, you are almost done. Of course, you still need to deliver the actual speech!

There are certain steps you must remember:

- **Capture the audience’s attention.**
- **Establish eye contact.**
- **Articulate your words. Do not mumble.**
- **Stand up straight, do not shift your body and shuffle your feet. Do not put your hands in your pockets.**
- **Do not use phrases such as “okay,” “you know,” “um,” “I mean,” and “well.”**
- **Establish an acceptable volume. Do not screech or use a monotone voice.**
- **Do not talk to your visual aids. Face the audience at all times.**

Key Note Term

articulate – to speak clearly and effectively

Presentation Guidelines

Here are some guidelines for ethical speech and delivery in communication:

- **Understand the power of the lectern. Being in front of people gives you a certain amount of credibility.**
- **Speak truthfully and be sure of your facts.**
- **Be willing to rock the boat. Stand for what you believe, but do not alarm your audience.**
- **Do not lie.**
- **Avoid excess and inappropriate emotional appeals.**
- **Use credible and current sources.**
- **Avoid ambiguity. Be concrete in your statements.**

Key Note Term

vocal qualities – the characteristics of someone’s speaking voice

Verbal Communication

In verbal communication, it is up to you to use your voice and **vocal qualities** to drive home your ideas and information. You have control over rate, volume, pitch, pause, articulation, and pronunciation. Your voice can help you in the following ways:

Rate

The rate at which you speak is very important. It should not be too fast or too slow. Vary the rate at which you speak to add emphasis to your presentation.

Volume

Volume is another verbal technique that can add emphasis to your speech. Make sure you can be heard in the back of the room.

Pitch

Pitch is the use of notes (higher or lower) in a voice range. Speak in a range and **tone** that is comfortable for you and move up or down your scale for emphasis.

Modulation in your voice will keep the audience listening.

Pause

Pause gives you time to take a breath and collect your thoughts. It also gives the audience time to absorb your points and ideas.

Articulation/Pronunciation

Articulation is the art of speaking intelligibly and making proper sounds. Listen to yourself and make your words distinct and understandable. The more clearly you articulate, the more confident you will sound.

Even if you articulate clearly, you can still mispronounce a word. Mispronunciation distracts listeners from focusing on the content of the speech.

Key Note Terms

volume – the amplitude or loudness of a sound

tone – a sound of distinct pitch, loudness, vibration, quality, or duration: the particular or relative pitch of a word or phrase

modulation – to change or vary the pitch, intensity, or tone

Conclusion

Speech is the most widely used medium of communication. The main purpose of any speech or presentation is to deliver clear and specific ideas to the listeners. Preparing and practicing your speech is the best way to have a positive speaking experience.

You will have many opportunities to give speeches during your life. The better prepared you are, the more comfortable you will feel, and the more successful you will be. Giving speeches is a science with definitions, terms, and processes. Study these and practice them, and you will soon be a competent speaker.

The following lesson looks at how you can become a better speaker. You will learn how to use your voice and your body language to your advantage when you're in front of an audience.

Lesson Review

1. Why is it important to analyze the purpose of your speech?
2. Define the term *demographics*.
3. Choose three ways to get your audience's attention and explain how these work.
4. During a dry-run practice, what can you do if your speech is too long or too short?

