

Structure

Speech Development

Putting together your speech is a fairly simple matter of arranging your research, your arguments, and your conclusions in an order that will have the most impact on your audience. Every good speech has three major parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction and the conclusion are shorter than the body; the body is designed to present your ideas to the audience in a way that builds your story or your case in a logical manner using all of the narrative and research tools you've been learning.

Introduction

An audience needs to know generally what topic they will be hearing and how the topic relates to them. The point

of an introduction is to capture the attention of the audience and convince them immediately that your topic affects them directly.

Introductions are notoriously difficult to create. There you sit, a pile of research all ready to use, a clear idea of your topic, and no good way to figure out how to plunge in. In fact, effective introductions really can't be prepared until the rest of the speech is completed! If your speech doesn't exist, what is there to introduce? Once you know how the body of the speech will be organized and how you intend to approach your topic, come back to the introduction and put together these three parts as the final step in speech preparation: an attention step, a thesis statement, and a summary or preview of the main points.

The attention step is verbal. It is not an "attention getter" which could consist of slamming the classroom door or pretending to faint dead away at the front of the room. Getting someone's attention is much different than crafting an attention "step" that is related to your topic and is expressed verbally. For example, a speech about steroid allegations in major league baseball might begin with the words, "Play ball!" It's verbal, it's related to your topic, and it's more interesting than the opening, "I'm here today to talk about steroid use in major league baseball."

Whatever you first say to your audience is the initial, or first, impression they will have of you as a speaker. This is initial ethos. An audience may decide with the first sentence you utter that you are dynamic, interested in your topic, have given thought to what they want to hear, and will continue to be dynamic throughout the speech. The attention step should be short; it should be punchy; and it should be delivered with conviction. An attention step lacking dynamism or conviction may lead the audience to conclude immediately that you don't care much for your topic or for what the audience wants to hear.

The second part of the introduction is the thesis statement. The audience needs to know the general topic of the speech and what you intend to prove. Announcing that "My speech is about global warming" is not a thesis statement. However, telling the class that "Global warming legislation may begin causing problems for students who do a lot of commuting to get to college" is an excellent thesis statement. The audience is clearly identified – college students. The topic is clearly identified – problems for those students coming out of legislation to curb global warming.

If you have chosen to use the research strategy provided by this text, then your thesis statement is simply your research question reworked as a statement. The

research question might have been: How are college students affected by potential global warming legislation? You'll know that your research will fit the topic and prove your thesis.

The final part of the introduction is the summary or preview, a brief statement acting like a mini-outline listing the main parts of the speech in the order they will be presented. This accomplishes two goals: first, the audience is informed about how to listen to the speech because they'll know how many main points are coming and in which order; second, it acts as a transition from the introduction to the body of the speech. Without careful transitions, the audience can become confused about how they are to listen, and any barrier to listening is a problem for the speaker. Therefore, a careful, brief preview of the main points is both a courtesy and necessity in terms of audience involvement in the speech.

Body

Most of your work in putting together the speech will be done in arranging the material to go into the body. Using your working outline (from your research strategy), decide in which order your main points will best work. Fortunately,

there are some designs that can help you make those structural decisions.

If your speech topic is about something that the audience members are going to enjoy or agree with, then the body should begin with the category that best informs your topic with information, support, and conclusions. The second part of the body will be a category of additional or unexpected related reasons or arguments for the audience to agree with you, but it will be shorter and have different research to support the ideas. And, since most student speeches have three (3) main sections in the body, the third section would present another side to your argument that might otherwise be entirely new to your audience. You are looking for balance among all of the sections of the speech so that your audience can discern what is most important by which section is given the most time, development, and support.

A speech dealing with a topic unlikely to find immediate support among your audience members would be structured in an opposite fashion. The speaker will find some way to meet audience need in a related area, moving only toward the end of the speech to the actual thesis. For example, a speech urging students to donate blood at the local Red Cross Center would be structured to mention the

actual blood donation later in the speech. To keep the audience in agreement and lead up to the main idea, the speaker might develop a short, initial portion of the body that supports volunteerism and engages the audience in agreeing that helping out others is a cultural standard. The second part of the body might provide examples of individuals who have performed heroic rescues or put themselves in harm's way to assist someone else, particularly a stranger. Again, the audience would have a difficult time disagreeing with the speaker as long as the examples were clear and the reasoning fully developed. Finally, in the third and most fully developed portion of the speech, the speaker would urge students to consider donating blood because it helps people and is a tiny form of heroism compared to the previous examples.

To say that there is more time, or more evidence, or more thought devoted to one section of the body over another does not mean that the sections have to be dramatically different in length or depth. The various sections might sound almost the same to an audience and that's OK. The idea of arranging material in one or the other of these designs is to help the speaker prepare the material for the needs of the specific audience hearing the message. In fact, the same speech could be given to different audiences by simply re-

arranging the parts. That same blood donation speech being given at a Red Cross testimonial would begin with the donation section – who in that group would be against blood donation? Arrangement is always filtered through audience need. Audience analysis is never complete until the speech, itself, is completed.

Conclusion

The end of your speech needs to deliver the same dynamic impression that you delivered in the introduction. The final impression you leave with your audience is called terminal ethos. Just as initial ethos (or first impressions) sets up whether the audience is willing to continue listening to the presentation at the beginning, the audience will often remember the end of a presentation and decide how they will perceive any future presentations based on how strongly you finished.

The conclusion also has three main parts: a restatement of the thesis, a review of the main points that prove the thesis, and a memorable statement as a concluding remark. A good strategy for designing your speech is to begin with the conclusion because you can arrange the body

to actually fit your conclusion, then finish by creating the introduction.

Patterns of Arrangement

Deciding how to put the sections of your speech in some sort of order can be daunting. In addition to deciding what your audience needs to know and what you're comfortable sharing, there are some standard ideas about how to organize your ideas based on principles of similarity and proximity.

Similarity (topical patterns) would allow you to find a common theme among sub-sections of your presentation and group them together logically. For example, a speech encouraging audience members to donate blood will have sub-points that are related to telling the audience how to help others. All of the information and evidence you've collected that is related to identifying your audience as members of a "helping" culture belongs here. In fact, the topic of blood donation might not even appear in this section of your speech because you're setting up a preliminary argument to elicit agreement on a related issue. Sub-points detailing how the blood is collected belong together. Volunteering, being screened, actually donating, and the eventual disposition of

the blood are all similar because they are part of the actual donation process. The speaker has to decide carefully which evidence and which explanations belong in these groups so that information doesn't end up scattered throughout the speech.

Proximity is another organizing principle that you probably use in conversation all of the time. Whenever you tell a story in chronological order, you are using the principle of proximity. One sub-point in your story follows another because it happened next. What happens “next” is proximate (next to; near to) the previous point. Time is not the only proximate choice. Sub-points can be gathered spatially (where things are in physical relation to other things), as steps in a process, or causally (a relationship between cause and effect).

You don't need to choose one of these patterns because good speeches are often combinations of similarity, chronology, and causal relations. However, it helps to organize your presentation, especially during the planning stage, to look for general patterns to help you make decisions about where to insert evidence and narrative in a meaningful way to advance your thesis.