

## Goals and Strategies for Preparing a Speech

Public speaking is a fundamental type of communication that can be used in academic and professional settings as well as during special occasions. The process of preparing a speech relies on many of the same planning and organization techniques that are utilized in written communication like essays. This handout will discuss the purposes of various types of speeches and will offer guidance on how to best outline and prepare for a speech. This handout also includes a speech outlining template.

### Types of Speeches

When writing an essay, the style and organization is often determined by the purpose of the specific writing. Similarly, speeches are also designed around a purpose and crafted for a particular intended audience. This handout focuses on the three major speech types you'll experience in academic and professional settings: 1) informational, 2) persuasive, and 3) demonstrative. While there are other types of speeches used during “special occasions”—such as eulogies, wedding toasts, or graduation speeches—this handout does not discuss them in-depth.

### Informative Speeches

The goal of an informational speech is to share information about a topic that the audience does not already know. This can be used in academia, for example, to share findings from a research project or to teach a lesson on a particular subject. These speeches can feature facts, statistics, or data that demonstrate your knowledge and help the audience understand the subject. The following passage is an excerpt from an informative speech on global warming. Note how the speaker keeps to factual and descriptive statements.

[...] Global warming occurs when greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane trap heat inside the earth's atmosphere. Think about what happens when you open your car door after the windows have been rolled up on a hot day. Heat from the sun enters the car, but the frame of the car prevents it from escaping. To a small extent, this is a representation of what happens during global warming. Burning fossil fuels like petroleum and deforestation both contribute to the problem.

[...]

Global warming has already started to affect the earth in several ways. Arctic glaciers have begun to melt, threatening indigenous life such as the polar bears. Melting glaciers also cause sea levels to rise. This could become a problem for low land areas like the ones in the South Sea Islands. Ocean temperatures have begun to rise. This causes some of the algae to die which can affect the entire food chain. [...]

~ “Global Warming Speech,” *Best Speech Topics*.

### **Persuasive Speeches**

The goal of a persuasive speech is to change the belief or opinion of your audience. These speeches often focus on a controversial or divisive subject, and while they use concrete evidence and facts, persuasive speeches can also utilize emotions and other rhetorical strategies to sway the audience's perspective. It's important in a persuasive essay to consider both sides of the argument to fully convince the audience—the same is true in speeches. The following passage is an excerpt from a persuasive speech arguing against gender selection during pregnancy. Notice how the speaker uses a combination of facts and rhetorical strategies to influence the audience's perspective; the speaker also considers and then refutes an opposing perspective.

[...] Not only is gender selection dangerous, but it can create sex distortion ratios, particularly in countries where one sex is the preferred member of society.

Proponents of gender selection, though, have come up with an answer to this one as well. Dr. Suresh Nayak, an Indian Ob-Gyn, suggested that the fear that sex selection would change the natural ratios was unfounded because the practice is only used by a fraction of couples who can afford it. That fact, though, may soon change.

As the procedures get increasingly cheaper, more couples are taking advantage of them. Couples have swamped fertility clinics while trying to create designer babies. By the end of 2004, research reported more than 4000 cases of successful gender selected babies. Many schools are starting to study the procedure to make it more available to couples.

[...]

There is some light at the end of this tunnel, however. Many countries on the continents of Europe and Asia have finally banned gender selection. Perhaps they realize that this practice is not only unethical and dangerous, but it will also eventually lead to couples wanting to create designer babies by choosing hair and eye color, levels of intelligence, and even height! [...]

~ "What happened to as long as it's healthy?", *Best Speech Topics*.

### **Demonstrative Speeches**

The goal of a demonstrative speech is to show the audience how to do something. This speech is process-oriented and often progresses step-by-step in great detail. Occasionally, the speaker uses props and visual aids to guide the audience. The following passage is an excerpt from a demonstrative speech about baking chocolate chip cookies. Note how the speaker offers detailed step-by-step instructions while completing the process alongside the presentation.

[...] The second main step is the mixing of the ingredients. So the first seven ingredients that you're going to combine are the sugars, the eggs, the butter, and the vanilla extract. So you're just going to put that all in your bowl and mix it on medium power until it's all combined.

As you can see, this mixture is all the way combined, so next we're going to add the dry ingredients. You're going to put your backing soda, baking powder, and salt in. And now, you're going to add the flour, about a cup at a time—it doesn't really matter, just put it in slowly so that it can mix in. You're just going to mix a little bit at a time until it's all mixed in.

Now, as you can see, all the dry ingredients are mixed in except for the chocolate chips, which you now want to stir into the mixture. Your mixture should look something like this. Now we're finished with the second step, which is mixing the ingredients. [...]

~Elizabeth Hosman, "Demonstration Speech - Baking Chocolate Chip Cookies," *YouTube*, February 28, 2018.

## The Process of Writing a Speech

Even though a speech is delivered orally, it's a good idea to both plan and outline the speech in advance. Planning and outlining a speech are critical to achieving the goals of that speech.

### Planning a Speech

As indicated previously, the form, content, and style of a speech vary depending on the goals and audience of speech. During the planning or pre-writing portion of your speech preparation, consider the following questions:

1. **What is your speech going to be about?** What are your most important points? What supporting research have you done?
2. **Why are you giving this speech?** What are your goals? What type of speech will this be?
3. **Who is your speech for?** What do they know about the subject? How do they feel about the subject—do they like or dislike it? How is the subject relevant for the audience?

**Note:** Use this information to tailor the language and information in the speech for the specific audience.

### Outlining a Speech

Just as you would outline an essay before writing it, you should also outline a speech to organize your main points before delivering them. The most basic structure of a speech includes the opening, the body, and the closing.

1. **Opening:** The opening consists of three main elements.
  - a. An introduction to who you are and what you're going to talk about. You may need to mention the length of time that you'll be speaking.
  - b. A hook to draw the audience into the topic. This can include a rhetorical question, a surprising fact, a famous quote, or a bold statement. The hook should be aligned with the purpose and tone of your essay.
  - c. A statement that creates a signpost for each point that the speech covers. This statement is similar to a traditional thesis statement in a written essay that lays out each major point in the order it appears.
2. **Body:** The body delivers the main message(s) of the speech. There can be as many points or paragraphs as needed. There are several elements to consider.
  - a. Each main point should have its own paragraph, and each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that indicates the point of the section.
  - b. Main points can be supported by statistics, examples, anecdotes—the type of supporting details included will vary depending on the type of speech being given. For example, data and facts are more relevant than anecdotes in an

informational speech. When researching a speech's topic, look widely, but only seek out the most relevant and reputable sources.

- c. Main points should be organized intentionally. Different methods of organization can have different effects on your presentation.
    - i. Organizing by chronology can be useful when speaking about historical changes or developments. Use chronological organization when the order of something or the progression of time is important.
    - ii. Organizing sequentially is necessary when describing a process or plan.
    - iii. Organizing between pros and cons can be useful to allow the audience to fully consider all options or to address opposing perspectives.
    - iv. Organizing from your weakest to strongest point can build to a climax and get the audience on the speaker's side over time.
    - v. Organizing from strongest to weakest point, also called "headlining," can get the audience on the speaker's side more quickly.
  - d. It's important to use transitions to link your ideas. Transitions should help to remind the audience of the overall goal of the speech.
3. **Closing:** The closing should do three main things.
- a. Repeat and summarize the message of the speech.
  - b. Create a link back to the speech's opening.
  - c. End with a call-to-action, a call for audience questions, or some other signal that the speech has concluded.

This basic structure can be a guide for your outline, but always defer to any specific instructions that have been given by your professor or the organization hosting the speech.

### Final Tips for Delivering a Speech

As you prepare to deliver a speech, consider the following points.

1. Since a speech is delivered orally, keep the content simple and clear so an audience can follow and remember each point.
2. In speeches, repetition can be used to emphasize points. Repetition is discouraged in many forms of writing, but it's used to much greater effect verbally.
3. Some speeches are memorized; others are read off of notecards or scripts; and some may be given extemporaneously. Regardless, it's important to prepare enough structure ahead of time so as not to get lost, but also avoid preparing something so rigid that it becomes a boring presentation for your audience.
4. Rehearse a speech several times to make sure it fits within any time constraints. Repeated practice will also help the speech feel more natural.

### Activity: Speech Outline Template

When preparing a speech, creating an outline can be one of the most important steps. Use the following outline template to structure your speech, but be sure to adjust for any additional main points or specific requirements.

#### Sample Speech Outline

Speech Topic:

Type of Speech:

Specific Purpose:

Audience:

## I. Opening

### A. Introduction

1. Tell the audience who you are. Offer any relevant details that speak to your authority as the speaker.
2. Let the audience know what you'll be talking about. Include any background details they need to know.

### B. Hook / Attention Grabber

1. Provide a statement that will draw the audience in.
2. This can include a rhetorical question, surprising fact, or bold statement.

### C. Thesis Statement

1. Give the audience an expectation of what major points will be delivered in the speech and in what order.
2. Connect this statement with the purpose of your speech.

## II. Body

### A. Paragraph 1 (first main point)

1. Topic sentence: What is this paragraph about?
2. Supporting evidence and ideas
  - a) Include statistics, examples, quotes, anecdotes, visual aids, etc.
  - b) Explain how this evidence supports the goals of the speech.
  - c) Transition to the next point.

### B. Paragraph 2 (second main point)

1. Topic sentence: What is this paragraph about?
2. Supporting evidence and ideas
  - a) Include statistics, examples, quotes, anecdotes, visual aids, etc.
  - b) Explain how this evidence supports the goals of the speech.
  - c) Transition to the next point.

### C. Paragraph 3 (third main point)

1. Topic sentence: What is this paragraph about?
2. Supporting evidence and ideas
  - a) Include statistics, examples, quotes, anecdotes, visual aids, etc.
  - b) Explain how this evidence supports the goals of the speech.
  - c) Transition to the next point.

[**Note:** Use as many body paragraphs as you need to develop your speech fully. Remember to give each main point its own paragraph and to organize your points in a way that serves the purpose and needs of your speech.]

## III. Closing

- A. Repeat and summarize the main points of the speech.
- B. Make a connection or link to the speech opening.
- C. Give a call-to-action, ask for audience questions, or otherwise indicate that the speech has concluded.

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