

Speech Writing

- ◆ Did your introduction grab the audience?
- ◆ Did your speech stick to the point?
- ◆ Did your conclusion emphasize the objective?
- ◆ Did you promise to make a short speech and didn't?

Speeches can inform, persuade and/or entertain. Most speeches follow the standard *Introduction, Body and Conclusion* form. In this form, an objective or the purpose of a speech is explored and set into three goals. The first goal is to present the objective to the audience. Then explain the objective to the audience. Finally summarize the objective. However, prior to accomplishing any of the three goals, learn about the subject of the speech.

Research

Establishing a solid foundation is a priority in speech writing. Reference sources should be reputable and appropriate. Include sources cited from libraries, the Internet, reputable people and personal experience. Determination of the following will form the speech:

- **Purpose:** Once the purpose of the speech is established, clear goals can be set.
- **Occasion:** Defining the type of occasion determines what content needs to be included. Then the duration, tone and expectation of the speech can be determined.
- **Audience:** Approach the speech from the perspective of the audience. Tie in their concerns with the speech's goals so everyone can relate.

Introduction

During the introduction, the objective of the speech is presented to the audience. Gaining the attention of the audience is crucial and may be done in a variety of ways. Keep in mind the speech's environment and the character of the audience.

- **Anecdote:** Tell a real or fictitious story to lead into the presentation. If a standard story is used, be sure to give it a personal touch.
- **Quote:** Recite an expression, poem or an excerpt used by another person. Be sure to give others proper credit.
- **Rhetorical question:** Ask a question with no expectation of an answer. Style the question to make people aware or think on a different level. Challenge any common misconceptions.
- **Statistics:** Show figures that demonstrate important results or comparisons.
- **Candor:** Share an appropriate fact about yourself the audience would otherwise not know.
- **Humor:** Telling a joke or teasing the crowd a little can put the audience at ease. Use caution in joke-telling however. If things do not go well, it may be hard to get back on track. The audience may lose interest as well. But most importantly the joke must be in good taste. For those who just cannot tell jokes, it's best to stick with personal stories that the audience may find amusing.

Body

In the body of the speech, present the objective. Presentation of facts and ideas can be done in several ways. Use the method that best emphasizes the objective.

- **Chronological:** Display time units and how changes have happened from past to present.

- **Numerical:** Show volume in highest to lowest number. Relate numbers to people. Explain why there was a difference and how it happened.
- **Cause and effect:** Reference a program or plan and then tell what its effect has been. If it is a success, tell what caused the improvement. If the plan failed, explain why.
- **Problem-Solution:** Describe an existing problem and how or why it became one. Offer solutions to correct the problem(s).
- **Geographical Order:** Discuss topics by region, districts or neighborhoods.
- **Alphabetical:** Lists communities or departments in alphabetical order.
- **Psychological Order:** Address what the audience finds most acceptable, important and/or interesting.

Conclusion

For the speech's conclusion, a summary of the objective is presented to the audience. Close the speech with strong words. Be candid, sincere and optimistic.

- **Reference introduction:** Bring the speech back to the beginning. Close by reinforcing the same theme.
- **Quotation:** End with a thought-provoking quote or saying that will inspire.
- **Anecdote:** Refer to a story with an ending message that sums up the speech objective.
- **Rhetorical question:** Ask a realistic question that will urge the audience to take action.

Speech Tips

Add some sparkle to the speech.

Repetition

Repeat a word(s) or phrase for emphasis.

e.g., "We will go on learning, we will go on living, we will go on loving."

Alliteration

Use a phrase or two or more words with the same initial sound.

e.g., "a dime a dozen," or Whitman's line, "all summer in the sound of the sea."

Simile

Two unlike things are compared using like or as.

e.g., "The soldier was as strong as an ox."

Metaphor

A comparison or analogy not directly related.

e.g., "evening of life - old age."

Additional Resources

- How to Write and Give a Speech, by Joan Detz.
- Eloquence in Public Speaking, by Kenneth McFarland.

Additional copies of this Technote are available from the Office of Community Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Room 266, 300 7th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20024 (1-800-645-4712). Copies may also be obtained at

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ocd>

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