

Speech Basics

All well constructed speeches will share several key attributes. First, it will contain interesting and well-researched content. Second, it will be well organized. Finally, it will be delivered in an interesting, engaging manner.

Content

Any speech will start with an idea. Let's say you are presented with the question: "What is the best color?" You will need to do the following to write your speech:

1. Choose your answer (what color is best?)
2. Brainstorm reasons why it is best
3. Find evidence, quotations, logical reasoning or other ways to support your answer.

Your goal is to persuade your audience that your choice of color really is the best. They don't have to agree with you at the end of the speech, but they should at least think you made a good case for your answer. In a speech on this topic, you will probably rely primarily on your own reasoning for support. In a real extemporaneous speech, however, you would use a variety of sources from newspapers and magazines to back up your own reasoning. That would be difficult when giving a speech about colors, but it might be possible to find articles or statistics that back up what you want to say.



First: On your own paper, do the following:

1. Choose an answer to the above question
2. Brainstorm a list of at least 10 reasons that you choose that answer
3. List ways you could support your answer (sources, logic, etc)

Organization

Once the content for your speech is chosen, your next step is to organize it. In some ways, organization might be the most important part of constructing a speech. If your thoughts are not organized, your audience will not really be able to understand the content of your speech and you will be hard to follow. Organization in speaking is even more important than in writing because you have to be clear the first time. If you write an essay, your readers can always reread portions of it if they are confused. When you are speaking, however, they can't push the rewind button to back you up to listen to your first section again. So it is imperative that you are clear the *first time*.

The most basic type of organization is three-point *analysis*. When you analyze something, you break it into parts. So the word analysis essentially means the process of breaking into sections. This organizational style divides the speech's content into three sections.

The first thing you want to do is look for similarities. Are there several of your reasons that are very close to each other? Could you group your ten reasons into 3 or 4 major groups of reasons? Or are all the reasons completely different? How you answer this question will determine your structure. Your goal is to put the

content you have into the three-point analysis structure. If you were able to group your ten arguments, you should now use your best three groups as your main areas.

Each of your groups will need an overarching statement (like a topic sentence in an essay). This is the name of each argument. If each of your reasons was completely different, you will need to choose the best three to be your main areas. Now, you will need to think of *sub arguments* to support your points.

Once you do all this, you are ready to create the basic outline of your speech. I suggest something like the following:

- I. Intro
 - A. Attention getter
 - B. Thesis
 - C. Preview
- II. First Area
 - A. sub argument
 - B. *sub argument*
- III. Second Area
 - A.
 - B.
- IV. Third Area
- V. Conclusion



Second: Organize your thoughts on your own paper

1. Look over your original brainstorming and try to group your arguments into three major areas
2. Write a topic statement for each
3. Choose the order you think they should go in the final speech
4. Create a basic outline of your speech

Finishing the Speech

Now that your thoughts are organized, you have one more step before you start practicing your speech. It's time to figure out how you are going to start and end your speech. Start with the introduction.

Any speech needs an interesting introduction. Your listener will generally decide within the first 30 seconds of your speech whether or not your speech is going to be interesting and informative. If he or she decides it won't be during your introduction, it will be difficult to win them over during the body of your speech no matter how good it is. The introduction needs to do four things.

- First, it must get the listeners attention.
- Second, it must justify the topic or explain why it's an important topic.
- Third, it must state the thesis (main idea) of your speech.
- Fourth, it should give the listener some idea of what the rest of your speech will be about. (Preview)

Your thesis and preview are easy to construct. In fact, you already decided what they will say when you created your outline. Your thesis for this speech should be something along the lines of "Blue is the best color you will

ever find." Your preview will be something like, "To better understand why blue is the best color, we need to first look at (insert your first area here), second at (second area), and finally at (third area)." After you state your preview, you are ready to transition to your first area. Even though these will actually be stated after your attention getter, you should always compose them first.

Attention Getter

One of the most important, and most difficult, skills to develop in speech is constructing good attention getters. You don't always know what will get a judge's attention, but there are several methods that are commonly accepted as good ways to start a speech.

1. *Anecdote* (often, but not always humorous)

This is probably the best and most common way of opening extemporaneous speeches, and it works well for other speeches too. This method uses a story that is either related by topic or through theme to your speech. Funny anecdotes are an especially effective way of opening speeches.

2. *Quotation*

Humorous or interesting quotations can make very effective introductions. They also have the added value of showing that you did research for your topic area. Quotations might actually reference the subject you are talking about or be thematically related.

Example: "In The Muppet Movie, Kermit the Frog sang, 'It's not easy being green.' If he had been blue he probably would have sung a different tune..."

3. *Startling statement or fact*

This is used more in expository and oratory than extemporaneous, but it can work for any speech. This usually involves repeating a fact or story that the audience will find surprising. It can be humorous, but it is more often something they will find somewhat upsetting.

Example: Did you know that 75% of all cars that caused accidents last year were red? Yes, it's true...(false, it's not)

4. *Historical reference*

Most current political situations relate to events of the past, and it's easy to draw analogies. The historical reference needs to be interesting, however. Dry historical references probably won't be very effective.

Example: "During the Revolutionary War, the British soldiers were known for the color of their notoriously hot woolen jackets. From Paul Revere's ride to the surrender of Cornwallis, the Redcoats became symbolic of British repression. While red was the color of the enemy, many artists have depicted blue as the color worn by freedom loving revolutionaries..."

5. *Reference to culture*

This is a difficult type of attention getter to explain, but it can be used very effectively. It involves relating the topic to a movie, situation or current event. It can also be a reference to the setting of the speech, but this is almost never used in competitive speech.

Example: "In the Prince song, Little Red Corvette, the singer laments, 'Baby you're much too fast.' Perhaps this is why red cars receive speeding tickets so much more often than those of other colors. Maybe in the world of colors, red is, indeed, much too fast. So when we choose the best color...."

6. Question

This is probably the least effective of the six methods. It should really never be used in extemp since the whole speech revolves around a question. It can be used effectively at times in oratory and expository.

Example: What's your favorite color?

Topic Justification

This is the part of the introduction most often overlooked by speakers, but it is important. Essentially it means that you need to explain why your speech is important. Many topics will already seem important to the audience and not require a justification at all. Other speeches are primarily for entertainment purposes. But often it is useful to clarify the importance of your topic in the introduction. This can be done through a quotation explaining the timeliness or importance, statistics demonstrating the significance of the topic, or through showing how the topic relates to the audience's own lives.

Putting it together

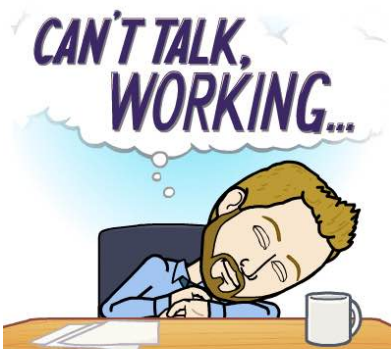
Your final introduction will look something like this:

- I. Intro
 - A. Attention getter
 - B. Topic justification
 - C. Thesis
 - D. Preview

Conclusion

The conclusion is the simplest part of your speech, but it is very important. You want to leave the audience with a good final impression and a clear idea in their minds of exactly what you said. The conclusion, therefore, has three parts. 1. Summarize your main points. 2. Restate the thesis. 3. Tie back to your attention getter. The most common way to organize a conclusion is:

- V. Conclusion
 - A. Summary
 - B. Restate thesis in different words
 - C. Tie back to attention getter for strong finish



Third: Create an outline of your introduction on your own paper

1. Using the above format, write out an outline of an introduction for your speech.
2. Write out your entire attention getter, a short justification statement, your thesis and preview.
3. Then create an outline of your conclusion following the form above.