

- Do I use a variety of specific supporting materials, such as examples and stories, to develop my key points?
- Will my supporting materials be clear and interesting to my audience?
- Do I acknowledge sources for anything I quote or paraphrase from other speakers or writers?

Once you begin to generate the main ideas of your topic and to choose those that you think the audience will find most interesting, you have begun to organize your content.

## Organize Your Speech

Organizing a speech is similar to writing an essay. Every essay must have an introductory paragraph, a body, and a concluding paragraph. A speech has the same three divisions: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. To determine whether your ideas are clearly organized and easy to follow, you must consider the organization of each of these three parts of your speech.

**Organize Your Speech Introduction.** Though usually brief, your speech introduction serves five vital functions. First, it focuses the audience's attention on your message. You want to command their attention with your first words. How can you do this? Question your audience, amuse them, arouse their curiosity about your subject, or stimulate their imaginations.

Second, your introduction should clarify your topic or your purpose in speaking. If your listeners are confused about your exact topic, you limit their ability to listen actively. To minimize any chances of this, state your purpose clearly in a well-worded sentence.

A third function of your introduction is to establish the significance of your topic or to explain your interest in it. Fourth, your introduction should help establish your credibility as a speaker on that topic. Reveal any special qualifications you have for speaking on the topic, and use your words, voice, and body to instill confidence in your listeners that you have prepared thoroughly. Finally, your introduction should highlight or preview the aspects of your subject that you will discuss in the body. Well-planned and well-delivered opening remarks will make the audience want to listen and will prepare them for what comes next. To check the integrity of your speech introduction, answer the following questions:

### What are the parts of my introduction?

- What is my attention getter?
- What is my statement of purpose?
- What rationale do I provide for speaking about this topic?
- How do I establish my credibility to speak on this topic?
- What are the points I will cover in my speech?

**Organize the Body of Your Speech.** The body of your speech is its longest, most substantial section. Though it follows your introduction, you should prepare the body of your speech first. Here you introduce your

key ideas and support or explain each one. You should develop only two or three main ideas in a first speech, because you can more easily develop them within your time limit. Your audience will also more easily grasp and remember a few well-developed ideas. Restricting your main points to a few is particularly important in a first speech because it may be the shortest presentation you make during the semester or quarter.

Your organizational goal in the body is to structure your main points so clearly that they are both distinct and unmistakable to your listeners. To help you do so, we recommend a four-step sequence—the “4 S’s”—for organizing each of your main ideas. First, *signpost* each main idea. Typical signposts are numbers (“first” or “one”) and words such as *initially* and *finally*. Second, *state* the idea clearly. Third, *support*, or explain, the idea; this step will take you the most time. Finally, *summarize* the idea before moving to your next one. These four steps will help you highlight and develop each of your main ideas in a logical, orderly way. The following questions and outline form should help you determine whether the body of your speech is well organized:

**Have I organized the body of my speech clearly?**

- I. What is my first main idea?
  - A. What will I say about it?
  - B. How will I summarize it?
- II. What is my second main idea?
  - A. What will I say about it?
  - B. How will I summarize it?
- III. What is my third main idea?
  - A. What will I say about it?
  - B. How will I summarize it?

**Organize Your Speech Conclusion.** Your speech conclusion is a brief final step with three main functions. The first is the summary, a final review of the main points you have covered. Summarizing may be as simple as listing the key ideas you discussed in the body of the speech. You should not introduce and develop any new ideas in the conclusion. When you summarize, you bring your speech to a logical close.

The conclusion’s second function is to activate an audience response by letting your listeners know whether you want them to accept, use, believe, or act on the content of your speech. Whether your speech is informative or persuasive, you want the audience to have been involved with your information and ideas. This is your last opportunity to highlight what you want your listeners to take away from your speech.

Finally, your conclusion should provide your speech with a strong sense of closure. To do this, end on a positive, forceful note. You can use many of the same techniques here that you used to get the audience’s attention at the speech’s beginning: question the audience, amuse them, stimulate their imaginations, and so forth. Your final remarks should be carefully thought out and extremely well worded. Ask and answer these questions to test your speech conclusion.



### What are the parts of my conclusion?

- What is my summary statement?
- What am I asking my audience to remember or do?
- What is my closing statement?

If you answer each of the questions we've posed so far, you should have an interesting, well-developed speech that is easy to follow. Both your content and your organization are in good shape.

Up to this point, you have spent most of your time thinking about the speech and jotting down ideas. Now you have to word those ideas and practice getting them across to your audience through your vocal and physical delivery.

### Word Your Speech

Unless your instructor requests that you do so, avoid writing out your first speech word for word. Even though having the text of your speech in front of you may make you feel more secure, students who deliver speeches from manuscripts often suffer two consequences. One is that what they say tends to sound like writing rather than speech. In Chapter 12 we'll examine some of the important differences between oral and written styles.

A second problem is a lack of eye contact. Effective speakers make eye contact with their listeners. If you are reading, you can't do this. Therefore, if you have a choice, speak from just a few notes rather than from a prepared manuscript.

The language of your speech should be correct, clear, and vivid. To illustrate this, assume that you have been assigned a practice speech of self-introduction early in the course. Assume, too, that you have decided to make your travels one of your main points. "I've traveled quite a bit" is a vague, general statement. Without supporting materials, the statement is also superficial. Instead, suppose you said,

I've traveled quite a bit. I had lived in five states before I was in middle school, for example. When I was seven, my father worked in the booming oil business, and my family even got a chance to live in South America for more than a year. My brother and I went to an American school in the tiny village of Anaco, Venezuela; we were students 99 and 100 in a school that taught grades 1 through 8. Instruction in Spanish started in the first grade, and by the time we returned to the States, I was bilingual. I have vivid memories of picking mangoes and papayas off the trees, swimming outdoors on Christmas day, and having my youngest brother born in Venezuela.

The second statement is a great deal clearer and more vivid than the first. It begins with the general comment, but then amplifies it with details. The language is personal, conversational, and crisp. The following questions should help you test the language of your speech:

- Does my speech sound conversational?
- Do I use language correctly?
- Will the language of my speech be clear to my listeners?
- Will the language of my speech be vivid for my listeners?

