

Organization of a Constructive Speech

I. The Introduction (What are you going to say?)

Use it to gain audience attention and create a favorable impression. Use it to set the tone and lead into the speech. State the central idea and how you will divide your speech.

Pretend you are giving a speech about your view that Elvis Presley is still alive. You may wish to open your remarks in some of the following ways:

a) Explain the terms you will use. Define what you are and are not talking about.

Example: “Today, my comments will focus on evidence that proves ‘the King’ is still alive. When I refer to ‘the King’ of course I refer to Elvis Presley and not the many cheap Las Vegas impersonators who soil ‘the King’s’ legacy every year!”

b) Begin with a personal experience designed to identify with the listeners. Example: “When I was a young girl, I would lock myself in my room for weeks and listen to Elvis’ music. I would often forget to sleep or eat because I loved Elvis so much. I promised that when I grew up I would marry him!”

c) Ask a question or a series of questions. Example: “Are you aware that Elvis’ name is misspelled on his tombstone? Are you aware that there have been more Elvis sightings in 7-11 than in any other place? Are you aware that this is all evidence of a government conspiracy!?!”

d) State a relevant quotation. Example: “Since my baby left me, I found a new place to dwell.” Clearly, Elvis did find a new place to dwell by leaving Graceland in search of the peace of suburbia.

e) Challenge your audience with a startling Statement. Example: “In 1998, there were 786 Elvis sightings in Kentucky alone!!”

f) Tell a humorous anecdote. Example: “Last week at the National Elvis Convention in Moose Jaw ...”

g) All of the above.

Some Explanation on Introduction

(Your Introduction should be like a road map through your speech. If the judges know what to listen for in advance - they are more likely to notice when they hear it..)

Now that you have the undivided attention of your audience, it is time to explain what it is you are going to say in as clear and brief a manner as you can. You are at this point, explaining the point of your speech to the audience. If you are about to try to explain to the judges that Quebec should separate from the rest of Canada or the best way to plant a poplar or why English is such a wonderful language - it is in the introduction that you tell them what it is you will be discussing today.

When you do this, provide them not only with your topic but give them a brief summary of your speech. It is like providing them with directions or a road map of your presentation. This way they will know what to look for and when you actually say it not only will they be impressed, they will take note of your point.

If you chose to tell the audience that English is the greatest language on the planet and everyone should speak it, after getting their attention, you will provide them with the skeleton of your speech. "... I will provide you, ladies and gentleman with some convincing reasons for adopting English as the official language of the world. It is already becoming necessary to speak it in almost every country anyway, it has the potential to be as lyrical and romantic as any other language and it is also easy to learn. Allow me to explain each of these points in detail..."

Remember to be brief. If you get detailed in your introduction, you won't have anything to say for the rest of your speech, or you run the risk of repeating yourself and this will make the judges tune out and not listen to you.

II. The Body

This is the main part of the speech. There are a number of different ways to structure the body depending on which best suits the purpose of your speech. (The following is based upon *Getting Started in Public Speaking* by James Payne and Diana Prentice, National Textbook Company, Lincoln-Wood, 1985)

a) Logical or Topical Order

A good method when you have several ideas to present and the ideas seem to naturally flow from one to another. For example, if you were giving a speech about the benefits of exercise, you might organize it like this:

1. Physical Benefits

- a. Cardiovascular Strength
- b. Muscle Tone
- c. Weight Loss

2. Mental Benefits

- a. You are more alert
- b. You feel better about yourself

b) Chronological (Time) Order

Use time sequence as a framework to organize your speech. This method is especially useful for speeches requiring background information. It also works well for speeches explaining a process or explaining how to do something. For example, a speech on the history of baseball could begin with its invention and follow the rule changes up to the present day.

c) Spatial Order

Uses physical space as the framework. If you were describing a house, you would start in one room and walk your way around the house. A weather report is usually given region by region without randomly skipping around the country. This style works well with informative speeches.

d) Classification

This method organizes things into categories or classes of items. This technique is useful for all types of speeches. Information is easily given by classifying ideas. A speech about Elvis could be categorized as follows: songs written by Elvis, biographical facts about Elvis, facts surrounding his “alleged” death, and your theories about why he is still alive.

e) Problem-Solution Order

This is a good technique for persuasive speeches. The first part of the speech outlines the problem and the second part gives a solution. Within the problem-solution pattern, you will find other types of organization. For example, the problem section of the speech might be organized using a logical sequence. The solution portion of the speech might involve classification. If your goal is to persuade, select one solution and present arguments for why it is the best option.

f) The Cause and Effect Order

This method, like the Problem-Solution method, contains two parts. The first describes the cause of the problem, and the second its effects. For example, if you were doing a speech on toxic waste pollution, the first part of the speech might explain how and why toxic waste causes environmental damage. The second part would discuss the effects of toxic waste on property and health. As with the problem-solution speech, other forms of organization are usually incorporated into the major sections.

Some Explanation on Body or Exposition

The middle part of a speech, like the middle part of a paragraph or a story - usually the stuff between the first paragraph and last paragraph (or first and last chapter if it is a book) is called exposition. It is the detailed explanation of your point. It is where support for your point will be given and it where you will spend the greatest amount of time when you are delivering your speech.

It is in the exposition that you will give the audience a more detailed look at the map you provided them in the introduction - and it should follow the same order you laid out in your introduction, too. (If you change order, the judges will be confused.)

(The body or exposition of your speech is the detailed information - the point of your speech and the proof for that point, the instructions on how to do something or the thoughts or stories or ideas you wish to entertain them with.)

In the exposition, as you provide support for your main contention or idea, or you will provide the detailed instructions or information you wish to give them or you will give them the story or tale you have chosen to entertain them with.

Whatever type of speech you are going to give to the audience, whether to inform or entertain or persuade, you will use the body of the speech to make your point. If your point was how to change the cat litter, the exposition will tell them how to do so, if your point was to tell them about the humorous and important time you spent at summer

camp in 1987, then you will do so in the exposition, if you have decided to persuade the audience into thinking that English is the best language for the world to speak, it is in the body of your speech that you will prove that to them.

Say you have chosen the English should be spoken by the world topic - it is the one that has been developed so far so we will stick with it - you will have followed the steps so far and the audience will have heard this: An attention grabbing opening statement which will compel or make the audience want to listen to you.

An introduction in which you have told them your topic, how you will support your topic and the order in which they will hear that support.

So now you have the attention of the audience and they also know what it is they will be looking for while you speak - now you have to give them what you promised in the introduction.

Following the 'English is the best' example, you will now have to explain your topic in detail. You will tell them not only what your topic is, but you will also explain what the point of your speech is and why your point is valid. You will have to prove to the audience that English is in fact the best language for the world to speak and you will do by proving the compelling reasons you gave them in the introduction - most everyone has to speak it already, it is lyrical as any other language and it is easy to learn.

Not only will you give them these reasons but you must prove to the audience that they are valid reasons.

Proof can take many forms - when trying to persuade, think about what kinds of things will sway you into thinking that a point is a good one. Some standard means of proving a point are:

Some types of evidence or proof:

Quotations

Experts in the field and their opinions are often good ways of convincing people.

Common Sense or Logic

Things that are quite obvious or are just simply the case. That pollution is bad is a fairly accepted view, that there is a hole in the ozone layer, that mountains are difficult to move and the earth is round. Remember that common sense is not always so common and doesn't always make sense. Make sure you provide a solid argument for any point you are trying to make.

Statistics/figures

There are lies, there are damned lies, and there are statistics. Statistics can say pretty much anything that you want them to. This is why that they are a good thing to use as proof. For the same reason, they can be a bad thing as well. If you are providing a statistic, make sure it is valid and that you aren't stretching how applicable or useful it is.

How to use proof in your speech:

It is important if you are going to be using proof in your speech that you are able to use it properly. The use of common sense is pretty much, well, common sense. It need only be brought into your speech with a minimum amount of explanation. Quotations and Statistics are a different story, though. In order for you to introduce a quotation or a statistic as proof, the audience has to be assured that you aren't making it up as you go. You should provide a source for the quotation, that is who it is was written or spoken by, the date of the quotation (usually only necessary for statistics or quotations from newspapers or magazines or other dated periodicals) and the actual place it came from.

(If you got it from a book or a newspaper rather than from a speech - the author as well as the title of the publication are both necessary.) If you provide the judges with this information, then there is no room for confusion as to where the statement came from, that it is going toward strengthening your point and they can also keep track of the amount of quoted material in your speech - this last point is most important.

(Don't forget the 10% rule. No more than 10% of your speech can be quoted material. Citing sources when you use quotations and statistics helps the judges make sure you are under 10% - They don't always give you the benefit of the doubt if they aren't sure if it was an original statement.)

Not long ago on CBC, a gentleman was interviewed who had decided to seek out the source or a list that he had heard quoted by a number of people including Mrs. George Bush, the U.S. Secretary for Education and a number of other highly respected

individuals. They were all quoting items from a list that itemized all of the problems in American schools in the 1990's. Things like guns, stabbings, drugs, etc. All of these people who quoted the list as scientific fact were using the information incorrectly because it turned out that the source was a right wing preacher from Texas who decided that he would write up a list, with no proof, of what he thought the biggest problems in schools were.

Regardless of how valid the point he had was, and regardless of how valid the point of the then First Lady or the Secretary for Education in the U.S., the proof was not valid.

Without the valid proof, how is the audience supposed to believe you?

(Be careful of the proof you choose to support your point with. Try to use evidence that is well accepted or credible, the judges will be more likely to believe you if they believe your proofs.)

Going back to something that was stated earlier, you should try to have between 2 and 4 supports for your point. This goes for all types of speeches. If it is your job to persuade or convince, there is one extra step. Your speech should flow like this:

(2-4 points of support or steps in the process you are explaining or 2-4 thoughts in your speech to entertain. This is a comfortable number to work with and an easy number of things to keep track of if you are a judge.)

Your main point is the topic of your speech -- what you are trying to convince the audience to believe in.

Your supporting points are the body of your speech. They are the reasons that the audience should trust in what you are saying and change their minds about it. Your proofs are the details or reasons for your supports. If you are explaining the next step in a process, the proof is the actual action. The details involved in the step. If your support is a location or a lesson, the proof is simply the details surrounding that lesson or the events which occurred in that location. If your supports are reasons to change your mind about something, that is if you are trying to persuade your audience, the proofs are the quotes and states and logic that you use to supports make sense and if your supports make sense, then your main point makes sense and if your point makes sense, then your speech has fulfilled its goal.

III. Conclusion

The conclusion should end the presentation on a high note and tie the whole speech together. You should try to achieve three things:

- 1) Make the audience aware that the speech is drawing to a close.
- 2) Make sure the audience knows the point you are trying to make, the belief you are trying to establish, or the action you wish the audience to take.
- 3) Leave the audience with something to remember.

Some explanation on Conclusion Your conclusion is the wrapping paper on your present to the judges. It is where you say what you said. Like your introduction, it should be short - only a sentence if you like - and it sums things up as briefly as you can. It states the point of your speech once more, it states the supports or steps or reasons once more and then you tell them that obviously they have learned something from you now and you tell them what that was.

Punch Line

This is like the attention grabbing opening sentiment. Something to finish up everything and make them remember what a good speech you have just delivered. It could be another shocking statement, it could be a humorous statement to make them laugh and think of you fondly or it could be a sad and poignant quotation that makes them sit in awkward silence - but at least they will remember you.