

# STRUCTURING YOUR SPEECH

## ***Dynamic Presentations* by Amanda Quibell**

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### **This section covers information that will help you to structure your speeches:**

- Opening a speech: Get Their Attention From The Start!
- Outlining
- Organizing a speech and Harnessing the Power of Three
- Transitions: Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation
- Closing a Speech: End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap



# OPENING A SPEECH: GET THEIR ATTENTION FROM THE START!

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Get the audience's attention, or the rest of your speech is a waste. I mean it! Most people spend the majority of their speech preparation time working on the body of their speech and then they tack on an opening and a closing last minute.

The opening and closing deserve the most attention. Why? If you don't get the audience's attention and get them to pay attention to you instead of... the thoughts in their heads, their grocery lists, their neighbors, their social media...then all the rest of your brilliant content is wasted because they will never hear it. Lisa Marshall of Toastmasters International stresses the opening words are so important that "I spend 10 times more time developing and practicing the opener than any other part of the speech."

Look at the description of Person A and Person B and tell me which person you like more.

Person A

envious, stubborn, critical, impulsive, industrious, and intelligent

Person B

intelligent, industrious, impulsive, critical, stubborn, and envious

If you are like most people, you have a preference for Person B. This illustrates a study by Solomon Ashe. He had subjects rate these two people using a string of descriptive words. Now look back at the descriptions. Look closely and you will notice they are the same words in a different order. Most people put the most emphasis on the first three words in determining how they will create the person. Like Ashe's subjects, your audience will be evaluating those first three words. Let's bring it back around to speechmaking. The first sentence out of your mouth is crucial and the first three words are especially important.

People form opinions quickly. To prove this, researchers showed subjects either a 20-minute clip of a job applicant or a 20-30 second clip of a job applicant. They were asked to rate the person on likeability and self-assurance. People were able to form an opinion in under thirty seconds. Not only that but they were able to form the same opinions from a 30-second clip as a 20-minute exposure.

## The Battle for Attention

*Remember that every piece of content in our modern era is part of an attention war. It's fighting against thousands of other claims on people's time and energy. This is true even when you're standing on a stage in front of a seated audience. They have deadly distracters in their pockets called smartphones, which they can use to summon to their eyes a thousand outside alternatives. Once emails and texts make their claim, your talk may be doomed. And then*

*there's that lurking demon of modern life, fatigue. All these are lethal enemies. You never want to provide someone with an excuse to zone out. You have to be a savvy general directing this war's outcome. Starting strong is one of your most important weapons.*

*Chris Anderson, TED Talks, The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking.*

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“People don’t pay attention to boring things,” according to John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*, “You’ve got 30 seconds before they start asking the question, ‘Am I going to pay attention to you or not?’” It is important to get your audience’s attention right away. In this chapter, I will share with you several ways to win the war for attention and to start your speech right. I will show you the basic opening and closing structure of speeches and give you many examples of what that looks like. A speech, like an airplane, needs a good take-off and a good landing. Now it’s time to prepare to have a strong take-off and learn everything that goes into a speech introduction. This chapter is full of examples from a variety of talks. I included quotes from those introductions, but I also included links to each of those talks hoping you will be interested enough to want to listen.

## Ways to Start a Speech

Chris Anderson likens this to battle. “First there is the 10-second war: can you do something in your first moments on stage to ensure people’s eager attention while you set up your talk topic? Second is the 1-minute war: can you then use that first minute to ensure that they’re committed to coming on the full talk journey with you?”

When thinking about your speech, spend a lot of time thinking about how to win the battle for their attention. Your introduction should make your audience want to put down their phones and listen. Your introduction should be so compelling they stop their wandering minds and turn their thoughts to you and you alone. Your introduction should start with three strong words where they form a strong opinion of you and your speech. Let me share how to accomplish this.

## Story

Capturing the audience through the story is one of the most powerful ways to start a speech. A story engages the brain in powerful ways and causes the audience’s brains to sync with the speakers. A well-told story will allow the audience to “see” things in their mind’s eye and to join the speaker’s emotions.

**Watch 3 things I learned when my plane crashed (5 mins) by Ric Elias on TED**

([https://www.ted.com/talks/ric\\_elias\\_3\\_things\\_i\\_learned\\_while\\_my\\_plane\\_crashed](https://www.ted.com/talks/ric_elias_3_things_i_learned_while_my_plane_crashed)) for how he begins his speech with a powerful story. Particularly notice his first four words, “Imagine a big explosion.”

The pilot lines up the plane with the Hudson River. That’s usually not the route. He turns off the engines. Now, imagine being in a plane with no sound. And then he says three words. The most unemotional three words I’ve ever heard. He says, “Brace for impact.”

**Source:** Elias, R. (2011). *3 things I learned when my plane crashed* [Video]. TED. [https://www.ted.com/talks/ric\\_elias\\_3\\_things\\_i\\_learned\\_while\\_my\\_plane\\_crashed](https://www.ted.com/talks/ric_elias_3_things_i_learned_while_my_plane_crashed)

Consider these other examples and notice how the speaker uses a story.

## More powerful introductions using story:

**I love you**, I believe in you and it’s going to be OK. The three things that I needed to hear three years ago when I felt more abandoned than ever. I remember that day as if it happen this morning. It was Sunday and I had just woken up early at a brisk 12:30 in the afternoon.

Ryan Brooks, Honesty, courage, and the importance of brushing your teeth. (<https://youtu.be/SskgA2hHgFI>)

**When I was nine years old** I went off to summer camp for the first time. And my mother packed me a suitcase full of books, which to me seemed like a perfectly natural thing to do. Because in my family, reading was the primary group activity. And this might sound antisocial to you, but for us, it was really just a different way of being social. You have the animal warmth of your family sitting right next to you, but you are also free to go roaming around the adventureland inside your own mind. And I had this idea that camp was going to be just like this, but better.

Susan Cain. The Power of Introverts. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/susan\\_cain\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_introverts](https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts))

**I grew up to study the brain** because I have a brother who has been diagnosed with a brain disorder: schizophrenia.

Jill Bolte Taylor, My Stroke of Insight. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/jill\\_bolte\\_taylor\\_my\\_stroke\\_of\\_insight](https://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_my_stroke_of_insight))

**A few years ago**, I got one of those spam emails. I’m not quite sure how, but it turned up in my inbox, and it was from a guy called Solomon Odonkoh.

James Veitch This is What Happens When You Reply to Spam Email. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/james\\_veitch\\_this\\_is\\_what\\_happens\\_when\\_you\\_reply\\_to\\_spam\\_email?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/james_veitch_this_is_what_happens_when_you_reply_to_spam_email?language=en))

**Eleven years ago**, while giving birth to my first child, I hemorrhaged and was transfused with seven pints of blood. Four years later, I found out that I had been infected with the AIDS virus and had unknowingly passed it to my daughter, Ariel, through my breast milk, and my son, Jake, in utero.

Elizabeth Glaser, Address to the 1992 Democratic National Convention. (<https://youtu.be/7z0lbUJWjf4>)

Good stories immediately set the stage and introduce you to the place and to the people. Doing this helps your brain can form a structure where the story takes place. It helps you see the story unfold in your mind. If you need help starting a story, Vanessa Van Edwards suggests these prompts:

- Once upon a time.
- I'm here for a reason, and it's an interesting story.
- The best thing that ever happened to me was.

There is an entire chapter on the Power of Story that can be found here.

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*Humor is a rubber sword –  
it allows you to make a point without drawing blood.  
– Mary Hirsch*

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## Humor

When Family Guy's Seth MacFarlane spoke at Harvard Commencement (<https://youtu.be/YOBK-xBOFcc>) in the rain, he started with "There's nowhere I would rather be on a day like this than around all this electoral equipment." People laughed, people smiled, and the speech was off to a strong start. Humor works because it gives the audience a hit of the feel-good hormone dopamine. That is ... if you are funny. If you decide to use humor, make sure you are funny. Test your humor on honest friends. In addition, the humor you use should fit your personality and your audience. Be warned, some groups would find humor inappropriate, do your research.

### **Watch This country isn't just carbon neutral – it's carbon negative (19 mins) on TED**

([https://www.ted.com/talks/](https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering_tobgay_this_country_isn_t_just_carbon_neutral_it_s_carbon_negative)

[tshering\\_tobgay\\_this\\_country\\_isn\\_t\\_just\\_carbon\\_neutral\\_it\\_s\\_carbon\\_negative](https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering_tobgay_this_country_isn_t_just_carbon_neutral_it_s_carbon_negative)) for how Tshering Tobgay begins his speech with humor.

**From the video transcript: Tshering Tobgay, This Country Isn't Just Carbon Neutral-Its Carbon Negative. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering\\_tobgay\\_this\\_country\\_isn\\_t\\_just\\_carbon\\_neutral\\_it\\_s\\_carbon\\_negative/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering_tobgay_this_country_isn_t_just_carbon_neutral_it_s_carbon_negative/transcript?language=en))**

In case you are wondering, no, I'm not wearing a dress, and no, I'm not saying what I'm wearing underneath. (Laughter) This is a go. This is my national dress. This is how all men dress in Bhutan. That is how our women dress. Like our women, we men get to wear pretty bright colors, but unlike our

women, we get to show off our legs. Our national dress is unique, but this is not the only thing that's unique about my country. Our promise to remain carbon neutral is also unique, and this is what I'd like to speak about today, our promise to remain carbon neutral.

**Source:** Tobgay, T. (date). *This country isn't just carbon neutral – it's carbon negative* [Video]. TED.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering\\_tobgay\\_this\\_country\\_isn\\_t\\_just\\_carbon\\_neutral\\_it\\_s\\_carbon\\_negative](https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering_tobgay_this_country_isn_t_just_carbon_neutral_it_s_carbon_negative)

## More powerful introductions using humor

**I didn't rebel as a teenager.** I started late and was still going at it the summer I turned thirty. I just became an American citizen, I divorced my husband, I got a big tattoo of a bat on my arm, and I joined a New York City punk band.

Danusia Trevino, Guilty (<https://youtu.be/OcHLBkLVONw>)

**I need to make a confession** at the outset here. A little over 20 years ago, I did something that I regret, something that I'm not particularly proud of. Something that, in many ways, I wish no one would ever know, but that here I feel kind of obliged to reveal. In the late 1980s, in a moment of youthful indiscretion, I went to law school. Dan Pink, The Puzzle of Motivation. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_pink\\_the\\_puzzle\\_of\\_motivation?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_the_puzzle_of_motivation?language=en))

**It is really interesting** to be a woman and to get to 45 and to not be married yet and to not have kids, especially when you have pushed out your fifth kid on television.

Tracee Ellis Ross, 2017 Glamour Woman of the Year. (<https://speakola.com/ideas/tracee-ellis-ross-glamour-women-of-the-year-2017>)

**I am not drunk...**but the doctor who delivered me was.” (reference the shake she has due to a botched medical procedure at birth causing her cerebral palsy).

Maysoon Zayid, I've Got 99 Problems and Cerebral Palsy is Not One of Them ([https://www.ted.com/talks/maysoon\\_zayid\\_i\\_got\\_99\\_problems\\_palsy\\_is\\_just\\_one?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/maysoon_zayid_i_got_99_problems_palsy_is_just_one?language=en)).

## Salutation followed by humor

Oh boy, thank you so much, thank you so much. Thank you, President Cowan, Mrs. President Cowen; distinguished guests, undistinguished guests, you know who you are, honored faculty and creepy Spanish teacher. And thank you to all the graduating Class of 2009, I realize most of you are hungover and have splitting headaches and haven't slept since Fat Tuesday, but you can't graduate 'til I finish, so listen up. When I was asked to make the commencement speech, I immediately said yes. Then I went to look up what commencement meant which would have been easy if I had a dictionary, but most of the books in our house are Portia's, and they're all written in Australian. So I had to break the word down myself, to find out the meaning. Commencement: common, and cement, common cement. You commonly see cement on sidewalks. Sidewalks have cracks, and if you step on a crack, you break your mother's back. So there's that. But I'm honored that you've asked me here to speak at your common cement

Ellen DeGenres, Commencement Speech at Tulane. (<https://youtu.be/0e8ToRVOtRo>)

Well, thank you. Thank you Mr. President, First Lady, King Abdullah of Jordan, Norm, distinguished guests. Please join me in praying that I don't say something we'll all regret. That was for the FCC. If you're wondering what I'm doing here, at a prayer breakfast, well so am I. I'm certainly not here as a man of the cloth, unless that cloth is — is leather.

Bono at the 54th annual National Prayer Breakfast. (<https://youtu.be/IrH8hExXDiw>)

## Interesting or Startling Fact

Starting your speech by sharing a little-known fact, can be powerful. For this to fully work, you need to have the audience's attention from the very first word. Read on for how these speakers started strong.

## Powerful introductions using facts

Sadly, in the next 18 minutes when I do our chat, four Americans that are alive will be dead from the food that they eat.

Jamie Oliver, Teach Every Child About Food. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie\\_oliver\\_teach\\_every\\_child\\_about\\_food?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie_oliver_teach_every_child_about_food?language=en))

So I want to start by offering you a free, no-tech life hack, and all it requires of you is this: that you change your posture for two minutes.

Amy Cuddy, Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are. ([https://youtu.be/Ks-\\_Mh1QhMc&vI=en](https://youtu.be/Ks-_Mh1QhMc&vI=en))

Okay, now I don't want to alarm anybody in this room, but it's just come to my attention that the person to your right is a liar. (Laughter) Also, the person to your left is a liar. Also the person sitting in your very seats is a liar. We're all liars. What I'm going to do today is I'm going to show you what the research says about why we're all liars, how you can become a lie spotter and why you might want to go the extra mile and go from lie spotting to truth seeking, and ultimately to trust building.

Pamela Meyer, How to Spot a Liar. ([https://youtu.be/P\\_6vDLq64gE](https://youtu.be/P_6vDLq64gE))

You will live 7.5 minutes longer than you would have otherwise, just because you watched this talk.

Jane McGonigal. The Game That Can Give You Ten Extra Years of Life. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/jane\\_mcgonigal\\_the\\_game\\_that\\_can\\_give\\_you\\_10\\_extra\\_years\\_of\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_the_game_that_can_give_you_10_extra_years_of_life))

There are 900,000 divorces in the United States of America every year. Fewer than 10% of them ever talked to anybody about their relationship. So why would you need a science? Well, we need a science to develop effective treatment and understanding of how to make love work. Why? Why should we care about having great relationships? Well, it turns out that in the past 50 years, a field called social epidemiology has emerged, and it shows that great friendships, great love relationships between lovers and parents and children lead to greater health – mental health as well as physical health – greater wealth, greater resilience, faster recovery from illness, greater longevity – if you want to live 10 to 15 years longer, work on your relationships, not just your exercise – and more successful children as well. John Gottman. The Science of Love. (<https://youtu.be/-uazFBCDvVw>)

This room may appear to be holding 600 people but there is actually so many more because within each of us there is a multiple of personalities.

Elizabeth Lesser, Take the Other to Lunch. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth\\_lesser\\_take\\_the\\_other\\_to\\_lunch/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_lesser_take_the_other_to_lunch/transcript?language=en))



## Use a Prop

Using a physical object can draw the audience's attention. Make sure you plan the timing of the prop, and you practice with it. It is important that it is large enough for the audience to see and they can see it well enough that they are not frustrated. Depending on your speech, it may be appropriate to put it away, so it is not distracting.

### Powerful introductions using props

Darren Tay walks onto the stage and stares at the audience. He pulls a pair of underwear out of his pocket and puts them on over his suit. "Hey loser how do you like your new school uniform. I think it looks great on you. Those were the words of my high school bully Greg Upperfield. Now if you are all wondering if the underwear that Greg used was clean, I had the same questions.

Darren Tay, Outsmart, Outlast. Toastmasters 2016 World Champion of Public Speaking (<https://youtu.be/v26CcifgEq4>).

Mohammed Qahtani walks onstage, puts a cigarette in his mouth ... then looks up as if noticing the audience and says, "What?" As the audience laughs, he continues. "Oh, you all think smoking kills? Ha-ha, let me tell you something. Do you know that the amount of people dying from diabetes are three times as many [as the] people dying from smoking? Yet if I pulled out a Snickers bar, nobody would say anything." He goes on to say, his facts are made up and his real topic is about how words have power. Mohammed Qahtani, Toastmasters 2015 World Champion of Public Speaking (<https://youtu.be/Iqq1roF4C8s&t=16s>)

JA Gamach blows a train whistle and then starts his speech as if he were a conductor, "All aboard! It's a bright sunny day and you are taking a train. You are wearing a pair of sandals you proudly made yourself. As you board the train one of your sandals slips off and falls beside the track. (J.A. loses one sandal that falls down the platform.) You try to retrieve it. Too late. The train starts to pull away. What would you have done? I would have cursed my bad luck, mad at losing a sandal.

JA Gamache, Toastmasters 2007 World Championship. ([https://youtu.be/YoW-T2\\_6OJo](https://youtu.be/YoW-T2_6OJo))

## Use a Quotation

### Rules for using quotes

- Be sure to use the quote purposefully and not just as placeholders.
- Quotes can just take up valuable space where you could put content unless they are not properly used.
- Let the quote be more important than the author. When using a quote at the opening, say the quote first and then the author. When using a quote at the end of a speech, say the author first and then the quote.
- Keep it short and sweet. Use a quote that gets to the point quickly.
- If you must use long quotes—put them on your slide.

- If you project a quote, read it to the audience. Never expect them to read it while you talk about something else. Never say stupid things like, “You can read, I’ll let you read this for yourselves” or “Your adults, I’ll let you process this.”
- Check the authorship and authenticity of the quote. There are so many quotes on the internet that are misattributed and misquoted. For example, who wrote the quote: “They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel”?
- Do not go for the overused quote or your audience is prone to dismiss it. Instead of quoting an overused “I have a dream quote” do as Jim Key, the 2003 Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking did and pick an equally great but lesser-used Martin Luther King Quote: “The time is always right to do what is right!”

Watch Nate Stauffer at a Moth Grand Slam as he uses poetry to start and carry his story.

**Watch Depression, the secret we share (10 mins) on TED** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew\\_solomon\\_depression\\_the\\_secret\\_we\\_share/](https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_solomon_depression_the_secret_we_share/)) for how Andrew Solomon opens with a quote to make us think about depression.

**Video source:** Solomon, A. (n.d.). *Depression, the secret we share*. [Video]. TED. [https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew\\_solomon\\_depression\\_the\\_secret\\_we\\_share/details?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_solomon_depression_the_secret_we_share/details?language=en)

## Reference the Occasion

Ceremonial speeches often call for acknowledgement of those in attendance or a mention of the occasion. Here is how Martin Luther King Junior set up his famous speech.

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

Martin Luther King Junior, I Have a Dream. (<https://youtu.be/I47Y6VHc3Ms>)

## Get the Audience Involved

Having the audience stand, raise their hand, or even nod in encouragement can cause them to focus on your message. This can be particularly helpful if the audience has been sitting for a while. Let me show you a few examples of how that works.

## Ask a Question

You can involve the audience from the start by asking them a question.

Watch the first few minutes of Amy Purdy's speech and how she starts with a question, "If your life were a book and you were the author, how would you want your story to go?"

## More powerful introductions using a question

I'm here today to talk about a disturbing question, which has an equally disturbing answer. My topic is the secret of domestic violence and the question I'm going to tackle is the one everyone always asks. Why would she stay? Why would anyone stay with a man who beats her?

Why Domestic Violence Victims Don't Leave- Leslie Morgan Steiner

([https://www.ted.com/talks/](https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie_morgan_steiner_why_domestic_violence_victims_don_t_leave?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)

[leslie\\_morgan\\_steiner\\_why\\_domestic\\_violence\\_victims\\_don\\_t\\_leave?utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie_morgan_steiner_why_domestic_violence_victims_don_t_leave?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare))

Here's a question we need to rethink together: What should be the role of money and markets in our societies? Today, there are very few things that money can't buy. If you're sentenced to a jail term in Santa Barbara, California, you should know that if you don't like the standard accommodations, you can buy a prison cell upgrade. It's true. For how much, do you think? What would you guess? Five hundred dollars? It's not the Ritz-Carlton. It's a jail! Eighty-two dollars a night. Eighty-two dollars a night.

Michael Sandel, Why We Shouldn't Trust Markets with Our Civic Life.

([https://www.ted.com/talks/](https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_why_we_shouldn_t_trust_markets_with_our_civic_life?language=en)

[michael\\_sandel\\_why\\_we\\_shouldn\\_t\\_trust\\_markets\\_with\\_our\\_civic\\_life?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_why_we_shouldn_t_trust_markets_with_our_civic_life?language=en))

How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? For example: Why is Apple so innovative? Year after year, after year, after year, they're more innovative than all their competition.

Simon Sinek, How Great Leaders Inspire Action.

Can you remember a moment when a brilliant idea flashed into your head?

Darren LaCroix, Ouch! World Champion of Public Speaking. (<https://youtu.be/FUDCzbmLV-0>)

## Have the Audience Participate

If you ask a question you want the audience to answer, be sure to give them time to respond. If they raise their hands, be sure to acknowledge their response. You might have the answer by standing, by raising their hands, by speaking to their neighbor. You might call on one member of the audience to answer for the group.

If you ask a question you want the audience to answer, don't let your presentation slide give away the answer. For example, one speaker had a slide behind him that said, "Lesson 1: Don't Worry About IQ." He has the audience raise their hand if they want to improve their grades then he asks, "So can I get a show of hands, how many would say IQ is going to be the most important to get those marks to go up?" Very few people responded because the answer was "written on the wall" literally.

**Watch Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands – Allan Pease (14 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/ZZZ7k8cMA-4?t=16>) as Allan Pease engages the audience.

**From the video transcript:** Allan Pease, Body Language, the Power is in the Palm of Your Hands (<https://youtu.be/ZZZ7k8cMA-4>):

Everybody hold your right hand in front like this in a handshaking position. Uncross your legs. Relaxed position. Right hand in front. When I say the word, "Now" here's what we're going to do. I am going to ask you to turn to someone besides you, shake hands as if you're meeting for the first time, and keep pumping till I ask you to stop. Then you'll stop and freeze it and we're going to analyze what's happening. You got that? You don't have time to think about this. Do it now. Pick anybody and pump. Pump, everybody. Freeze it. Hold it. Stop. Hold it. Freeze it. Keep your hands locked. Keep them locked. The person whose hand is most on top is saying "I'll be the boss for the rest of the day."

**Source:** TEDx Talks. (2013, November 17). *Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands – Allan Pease* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ZZZ7k8cMA-4?t=16>

## More powerful introductions using audience participation

I have a confession to make. But first, I want you to make a little confession to me. In the past year, I want you to just raise your hand if you've experienced relatively little stress?

Kelly McGonigal, How to Make Stress Your Friend. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend](https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend))

So I'd like to start, if I may, by asking you some questions.

If you've ever lost someone you truly loved, ever had your heartbroken, ever struggled through an acrimonious divorce, or being the victim of infidelity, please stand up.

If standing up isn't accessible to you, you can put your hand up. Please stay standing and keep your hand up there.

If you've ever lived through a natural disaster, being bullied or made redundant, stand on up. If you've ever had a miscarriage, if you've ever had an abortion or struggled through infertility, please stand up.

Finally, if you or anyone you love has had to cope with mental illness, dementia, some form of physical impairment or cope with suicide, please stand up.

Look around you. Adversity doesn't discriminate. If you are alive, you are going to have to, or you've already had to, deal with some tough times Thank you, everyone. Take a seat.

Lucy Hone: The Three Secrets of Resilient People. (<https://youtu.be/NWH8N-BvhAw>)

## Advice from Moth Storytelling Club: Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs attention

**No:** “So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought about it again and decided I’d climb the mountain the next morning.”

**Yes:** “The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure.”

## Arouse Suspense or Curiosity

**Watch Don’t regret regret (17 mins) on TED** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn\\_schulz\\_don\\_t\\_regret\\_regret/](https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_don_t_regret_regret/)) for how Kathryn Schulz creates curiosity by showing us Johnny Depp’s tattoo and then talks about her tattoo of regret. We hang on to her every word wondering, “Where is all this going and how bad can her tattoo really be?”

**From the video transcript: Kathryn Schulz, Don’t Regret, Regret.** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn\\_schulz\\_don\\_t\\_regret\\_regret/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_don_t_regret_regret/transcript))

So that’s Johnny Depp, of course. And that’s Johnny Depp’s shoulder. And that’s Johnny Depp’s famous shoulder tattoo. Some of you might know that, in 1990, Depp got engaged to Winona Ryder, and he had tattooed on his right shoulder “Winona forever.” And then three years later — which in fairness, kind of is forever by Hollywood standards — they broke up, and Johnny went and got a little bit of repair work done. And now his shoulder says, “Wino forever.”

So like Johnny Depp, and like 25 percent of Americans between the ages of 16 and 50, I have a tattoo. I first started thinking about getting it in my mid-20s, but I deliberately waited a really long time. Because we all know people who have gotten tattoos when they were 17 or 19 or 23 and regretted it by the time they were 30. That didn’t happen to me. I got my tattoo when I was 29, and I regretted it instantly. And by “regretted it,” I mean that I stepped outside of the tattoo place — this is just a couple

miles from here down on the Lower East Side –and I had a massive emotional meltdown in broad daylight on the corner of East Broadway and Canal Street.(Laughter) Which is a great place to do it because nobody cares. (Laughter) And then I went home that night, and I had an even larger emotional meltdown, which I'll say more about in a minute.

**Source:** Schultz, K. (2011). *Don't regret regret* [Video]. TED. [https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn\\_schulz\\_don\\_t\\_regret\\_regret/](https://www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_don_t_regret_regret/)

Saying unexpected things or challenging assumptions can get a speech started off right.

**A herd of wildebeests**, a shoal of fish, a flock of birds. Many animals gather in large groups that are among the most wonderful spectacles in the natural world. But why do these groups form? The common answers include things like seeking safety in numbers or hunting in packs or gathering to mate or breed, and all of these explanations, while often true, make a huge assumption about animal behavior, that the animals are in control of their own actions, that they are in charge of their bodies. And that is often not the case.

Ed Yong. *Zombie Roaches and Other Parasite Tales*. TED Talk ([https://www.ted.com/talks/ed\\_yong\\_zombie\\_roaches\\_and\\_other\\_parasite\\_tales?utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/ed_yong_zombie_roaches_and_other_parasite_tales?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare))

## Keys to Success

Memorize your first sentence so you can deliver it with impact.

Memorize your whole speech opening if possible.

Make sure your first three words have an impact.

## Typical Patterns for Speech Openings

- Get the audience's attention—called a hook or a grabber.
- Establish rapport and tell the audience why you care about the topic of why you are credible to speak on the topic.
- Introduce the speech thesis/preview/good idea.

- Tell the audience why they should care about this topic.
- Give a transition statement to the body of the speech.

## Step Two: Credibility

First, you hook the audience with your powerful grabber, then you tell them why you are credible to speak on the topic and why the topic is important. If they know your credentials, you would not need to tell them your credibility but you may still want to tell them why you are interested in the topic. Here are a few examples of how some speakers included credibility.

### Tell Why You Are Credible

I'm a doctor, but I kind of slipped sideways into research, and now I'm an epidemiologist.

Ben Goldacre, *Battling Bad Science*. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/ben\\_goldacre\\_battling\\_bad\\_science?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_goldacre_battling_bad_science?language=en))

I started studying resilience research a decade ago at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. It was an amazing time to be there because the professors who trained me had just picked up the contract to train all 1.1 million American soldiers to be as mentally fit as they always have been physically fit. Lucy Hone: *The Three Secrets of Resilient People*.

What I'm going to do is to just give a few notes, and this is from a book I'm preparing called "Letters to a Young Scientist." I'd thought it'd be appropriate to present it, on the basis that I have had extensive experience in teaching, counseling scientists across a broad array of fields. And you might like to hear some of the principles that I've developed in doing that teaching and counseling.

EO Wilson: *Advice to a Young Scientist*. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/e\\_o\\_wilson\\_advice\\_to\\_a\\_young\\_scientist?utm\\_campaign=tedspeak&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tocomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/e_o_wilson_advice_to_a_young_scientist?utm_campaign=tedspeak&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tocomshare))

## Step Three: Tell Why it is Important

Early on in your speech, you should tell the audience why they should care. You should connect the speech to things they care about. This is where you answer, so what, who cares?

You know, I didn't set out to be a parenting expert. In fact, I'm not very interested in parenting, per se. It's just that there's a certain style of parenting these days that is kind of messing up kids, impeding their chances to develop.

Julie Lythcott-Haims, How to Raise Successful Kids – Without Over-Parenting ([https://www.ted.com/talks/julie\\_lythcott\\_haims\\_how\\_to\\_raise\\_successful\\_kids\\_without\\_over\\_parenting?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/julie_lythcott_haims_how_to_raise_successful_kids_without_over_parenting?language=en))

## Step Four: Tell the Purpose of the Talk (aka Preview/Thesis)

*“If you don’t know what you want to achieve in your presentation your audience never will.” – Harvey Diamond, author*

Tell the audience your purpose, clearly give them an overview of the main points. MIT professor, Patrick Winston says one of the best things to add to your speech is an empowerment promise. You want to tell people what they will know at the end of your speech that they didn’t know at the beginning. It’s their reason for being here. His empowerment promise was, “Today you will see some examples of what you can put in your armory of speaking techniques and it will be the case that one of those examples—some heuristic, some technique, maybe only one will be the one that will get you the job. By the end of the next 60 minutes, you will have been exposed to a lot of ideas, some of which you will incorporate into your own repertoire, and they will ensure that you get the maximum opportunity to have your ideas valued and accepted by the people you speak with.” Notice that this statement told you what to expect and why it mattered.

### **Here are examples of how various speakers accomplished this.**

For years, I’ve been telling people, stress makes you sick. It increases the risk of everything from the common cold to cardiovascular disease. Basically, I’ve turned stress into the enemy. But I have changed my mind about stress, and today, I want to change yours.

Kelly McGonigal, How to Make Stress Your Friend. ([https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend](https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend))

We’ve been sold the lie that disability is a Bad Thing, capital B, capital T. It’s a bad thing, and to live with a disability makes you exceptional. It’s not a bad thing, and it doesn’t make you exceptional.

Stella Young, I’m Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much ([https://www.ted.com/talks/stella\\_young\\_i\\_m\\_not\\_your\\_inspiration\\_thank\\_you\\_very\\_much?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en))

What I’m going to show you is all of the main things, all of the main features of my discipline, evidence-based medicine. And I will talk you through all of these and demonstrate how they work, exclusively using examples of people getting stuff wrong.

Ben Goldacre, Battling Bad Science.

I would like to think that we (Arab women) poor, oppressed women actually have some useful, certainly hard-earned lessons to share, lessons that might turn out useful for anyone wishing to thrive in the modern world. Here are three of mine.

Leila Hoteit, Three Lessons on Success from an Arab businesswoman ([https://www.ted.com/talks/leila\\_hoteit\\_3\\_lessons\\_on\\_success\\_from\\_an\\_arab\\_businesswoman/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/leila_hoteit_3_lessons_on_success_from_an_arab_businesswoman/transcript?language=en))

We are often terrified and fascinated by the power hackers now have. They scare us. But the choices they make have dramatic outcomes that influence us all. So I am here today because I think we need hackers, and in



fact, they just might be the immune system for the information age. Sometimes they make us sick, but they also find those hidden threats in our world, and they make us fix it.

Keren Elazari. Hackers: The Internet’s Immune System ([https://www.ted.com/talks/keren\\_elazari\\_hackers\\_the\\_internet\\_s\\_immune\\_system?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/keren_elazari_hackers_the_internet_s_immune_system?language=en))

**Try This — Inspired by TED Master Class**  
 After you write your thesis, send it to three people with the question,  
 “Based on what you read here, what do you think my speech will be about?”

## Putting It All Together

At this point, you know you need to have a grabber, a preview, a credibility statement, and a so-what-who-cares statement. Let’s take a look at one of the top TED talks of all time by Jamie Oliver. This speech is a good illustration of everything we’ve been talking about so far and how all this works together.

**Watch Teach every child about food (22 mins) on TED** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie\\_oliver\\_teach\\_every\\_child\\_about\\_food](https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie_oliver_teach_every_child_about_food))

**Table 1: Teach Every Child About Food by Jamie Oliver Analyzed**

Part of speech	Illustration
Get the audience’s attention — called a hook or a grabber.	Sadly, in the next 18 minutes when I do our chat, four Americans that are alive will be dead through the food that they eat.
Establish rapport and tell the audience why you care about the topic or why you are credible to speak on the topic.	My name’s Jamie Oliver. I’m 34 years old. I’m from Essex in England and for the last seven years, I’ve worked fairly tirelessly to save lives in my own way. I’m not a doctor; I’m a chef, I don’t have expensive equipment or medicine. I use information, education.
Tell the audience why they should care about this topic.	I profoundly believe that the power of food has a primal place in our homes that binds us to the best bits of life. We have an awful, awful reality right now. America, you’re at the top of your game. This is one of the most unhealthy countries in the world.
Introduce the speech thesis/preview/good idea.	I came here to start a food revolution that I so profoundly believe in. We need it. The time is now. We’re in a tipping-point moment.
Give a transition statement to the body of the speech.	I’ve been doing this for seven years. I’ve been trying in America for seven years. Now is the time when it’s ripe — ripe for the picking. I went to the eye of the storm. I went to West Virginia, the most unhealthy state in America. Or it was last year. We’ve got a new one this year, but we’ll work on that next season.

## Never Start a Speech This Way

So we've talked about hooking the audience, telling why you are credible, telling them why they should care, and giving them a preview of your talk, now let's talk about what *not* to say or do. There are some things that speakers say to hurt their credibility and diminish the chances the audience will listen, be sure to avoid these.

### “Everybody close your eyes.”

I don't want to close my eyes; it makes me feel awkward and exposed to be in a group of people with my eyes closed. Because of that, I keep my eyes open. The problem is when I keep my eyes open, I feel like some sort of horrible nonconformist rebel. I feel awkward with my eyes closed and I feel guilty if they are open. Either way, I just feel bad. Besides, half of the time when speakers tell audience members to close their eyes, they forget to tell us when we can open them. If you are wanting me to imagine a story, just tell me to imagine it, don't make me close my eyes (rant over).

### “Can everybody hear me?”

You should plan your opening to be intentional and with power. “Can everybody hear me” is a weak and uncertain statement and this is not the first impression you want to leave. Do a microphone check before the audience members arrive and have someone stand in different corners of the room to make sure you can be heard. Don't waste your valuable speech time with questions that you should already know the answer to.

### “How long do I have to speak?”

You should know that before you begin. Even if the presentations for the day are running over and you are the last speaker, you should ask the MC before you begin. Always plan your first words with power.

### “Can you read this?”

You should make your slides big, really big. Test out your slides in advance of your speech, walk all around the room and make sure you can read them. Have a friend check them out as well. You should know they are big enough because you planned for it and tested it.

### “Turn off your cell phones and laptops.”

People really hate having things taken away, not to mention that your audience may want to take notes on their devices. Chances are you are speaking to adults, let them determine if it is appropriate to have out their technology.

**“I’m sorry, I’m losing my voice.”**

**“I’m stopped up.”**

**“I’m under the weather.”**

Stop apologizing! Stop making excuses! While these lines may be true, they just come off as excuses and can make the audience either feel like you don’t want to be there, or they just feel sorry for you.

**“I’m so nervous right now.”**

Talking about your nervousness will make you more nervous and will make them look for signs of your nervousness. Just start your speech.

**“So, Um, Ok.”**

Do not start with hesitation. Plan the first words, memorize the first words, practice the first words. Do not start with “Ok, so um, now I’d like...” Plan strong and start strong.

**Do Not Discuss Your Business with People Watching...Really! I Mean It!**

Many of us are giving and listening to presentations in an online format. I have attended numerous presentations this year through Zoom where I have to sit and watch while the organizers engage in personal small talk or deal with the details of the presentation.

This is how the speech I recently attended began.”Donna, you are going to share your screen, right?”

“Yes. I have my PowerPoint ready to go. Will you push “record” when I give the signal?”

“Sure. Where did you say that button is again? Do you think we should wait five more minutes, I think we had more who were coming? Dave, what was the total we were expecting?”

“Yeah, we had 116 sign up, but the reminders went out late so this may be all we have. We can give them a few more minutes to log on.”

“Donna, How is your dog? Is she still struggling with her cone since her spay surgery? My dog never would wear the cone –she tore her stitches out and broke her wound open. It was terrible. Well, it looks like it is about time to begin, thank you everyone for coming.”

If you are organizing an event online, hosting a speech online, giving a presentation online–please keep it professional. Most platforms will allow you to keep the audience in a waiting room until it is time to start. If you have a business to deal with, keep the audience out until you have everything ready to go. Once the audience is in the meeting, you should engage the audience in group-type small talk or you should just start the presentation. In professional settings, you should start the meeting on time. Why punish those who showed up on time to wait for those who aren’t there yet?

## A Conversation Over Coffee with Bill Rogers

*I asked my long-time friend, Bill Rogers, to write an excerpt to add to the book. I met Bill when he was the Chief Development Officer for a hospital in Northwest Arkansas and I met him again when he was reinventing himself as a college student getting a Master's Degree in the theater. He would love to share a symbolic cup of coffee with you and give you advice about public speaking.*

---

Perfect morning for a walk, isn't it? Join me for a cup of coffee? Wonderful. Find us a table and I'll get our coffee.

There you go; just like you like it. There's nothing like a great cup of coffee on the patio of your neighborhood coffee shop, is there?

Now that you're settled in your favorite chair, take a sip, and let that glorious caffeine kick in and do its stuff. Okay, let's talk.

So, you were asking me about public speaking.

Well, let's see. Where do we begin?

One of the first pieces of advice I ever received was to imagine that every member of your audience is sitting there in their underwear! Yeah, right. That never worked for me. I tried it once with a local civic group of community leaders both male and female. If the intent of that tidbit is to make you relax, it certainly didn't work for me. It just made me more self-conscious...and more nervous. I not only got distracted, but I also lost my train of thought, I started sweating, and, of course, imagined myself standing there without clothes. Needless to say, that speech was a disaster and I've never used it again. I suggest you don't either.

In the early days, I also relied very heavily on my typed-up speech. Now, there's nothing wrong with that unless you find yourself reading it word for word as I did. Nothing is more boring nor puts an audience to sleep quicker than a speaker with their nose down reading a speech. There's no connection and connection with your audience is key.

As you know, I love theatre and I've done a bit of acting over the years. Early on, I learned that the quicker I learned my lines, the more I could play, experiment, and shape my character. It relaxed me and gave me enormous freedom. It led me to find a mantra for myself: "With discipline comes freedom." This freedom will allow you to improvise as your audience or situation dictates while still

conveying the core message of your presentation. That discipline and its resulting freedom apply to public speaking of any kind and, I think, will serve you well.

Another old adage we've all heard is Aristotle's advice. You know the one. No? Well, roughly, it's to tell your audience what you're going to say, say it, and then tell them what you just said. That's the basic formula for public speaking. And it works as a good place to start.

However, effective speaking is much more and, to me, it starts with a story or even a simple sentence.

You know the feeling you get when you read the first sentence of a good book and it just reaches out and grabs you? That should be your goal with every presentation. One sentence to capture your audience's attention. Something that causes them to lean forward. Something that sparks their imagination.

It doesn't have to be all that profound either. It can be something very simple. A personal story that relates to your topic. A relevant fact or statistic that defines or illustrates the issue or subject matter at hand.

A couple of classics come to mind. The first is Alice Walker's, "The Color of Purple."

"You better not tell nobody but God."

And the second one is from my favorite novel, "To Kill A Mockingbird," by Harper Lee.

"When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm broken at the elbow."

Both sentences hook you immediately. A few simple words speak volumes. After reading or hearing those words, you naturally lean in. You want to learn more. You want to find out what happens next. Every effective speech or presentation does the same thing.

Of course, make sure that the first and last thing you say to your audience is both relevant and appropriate. I share this out of an abundance of caution. I once worked for an internationally recognized and well-respected children's research hospital and I was given the privilege to speak at a national educational convention. The room was filled wall to wall with teachers. I thought I'd be cute and add a little levity. I opened my presentation with this line, "You know, I've had nightmares like this..." Instead of the roars of laughter, I was expecting, a wave of silence ensued. Not only was the line not funny, but it was also wholly inappropriate and I immediately lost my audience. Not my best day. Learn from my mistakes.

Finally, let's touch on the importance of approaching a speech as a conversation. You and I are sitting here enjoying our coffee and having a friendly, relaxed conversation. Strive for that every chance you get. You may not always have that luxury. Some speeches and presentations simply

demand formality. But even in those cases, you can usually make it somewhat conversational. I always try to write my speeches in a conversational style. Like I'm talking to a friend...or trying to make a new one.

So, to recap: tell a story, learn your lines, hook your audience with a simple sentence, close with a question or call to action, use repetition, keep it conversational, treat your audience as a friend, and give yourself permission to relax.

Above all, be yourself. Allow yourself to be as relaxed as you are with those closest to you. If you're relaxed, if you try to think of your audience as a friend, then, in most cases, they too will relax and they will root for you. Even if they disagree with what you are telling them, they will respect you and they will listen.

How about another cup?

## Key Takeaways

### Remember This!

- The most important part of your speech is the introduction because if you don't get their attention, they are not listening to the rest of what you have to say.
- To get attention, tell a story, use humor, share a quote, tell a startling fact, show a prop, ask a question, reference the occasion.
- In addition to the grabber, a good introduction should establish rapport and tell the audience why you are credible.
- An introduction often includes a "so what who cares statement" to tell the audience why this should matter to them.
- The thesis/preview should be clear enough that someone could read just that sentence or couple of sentences and know what the speech is about

## Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from *Opening a Speech: Get Their Attention from the Start!* In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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# OUTLINING

## Why Outlining Is Important for a Speech

For your presented speech to be as effective as possible, organize your information into logical patterns that your audience can understand. This especially applies if you already know much about your topic. Take careful steps to include pertinent information that your audience might not know and to explain relationships that might not be evident to them. Using a standard outline format helps you to make decisions about your main

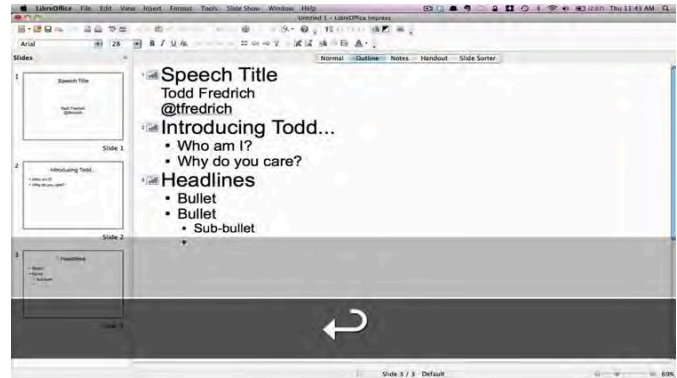
points, about choosing information to support those points, and about crafting the appropriate language to use. Without an outline, your message is liable to lose logical integrity. It might even deteriorate into a bullet-point list with no apparent cohesiveness,—except for the topic—leaving your audience relieved when your speech is finally over.

In this chapter, we discuss three outline types: a working outline, a full-sentence outline, and a speaking outline. For working outlines and full-sentence outlines, write in complete sentences; for speaking outlines, write in phrases. We'll give detailed outline examples later in the chapter, but for this first section, we'll discuss general outlining principles.

## An Outline Tests Your Specific Purpose's Clarity

A full-sentence outline lays a strong foundation. It compels you to have one clear and **specific purpose** and helps to frame a clear, concrete thesis statement. An outline helps you to exclude irrelevant information that does not directly focus on your thesis, and it reduces the research you must do because you will clearly identify the supporting evidence you need. And when presenting, an outline helps you remember your speech's central message.

Also, a solid full-sentence outline helps your audience understand and remember your message because they will be able to follow your reasoning. Creating an outline is a task too often perceived as busywork, unnecessary, time consuming, and restrictive. However, students who carefully write a full-sentence outline characteristically give powerful presentations with excellent messages.



Create an outline for your presentation in software such as LibreOffice using bullet points. Screenshot from [Using Outlines to Create a Presentation Video](#) by strategicgains reused under CC BY

## An Outline Tests Your Content's Scope

A clear, concrete thesis statement acts as your outline's compass. **Explicate** each main point, then, test your content's scope by comparing each main point to the thesis statement. If you find a poor match, you will know you've wandered outside your thesis statement's scope, as you will see in the example below.

**Specific Purpose:** To inform property owners about the *economics* of wind farms generating electrical energy.

1. Your first main point: modern windmills require a very small land base, making real estate cost's low. This is directly related to the *economics* thesis. Now, supply information to support your **claim** that only a small land base is needed.
2. Your second main point: you might be tempted to claim that windmills don't pollute in the ways other sources do. However, you will quickly note that this claim is unrelated to the *economics* thesis, so stay within this scope. A better second main point: once windmills are in place, they require virtually no maintenance. This claim is related to the *economics* thesis. Now, supply information to support this claim.
3. Your third point: windmill-generated electrical energy is more profitable compared to other sources—many audience members will want to know this. This point is clearly related to the economics thesis, and you will easily find information from **authoritative sources** to support this claim.

When you write in outline form, it is much easier to test your content's scope because you can visually locate specific information very easily and then check it against your thesis statement.

## An Outline Tests Your Main Points' Logical Patterns

You have many topic choices, therefore, there are many ways to logically organize your content. In the example above, we simply list three main points that are important economics to consider about wind farms. You can also arrange a speech's main points into a logical pattern. We discuss these patterns in the Organizing the Speech Body section. Whatever logical pattern you use, if you examine your thesis statement and then look at your outline's three main points, you will see the logical way in which they relate.

## An Outline Tests Your Supporting Ideas' Relevance

When you create an outline, you clearly see that you need supporting **evidence** for each main point. For instance, your first main point claims that windmills require less land than other utilities. Therefore, provide supporting evidence about the acreage windmills require and the acreage other energy-generating sites require, such as nuclear power plants or hydroelectric generators. Use expert sources in economics, economic

development, or engineering to support your claims. You can even include an expert's opinion, but not an ordinary person's opinion. The expert opinion provides stronger support for your point.

Similarly, the second point claims that once a windmill is in place, there is virtually no maintenance cost. To support this claim, provide annual windmill-maintenance costs and compare these to the alternative energy-generating sites' annual maintenance costs. If you compare nuclear power plants to support your first main point, compare nuclear power plants again to be consistent. It becomes very clear, then, that the third main point about windmill-generated energy's profitability needs authoritative references to compare it to nuclear power-generated energy's profitability. In this third main point, use just a few well-selected statistics from authoritative sources to support your claims, and compare them to the other energy sources you've cited.

## **An Outline Tests Your Speech's Balance and Proportion**

Writing a full-sentence outline is visually valuable. You immediately see whether each main point's importance is approximately equal. Does each main point have the same number of supporting points? If you find that your first main point has eight supporting points while the others only have three each, you have two choices: either choose the best three from the eight supporting points or strengthen the authoritative support for your other two main points. Remember, use the best supporting evidence you can find even if it means conducting more research.

## **An Outline Serves as Your Speaking Notes**

In addition to writing a full-sentence outline to prepare your speech, create a shortened outline to use as speaking notes to ensure a strong delivery. If you were to use the full-sentence outline when delivering your speech, you would be reading too much, which limits your ability to give eye contact and use gestures, and it hurts your audience connection. For this reason, write a short-phrase outline on 4 × 6 notecards to use when you deliver your speech.



parallelism, by Tom706, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Within the speech-writing process, there exists commonly agreed upon principles for creating an outline. The following are important factors to consider when creating a logical and coherent outline:

## Singularity

For clarity, make sure your thesis statement expresses one single idea. Use this single idea optimally as a guide to build your outline. The same holds true for your three main points: each must express one clear single idea. If many different ideas are required to build a complete message, present them in separate sentences using transitions such as “at the same time,” “alternately,” “in response to that event,” or some other transition that clarifies the relationship

between two separate ideas. As a reminder, for your audience’s sake, maintain clarity.

## Uniformity

A full-sentence outline readily shows whether you are giving equal time to each three main points. For example, are you providing each three main points with corresponding supporting evidence? Also, are you showing each main point’s direct relationship to the thesis statement?

## Consistency

Framing a thesis statement with one clear single idea will help you maintain consistency throughout your speech. Beyond the usual grammatical subject-verb agreement requirements, maintain a consistent approach. For instance, unless your speech has a chronological structure that begins in the past and ends in the future, choose a consistent tense, past or present, to use throughout the speech. Similarly, choose a language and use it consistently, for example, use humanity instead of mankind or humans, and use that term throughout.

## Adequacy

To ensure your audience understands your speech, do not assume that what is obvious to you is also obvious to your audience. Pay attention to using adequate language in two ways: how you define terms and how you support your main points. And use concrete language as much as you can. For instance, if you use the word community, you’re using an abstract term that can mean many things. So, define for your audience what you mean by community. And when you use evidence to support your main points, use the right kind and the

right weight. For instance, if you make a substantial claim, such as all printed news sources will be obsolete within ten years, you must use expert sources to support that claim.

## Parallelism

Parallelism refers to the idea that the three main points follow the same structure or use the same language. Parallelism also allows you to check for inconsistencies and self-contradictory statements. For instance, does anything within your second main point contradict anything in your first main point? Examining your content's parallelism strengthens your message's clarity.

## What are the three types of outlines?

Outlines are designed to evolve throughout your speech-preparation process, so in this section, we discuss the three types—a working outline, a full-sentence outline, and a speaking outline—and how you progress from each. Also, we discuss how using speaking-outline notecards help you as a speaker.

## Working Outline

**Use a working outline to develop your speech.** This is the outline you use to lay out your speech's basic structure, so it changes many times before it is complete. A great strategy to begin your working outline is to type out labels for each element. Later, fill in the content. The following are the outline labels that you must have:

### Working Outline Labels

**Your Name**

**Topic**

**General Purpose**

**Specific Purpose**

**Main Ideas**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Introduction/Grabber**

**Thesis Statement****Preview****Transition****Main Point I**

1. **supporting point**
2. **supporting point**

**Transition****Main Point II**

1. **supporting point**
2. **supporting point**

**Transition****Main Point III**

1. **supporting point**
2. **supporting point**

**Transition****Conclusion****References**

Also, a working outline allows you to work out your message's kinks. For instance, let's say you've made the claim that coal mining is a hazardous occupation, but you cannot find authoritative supporting evidence. Now, you must re-examine that main point to assess its validity. You might have to change that main point to be able to support it. If you do so, however, you must make sure that the new main point is a logical part of the thesis statement, the three main points, and the conclusion sequence. Don't think of your working outline as a rough copy, but as a careful step in developing your message. It will take time to develop, but is well worth it as it lays your speech's entire foundation. Here is a working outline example:

**Name:** Anomaly May McGillicuddy

**Topic:** Smart dust

**General Purpose:** To inform

**Specific Purpose:** To inform college science students about smart dust's potential.

**Main Ideas:**

1. Smart dust is an assembly of microcomputers.
2. Smart dust can be used by the military—no. No—smart dust could be an enormous asset in covert military operations. (That's better because it is clearer and precise).
3. Smart dust could also have daily life applications.

**Introduction:** (Grabber) (fill in later)

**Thesis Statement:** Thus far, researchers hypothesize that smart dust could be used for everything from tracking hospital patients, to early natural-disaster warnings, to defending against bioterrorism.

**Preview:** Today, I'm going to explain what smart dust is and the various near-future smart dust applications. To help us understand the small of it all, I will first examine what smart dust is and how it works. I will then examine some smart-dust military applications. And I'll end by discussing some smart dust-nonmilitary applications.

**Transition:** (fill in later)

**Main Point I:** Dr. Kris Pister, a robotics lab professor at the University of California, Berkeley, originally conceived the smart-dust idea in 1998 as part of a project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

1. (supporting point)
2. (supporting point)

**Transition:** (fill in later)

**Main Point II:** Because smart dust was originally conceptualized under a grant from DARPA, smart-dust military uses have been widely theorized and examined.

1. (supporting point)
2. (supporting point)

**Transition:** (fill in later)

**Main Point III:** According to the smart-dust project website, smart dust could quickly become a common part of our daily lives.

1. (supporting point)
2. (supporting point)

**Transition:** (fill in later)

**Conclusion:** (Bring your message full circle and create a psychologically satisfying closure.)

This working outline stage turns out to be a good place to go back and examine whether all the main points are directly related to the thesis statement and to each other. If so, your message has a strong potential for a unified focus. But if one main-point relationship is weak, this is the time to strengthen it. It will be more difficult to strengthen it later, for two reasons: first, the sheer amount of text on your pages will make the visual task more difficult, and second, it becomes increasingly difficult to change things in which you have invested much time and thought.

You can see that this working outline lays a strong foundation for the rest of your message. Its organization is visually apparent. Once you are confident in your basic message's internal unity, begin filling in the supporting points in descending detail—that is, from the general main points, to the particular supporting points, and then to greater detail. The outline makes it visually apparent where information fits and allows you to assess your supporting points to be sure they're authoritative and directly relevant to the main points they must support.

Now, let's discuss transitions. Sometimes, and not surprisingly, transitions seem troublesome to write because we often omit them in informal conversations. Our conversation partners understand what we mean because of our gestures and vocal strategies. And even when we do include transitions, we don't generally identify them as transitions. But in a speech, we must use effective transitions as a gateway from one main point to the next. The listener needs to know when a speaker is moving from one main point to the next.

In the next outline type—the full-sentence outline, take a look at the transitions and see how they make the listener aware of when you shift focus to the next main point.

## Full-Sentence Outline

**Write a full-sentence outline in full sentences only.** There are several reasons why a full-sentence outline



is important. First, this outline type includes a full plan of everything you intend to say to your audience so that you will not have to struggle with wordings or examples. Second, this outline type provides a clear idea of how much time it will take to present your speech. Third, a full-sentence outline showcases your ethical responsibility to your audience by detailing how fundamentally well-prepared you are. This is how a full-sentence outline looks:

**Name:** Anomaly May McGillicuddy

**Topic:** Smart dust

**General Purpose:** To inform

**Specific Purpose:** To inform college science students about smart-dust's potential.

**Main Ideas:**

1. Smart dust is an assembly of microcomputers.
2. Smart dust could be an enormous asset in covert military operations.
3. Smart dust could also have daily life applications.

**Introduction/Grabber:** In 2002, famed science-fiction writer Michael Crichton released his book *Prey*, which was about a swarm of nanomachines that were feeding off living tissue. The nanomachines were solar powered, self-sufficient, and intelligent. Most disturbingly, the nanomachines could work together as a swarm as it took over and killed its prey in its need for new resources. This nanotechnology-sophistication level is surprisingly more science fact than science fiction. In 2000, Kahn, Katz, and Pister, three electrical engineering and computer science professors at the University of California, Berkeley, hypothesized in the *Journal of Communications and Networks* that wireless networks of tiny microelectromechanical sensors, or MEMS; robots; or devices could detect phenomena including light, temperature, or vibration. By 2004, *Fortune Magazine* listed “smart dust” as the first in their “Top 10 Tech Trends to Bet On.”

**Thesis Statement:** Thus far, researchers hypothesized that smart dust could be used for everything from tracking hospital patients, to early natural-disaster warnings, to bioterrorism defense.

**Preview:** Today, I'm going to explain what smart dust is and the various near-future smart dust applications. To help us understand the small of it all, I'll first discuss what smart dust is and how it works. I'll then discuss some smart-dust military applications. And I'll end by discussing some smart-dust nonmilitary applications.

**Transition:** To help us understand smart dust, I'll begin by first examining what smart dust is.

**Main Point I:** Dr. Kris Pister, a robotics lab professor at the University of California, Berkeley, originally conceived the smart-dust idea in 1998 as part of a project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

1. According to a 2001 article by Bret Warneke, Matt Last, Brian Liebowitz, and Kris Pister titled “Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer” published in *Computer*, Pister’s goal was to build a device that contained a built-in sensor, a communication device, and a small computer that could be integrated into a one-cubic-millimeter package.
2. For comparison purposes, Doug Steel, in a 2005 white paper titled “Smart Dust” written for C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston, noted that a single rice grain’s volume is five-cubic millimeters.
  1. Each individual dust piece, called a mote, would then have the ability to interact with other motes and supercomputers.
  2. As Steve Lohr wrote in the January 30, 2010, edition of the *New York Times* in an article titled “Smart Dust? Not Quite, But We’re Getting There,” smart dust could eventually consist of “Tiny digital sensors, strewn around the globe, gathering all sorts of information and communicating with powerful computer networks to monitor, measure, and understand the physical world in new ways.”

**Transition:** Now that we know what smart dust is, let’s switch gears and talk about some the smart-dust military applications.

**Main Point II:** Because smart dust was originally conceptualized under a grant from DARPA, smart-dust military uses have been widely theorized and examined.

1. According to the smart dust website, smart dust could eventually be used for “battlefield surveillance, treaty monitoring, transportation monitoring, scud hunting” and other clear military applications.
  1. Probably, the number one smart-dust benefit in the military environment is its surveillance abilities.
    1. Major Scott Dickson, in a Blue Horizons paper written for the US Air Force Center for Strategy and Technology’s Air War College, sees smart dust as helping the military in battlespace awareness, homeland security, and identifying weapons of mass destruction.
    2. Furthermore, Major Dickson also believes it may be possible to create smart dust that has the

ability to defeat communications-jamming equipment created by foreign governments, which could help the US military not only communicate among itself, but could also increase communications with civilians in military combat zones.

2. According to a 2010 article written by Jessica Griggs in *New Scientist*, one of the first smart-dust benefits could be an early defense warning for space storms and other debris that could be catastrophic.

**Transition:** Now that we've explored some of smart-dust's military benefits, let's switch gears and see how smart dust may be able to impact our daily lives.

**Main Point III:** According to the smart-dust project website, smart dust could quickly become a common part of our daily lives.

1. Everything from pasting smart-dust particles to our finger tips to create a virtual computer keyboard, to inventory control, to product quality control have been discussed as possible smart-dust applications.
  1. Steve Lohr, in his 2010 *New York Times* article, wrote, "The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil."
2. Medically, according to the smart dust website, smart dust could help disabled individuals interface with computers.
  1. Theoretically, we could all be injected with smart dust, which detects adverse body changes instantly and relays information to our physicians.
  2. Smart dust could detect microscopic center-cell formations or alert us when we've been infected by a bacterium or virus, which could speed up treatment and prolong all our lives.

**Transition:** Today, we've explored what smart dust is, how the US military could use smart dust, and how smart dust could impact all our lives in the near future.

**Conclusion:** While smart dust is quickly transferring from science fiction to science fact, experts agree that smart dust's full potential will probably not occur until 2025. Smart dust is definitely in our near future, but swarms of smart-dust eating people as was depicted in Michael Crichton's 2002 novel, *Prey*, isn't reality. However, as with any technological advance, there are definite ethical considerations and worries related to smart dust. Even Dr. Kris Pister's smart-dust project website admits that as smart dust becomes more readily available, one of the trade-offs will be privacy. Pister responds to

these critiques by saying, “As an engineer, or a scientist, or a hair stylist, everyone needs to evaluate what they do in terms of its positive and negative effect. If I thought that the negatives of working on this project were greater than or even comparable to the positives, I wouldn’t be working on it. As it turns out, I think that the potential benefits of this technology far outweigh the risks to personal privacy.”

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When you prepare your full-sentence outline carefully, it may take as much as one- and one-half hours to complete the outline’s first part from your name at the top through the introduction. When you’ve completed that part, take a break and do something else. When you return to the outline, complete your draft in another one- and one-half hours. After that, you only need to do a detailed check for completeness, accuracy, relevance, balance, omitted words, and consistency. If you find errors, instead of being frustrated, be glad you can catch these errors *before* you stand up in front of your audience.

You will notice that the various speech parts, for instance, the transitions and main points, are labeled. There are compelling reasons for these labels. First, as you develop your message, you will sometimes find it

necessary to go back and look at your wording in another part of the outline. Your labels help you find particular passages easily. Second, the labels work as a checklist so that you can make sure you've included everything you intended. Third, the labels help you prepare your speaking outline.

You'll also notice the full references at the outline's end. They match the citations within the outline. Sometimes, while preparing a speech, a speaker finds it important to go back to an original source to be sure the message will be accurate. If you type in your references as you develop your speech rather than afterward, they will be a convenience to you if they are complete and accurate.

Don't think of the references as busywork or drudgery. Although they're more time consuming than text, they are good practice for the more advanced academic work you will do in the immediate future.

## Speaking Outline and The Advantages of Using Presentation Notes

Your full-sentence outline prepares you to present a clear and well-organized message, but your speaking outline will include far less detail. Resist the temptation to use your full-sentence outline as your speaking outline. The temptation is real for at least two reasons. First, once you feel that you've carefully crafted every word sequence in your speech, you might not want to sacrifice quality when you shift to vocal presentation. Second, if you feel anxious about how well you will do in front of an audience, you may want to use your full-sentence outline as a safety net. In our experience, however, if you have your full-sentence outline with you, you will end up reading rather than speaking to your audience. Remember, do not read, instead, use carefully prepared notecards.

Your speech will probably have five main components: introduction, main point one, main point two, main point three, and the conclusion. Therefore, we recommend using five notecards—one for each component.

How will five notecards suffice in helping you produce a complete, rich delivery? Why can't you use the full-sentence outline you labored so hard to write? First, your full-sentence outline will make it appear that you don't know your speech's content. Second, the temptation to read the speech directly from the full-sentence outline is nearly overwhelming; even if you resist this temptation, you will find yourself struggling to remember the words on the page rather than speaking extemporaneously. Third, paper is noisier and more awkward than cards. Fourth, it's easier to lose your place using the full outline. Finally, cards just look better. Carefully prepared cards, together with practice, will help you more than you might think.

Use 4 × 6 cards. The smaller 3 × 5 cards are too small to provide space for visually organized notes. Number your cards, and write on one side only. Numbering is helpful if you happen to drop your cards, and writing on one side only means that while you are speaking, the audience is not distracted by your handwritten notes and reminders to yourself. Make sure that each card contains only key words and key phrases, but not full sentences.

Some speeches will include direct or extended quotations from expert sources. These quotations might be

highly technical or difficult to memorize, but they must be presented correctly. This is a circumstance in which you include a sixth card in your notecard sequence. This is the one time you may read fully from a card. If your quotation is important, and the exact wording is crucial, your audience will understand that.

How are notecards sufficient? When they are carefully written and then you practice your speech using them, *they* will reveal that they work. If, during practice, you find that one card doesn't work well enough, you can rewrite that card. Using carefully prepared, sparingly worded cards help you resist the temptation to rely on overhead transparencies or PowerPoint slides to get you through the presentation as well. Although they will never provide your exact full-sentence outline word sequence, they'll keep you organized during your speech. The trick to selecting your cards' phrases and quotations is to identify the labels that will trigger a recall sequence. For instance, if the phrase "more science fact" triggers connections between Crichton's science fiction events in the novel *Prey* versus real science developments, that card phrase will support you through a fairly extended part of your introduction.

Ultimately, you must discover what works for you and then select those words that best jog your recall. Having identified what works, make a preliminary five-card set written on one side only, and practice with them. Revise and refine them as you would an outline.

The following is a hypothetical card set for the smart-dust speech:

Notecards Transcript [Word]

## Card 1

### *Introduction:*

2002, Prey, swarm nanomachines feed on living tissue.

Kahn, Katz, and Pister, U C Berkeley engineering and computer sci. profs. hyp.

Microelectromechanical (MEMS) devices could detect light, temp, or vib.

### *Thesis Statement:*

Researchers hyp that s.d. could track patients, warn of natural disaster, act as defense against bioterrorism.

### *Prev.:*

What smart dust is and how it works, military aps, nonmilitary aps.

### *Transition:*

To help understand, first, what smart dust is.

## Card 2

1. Dr. Kris Pister, prof robotics lab UC Berkeley conceived the idea in 1998 in a proj. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

1. 2001 article by Bret Warneke et al titled "Smart Dust: Communicating with a Cubic-Millimeter Computer" publ. in Computer, Pister wanted sensors, comm. devices, and computer in a cubic millimeter package.

2. Doug Steel of CT Bauer College of Bus at Houston noted grain of rice = 5 cm.

1. Each mote could interact w/ others.

2. (see extended quotation)

### Quotation:

Steve Lohr, NYT Jan 30 2005, "Smart Dust? Not Quite, but We're Getting There." Smart dust could eventually consist of "Tiny digital sensors, strewn around the globe, gathering all sorts of information and communicating with powerful computer networks to monitor, measure, and understand the physical world in new ways."



## Card 3

II. Orig conceptualized under DARPA, military uses theor. and examined.

1. Smart Dust website, battlefield surveill., treaty monitor., transp. monitor., + scud hunting.

1. benefit, surveill.

1. Maj. Scott Dickson, Blue Horizons Paper for Ctr for Strat and Tech for USAF air war college, sees s.d. as help for battlespace awareness, homeland security, and WMD ID.

2. Maj. Scott Dickson, Blue Horizons Paper for Ctr for Strat and Tech for USAF air war college, sees s.d. as help for battlespace awareness, homeland security, and WMD ID.

2. 2010 article Jessica Griggs New Scientist, early defense, storms and debris.

*Transition:*

Switch gears to daily lives.

## Card 4

III. s.d. project website: s.d. could become common in daily life.

1. Pasting particles for virtual computer keyboard to inventory control poss.

1. Steve Lohr, 2010, NYT, "The applications for sensor-based computing, experts say, include buildings that manage their own energy use, bridges that sense motion and metal fatigue to tell engineers they need repairs, cars that track traffic patterns and report potholes, and fruit and vegetable shipments that tell grocers when they ripen and begin to spoil."

2. Medically, accdng to SD project website, help disabled.

1. interface w/ computers.

2. injected, cd. relay info to docs and detect body changes instantly.

1. cancer cells, bacteria or virus, speed up treatment, and so on.

### *Transition:*

We expl. what SD is, how SD cd be used military, and how SD cd impact our lives.

*Card 5**Conclusion:*

Transf. fiction to fact, experts agree potential 2025. Michael Crichton's *Prey* isn't reality, but in developing SD as fact, there are ethical considerations.

Pister: privacy.

*Quotation:*

Dr. Kris Pister: "As an engineer, or a scientist, or a hair stylist, everyone needs to evaluate what they do in terms of its positive and negative effect. If I thought that the negatives of working on this project were larger or even comparable to the positives, I wouldn't be working on it. As it turns out, I think that the potential benefits of this technology far far outweigh the risks to personal privacy."

Notecard 5, by Brian Powell, licensed under CC0.

Creating and using a card set similar to the examples will help you condense and deliver an impressive set of specialized information. But, what if you lose your place during a speech? With a card set, it will take less time to find your place than with a full-sentence outline. You will not be rustling paper, and because your cards are written on one side only, you can keep them in order without flipping them back and forth to check both sides. What if you go blank? Take a few seconds to recall what you've said and how it leads to your next points. There may be several seconds of silence in the middle of your speech, and it may seem like minutes to you, but you can regain your footing most easily with a small well-prepared card set. Under no circumstances should you ever attempt to put your entire speech on cards in little tiny writing. You will end up reading word sequences to your audience instead of delivering a memorable message!

## Check your Understanding – Outlining

### Check your Understanding – Outlining (Text version)

1. Jerry is beginning to prepare his speech and has constructed a brief outline that sketches out his thesis and main points, but he does not yet have fully developed transitions or a conclusion. Which type of outline has Jerry constructed?
  - a. Transition outline
  - b. Working outline
  
2. Elisa has prepared her speaking outline on six notecards, so she believes she is finished preparing for her speech. You tell her that simply preparing the speaking outline is not enough; she needs to practice using her notecards as well. Why is this the case?
  - a. Elisa must get used to how the notecards feel in her hand.
  - b. Elisa must make sure the information on her cards work as a memory cue for her.

### Check your answers:<sup>1</sup>

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## Attribution & References

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## Notes

1. 1.(a), 2(b)

# ORGANIZING A SPEECH AND HARNESSING THE POWER OF THREE

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*A designer knows he or she has achieved perfection,  
not when there is nothing left to add,  
but when there is nothing left to take away.  
– Nolan Haims, Presentation Coach  
also attributed to Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

When it comes to speeches there are many formulas for how to present. Once you pick your topic, it is helpful to decide which formula works for you and use it from the start. Sure, you could wing it, but when you run into trouble, you will most likely find yourself seeking out a formula, so it just makes sense to start with an organization plan.

## Staples of Most Speeches

We're all familiar with the basic pattern.

Dale Carnegie wrote, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them." By this, he didn't mean being senselessly repetitive, but rather he wanted speakers to set up the framework for their speech, tell the audience the main points, and then recap the points.

The basic formula for most speeches follows this pattern:

**Grabber/Hook:** A statement to get the audience's attention.

**Preview/Big Idea/Thesis statement.** This statement is an overview of what the speech is about.

**Credibility Statement:** Why should the audience listen to you talk about this? Why are you credible on this topic?

Many, but not all speeches, need this.

**So-What-Who-Cares Statement:** A statement telling your audience why this topic suits this audience and this occasion.

This can be achieved as a statement, or it can be sprinkled throughout.

**Transitions / Signposts:** Statements that move the audience from one idea to the next.

**Body of Speech:** Main points of your speech with transitions between main ideas.

**Review:** Summary of the speech.

**Closure/Cincher:** A series of statements that provide closure.

## Audiences Will Listen According to Their Understanding

## of Your Credibility

One important thing to think about when building your speech is how you will build your credibility with the audience. If an audience doesn't think you are credible, they will listen with suspicion, or they won't listen at all. In speechmaking, there are three types of credibility—initial, derived, and terminal. Initial credibility is the credibility you have before you start to speak. It comes from any preexisting knowledge they have about you as a speaker, it comes from the way you are introduced, and it comes from the way your presentation was advertised. Next, there is derived credibility—credibility stemming from what you say during your speech, how you present yourself during the speech, and how you manage visuals during the speech. Finally, there is terminal credibility—credibility that you have at the end of the speech. Terminal credibility stems from what they think of how you managed yourself and your topic.

We live in a world where many speakers are “googled”, and their credibility is examined before they ever come in contact with their audience. When I train new teachers, I always have them google their names and see what comes up. To make a strong point, I have them open up their social media with someone else in the room. Once they have their profile pulled up, I ask them to hand their phone to the person next to them. I ask, “If a student looks at your public profiles and your social media, what will they think of you as a teacher?” New teachers are often shocked to think of students looking them up but that is the reality. Whether you are a student, a teacher, or a business professional, you need to be aware that people are looking online and using what they find there to determine your initial credibility.

*(Now is a good time to pause and “google” your name and look into your social media to think about your credibility).*

So, what makes up your credibility? According to communication researchers McCroskey and Teven, credibility is one part competence, one part trustworthiness, and one part goodwill. Competence is how much an audience member perceives you to be knowledgeable and an expert on the topic. You can boost your competence by using research, by having clear, organized ideas, and by clearly, articulating your ideas. Audiences are quick to form opinions and they are constantly evaluating your honesty and trustworthiness. If an audience deems you untrustworthy, every word out of your mouth will be seen as suspect. Finally, the audience evaluates your caring and goodwill. An audience wants to feel like you have their best intentions in mind. Audiences place a high priority on goodwill.

There are several ways to build your credibility with the audience. You can have someone introduce you who tells the audience why you are speaking on the subject. You can find ways to connect with the audience, so they trust you. The more a speaker shows that they understand and recognize the audience's feelings, the closer the audience will feel towards the speaker. Demonstrating enthusiasm and passion, managing content respectfully, and showing an awareness of situational factors all can enhance credibility.

## Mind the Gap

When mapping out your speech, you should always mind the GAP—goal, audience, and parameters. Always remember what the goal of the speech is, who the audience will be, and what parameters are set by the location, the time limit, and the setting.

## Rules for Effective Communication

Frank Lunz, political advisor, and author of *Words that Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear*, advises politicians of these key components to be an effective communicator.

1. **Simplicity:** Keep the language appropriate for the audience. It is usually better to assume they do not know and explain all terms than it is to leave them with words they don't understand.
2. **Brevity:** People have limited attention spans so be aware of the speech time. It is better to have fewer points than to have too many points.
3. **Credibility:** People will listen to you to the degree of trust that they have in you.
4. **Consistency:** Make sure what you say agrees with other things you have said. In other words, people look to the context of your life and other messages to interpret what you are saying. It is not uncommon for audience members to “google” a speaker before, during, and after a speech to see if they are trustworthy and consistent with what they say in their speech and in other places.
5. **Novelty:** Find ways to grab attention and stand out.
6. **Sound and texture:** Creative use of words will help attract and hold the audience's attention.
7. **Aspiration:** Help the audience reflect on how your message taps into them and their goals and dreams. Help them to see more and be more.
8. **Visualization:** Paint vivid pictures with your words to help the audience visualize the story or the outcome.
9. **Questioning:** Turn some statements into questions to engage the audience.
10. **Context and Relevance:** Tell the audience why your speech should matter to them.

## Organizing Your Ideas

Nancy Duarte, speech coach was asked, “What's the best way to start creating a presentation?” Her reply was as follows:

My best advice is to not start in PowerPoint. Presentation tools force you to think through information linearly,



and you really need to start by thinking of the whole instead of the individual lines. I encourage people to use 3×5 note cards or sticky notes — write one idea per note. I tape mine up on the wall and then study them. Then I arrange them and rearrange them — just work and work until the structure feels sound.

## Finding the Organizational Structure That is Right for You

*To help your travelers understand  
what is needed to achieve your vision,  
articulate where you need them  
to move from and where you need them to move to.  
Then make everything in your speech support that transformation.*

— Nancy Duarte,  
Illuminate: Ignite Change Through Speeches,  
Stories, Ceremonies, and Symbols

In a study published in *Speech Monographs*, researchers found that audiences who listened to an unorganized speech were more likely to lose interest. It makes sense that if the speaker is jumping around that we quit trying to follow the message. It also makes sense that their study found that it was harder for audiences to recall the speech information from a disorganized speech. Finally, it is no surprise that disorganized speakers were judged less persuasive and less credible. To maximize the effectiveness of your speech, to make your speech more memorable, and to be seen as more credible, you should use an organized speech pattern.

There are many different formulas for how to organize your speech and I am including a list of the most common structures for you to consider. As a useful activity, you might want to go down the list and figure out how your speech could fit into each of the patterns before you settle on the one that works for you.

When I think about compelling presentations, I think about taking an audience on a journey. A successful talk is a little miracle—people see the world differently afterward.

If you frame the talk as a journey, the biggest decisions are figuring out where to start and where to end. To find the right place to start, consider what people in the audience already know about your subject—and how much they care about it. If you assume they have more knowledge or interest than they do, or if you start using jargon or get too technical, you'll lose them. The most engaging speakers do a superb job of very quickly introducing the topic, explaining why they care so deeply about it, and convincing the audience members that they should, too.

The biggest problem I see in first drafts of presentations is that they try to cover too much ground. You can't summarize an entire career in a single talk. If you try to cram in everything you know, you won't have time to include key details, and your talk will disappear into abstract language that may make sense if your listeners are familiar with the subject matter but will be completely opaque if they're new to it. You need specific examples to flesh out your ideas. So limit the scope of your talk to that which can be explained, and brought to life with examples, in the available time.

A successful talk is a little miracle—people see the world differently afterward.

Chris Anderson, TED Talk Curator

## Informative Speech Patterns

### **Chronological:**

You would format your speech in the order things occurred. First this, then that.

In this talk, America Ferrera describes her step-by-step process of trying to get a role as a Latina in the United States. She takes us on a chronological journey as she wrestles with identity.

**Watch My identity is a superpower – not an obstacle (14 mins) on TED** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/america\\_ferrera\\_my\\_identity\\_is\\_a\\_superpower\\_not\\_an\\_obstacle/](https://www.ted.com/talks/america_ferrera_my_identity_is_a_superpower_not_an_obstacle/))

As you watch this speech notice how she opens with a story of her as a little girl dancing in the den singing and dreaming. At the end of her speech, she loops back to the nine-year-old girl and ends with power as she expertly points to the audience to bring them in as she delivers a well-thought-out last line:

*If I could go back and say anything to that nine-year-old, dancing in the den, dreaming her dreams, I would say, my identity is not my obstacle. My identity is my superpower. Because the truth is, I am what the world looks like. You are what the world looks like. Collectively, we are what the world actually looks like. And in order for our systems to reflect that, they don't have to create a new reality. They just have to stop resisting the one we already live in.*

### **Compare and Contrast:**

You would compare things and point out how they are similar and how they are different.

In this talk, Julie Hogan informs the audience about the concept of cultural humility by comparing and contrasting a Muslim burka and academic regalia.

**Watch The tale of two robes – Julie Hogan (12 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/w3Z3jdubP4Y>)

## Cause and Effect:

You would discuss what caused something and what was the overall effect.

In this talk, Caleb Stewart informs his audience of the benefits of reading. He tells all the effects that reading has had on his life.

**Watch 4-year-old gives motivational speech about importance of reading (2 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/g1UW3gnVGkg>)

## Problem Solution:

State the problem, tell us why it is a problem, offer us a solution to the problem.

*Many of the best talks have a narrative structure that loosely follows a detective story. The speaker starts out by presenting a problem and then describes the search for a solution. There's an "aha" moment, and the audience's perspective shifts in a meaningful way.*

*If a talk fails, it's almost always because the speaker didn't frame it correctly, misjudged the audience's level of interest, or neglected to tell a story. Even if the topic is important, random pontification without narrative is always deeply unsatisfying. There's no progression, and you don't feel that you're learning.*

*Chris Anderson, TED Talk Curator*

In this speech, Bart Knols tells us about the problem with mosquitoes (spoiler alert, it is malaria) and then he informs us of three innovative ways to kill mosquitoes. As you watch, notice how he uses a variety of props—a bed, a box of mosquitos, the slideshow, his boxer shorts to keep his audience engaged. His points are so clear that when his talk is over, you could remember the three main solutions and repeat them to a friend.

**Watch 3 new ways to kill mosquitoes (10 mins) on TED** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/bart\\_knols\\_3\\_new\\_ways\\_to\\_kill\\_mosquitoes](https://www.ted.com/talks/bart_knols_3_new_ways_to_kill_mosquitoes))

## Spatial Organization:

Show us a map and move across the map and show us where things are located. This works for more than a map, it could be a blueprint, a piece of art, an object.

## Topical Organization:

You would inform us of a topic and how this topic is broken down into subtopics.

Tucker and LeHew in, *Exploring Public Speaking*, offer this activity and insight:

One of the authors frequently does the following exercise in class. She has all the students take some object from their pocket, purse, or backpack and place it on a table at the front of the room. (It's interesting what gets put on the table!). Then she has the students gather around and look at the items and "group them"—put them into categories, with each group having at least two items and all items being put in some group. Afterward, she gets the different grouping schema and discusses them. Of course, most of the groups are "correct," even if just based on color. However, she then asks, "If you had to communicate to a classmate who is absent what is on the table, which schema or grouping pattern would you use?" The point is that grouping can be done on the basis of many characteristics or patterns, but some are clearer and better for communicating.

## Less is More

Writer Richard Bach says, "Great writing is all about the power of the deleted word." Many speakers try to do too much in a speech. They have so much information that they either speak too quickly or explain too briefly. It is better to have fewer points than you can illustrate in numerous ways. After you write your speech, go back, and try to condense. Try to find ways to be more specific and clearer.

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*It's a simple equation. Overstuffed equals under-explained.*

*The wrong way to condense your talk  
is to include all the things that you think you need to say,  
and simply cut them all back to make them a lot shorter.*

*There's a drastic consequence  
when you rush through multiple topics in summary form.*

Chris Anderson, TED Talk Curator

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To make sure the audience gets your point. Tell them what you are going to say, say it, tell them what you've said. When you make a point, say the point, illustrate the point with a fact or story, and then tell them how the point applies.

## Getting Advanced: The Rule of Three

*If you have an important point to make,  
don't try to be subtle or clever.  
Use a pile driver.  
Hit the point once.  
Then come back and hit it again.  
Then hit it a third time—a tremendous whack.  
-Winston S. Churchill*

*Omne Trium Perfectum* means everything that comes in threes is perfect. Humans love threes. In our culture, three provides a sense of the whole—it feels complete. The rule of threes suggests ideas presented in threes are easier to remember, more interesting, and more enjoyable. The three could mean have three main points, or the three could mean you have three items to a sentence. It could also mean explaining something in three different ways.

## Hendiatrix: Three successive words used to express one idea

Friends, Romans, countrymen. William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar  
Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. US Declaration of Independence.

## Tricolon: Three parallel words or phrases

Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of our nation – not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy.

Barack Obama, Keynote speech to Democratic National Convention

Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered.

Barack Obama, Inaugural Address

You learn that duty, honor, and country are not simply words, but guideposts. They dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be.

Michelle Obama, West Point Banquet

## Parallel construction: Repeated phrases

### Anaphora: The repeat of exact words at the beginning

**A sandal of** hope when you reach out.

**A sandal of** joy when you listen to your heart.

**A sandal of** courage when you dare to care.

J.A. Gamache, Toastmasters

**We can not** dedicate

**We can not** consecrate

**We can not** hallow — this ground

Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

**It means to** try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months.

**It means to** make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family.

**It means to** say your goodbyes.

Steve Jobs, Stanford Commencement Speech

**These men** are our fathers, grandfathers and even great-grandfathers.

**These men** have been and will be apart of our lives in ways that go far beyond the Tokyo Raid.

**These men** are the crews that have made sure our families' lives were on the right path.

Speech on the Doolittle reunion

**This was the moment** when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal.

**This was the moment** when we ended a war, and secured our nation, and restored our image as the last, best hope on Earth.

**This was the moment**, this was the time when we came together to remake this great nation so that it may always reflect our very best selves and our highest ideals.

Barack Obama Democratic Nomination Victory Speech – Change We Can Believe In

### **Epiphora: Repeat the words at the end.**

**There is** no Southern **problem**.

**There is** no Northern **problem**.

**There is** only an American **problem**.

President Lydon B. Johnson

This is not, however, **just America's fight**.

And what is at stake is not just America's freedom.

This is the world's **fight**.

This is civilization's **fight**.

**This is the fight** of all who believe in

progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.

President George Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks

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## **Have Three Points to Your Speech**

Have three main parts to your speech and make sure they are clear.

Now I want to share with you three things I learned about myself that day. I learned that it all changes in an

instant. We have this bucket list, we have these things we want to do in life, and I thought about all the people I wanted to reach out to that I didn't, all the fences I wanted to mend, all the experiences I wanted to have and I never did. As I thought about that later on, I came up with a saying, which is, "I collect bad wines." Because if the wine is ready and the person is there, I'm opening it. I no longer want to postpone anything in life. And that urgency, that purpose, has really changed my life.

The second thing I learned that day — and this is as we clear the George Washington Bridge, which was by not a lot — I thought about, wow, I really feel one real regret. I've lived a good life. In my own humanity and mistakes, I've tried to get better at everything I tried. But in my humanity, I also allow my ego to get in. And I regretted the time I wasted on things that did not matter with people that matter. And I thought about my relationship with my wife, with my friends, with people. And after, as I reflected on that, I decided to eliminate negative energy from my life. It's not perfect, but it's a lot better. I've not had a fight with my wife in two years. It feels great. I no longer try to be right; I choose to be happy.

The third thing I learned — and this is as your mental clock starts going, "15, 14, 13." You can see the water coming. I'm saying, "Please blow up." I don't want this thing to break in 20 pieces like you've seen in those documentaries. And as we're coming down, I had a sense of, wow, dying is not scary. It's almost like we've been preparing for it our whole lives. But it was very sad. I didn't want to go; I love my life. And that sadness really framed in one thought, which is, I only wish for one thing. I only wish I could see my kids grow up.

Ric Elias, Three Things I Learned While My Plane Crashed.

### Alan Alda's Three Ways to Make Yourself Understood

Some of you may know Alan Alda from the hugely popular show, *Mash*. Others of you may know him as the host of *Scientific American Frontiers*. What many people don't know was he was a visiting professor at Stony Brook University and the founder of the Universities' Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science. He created that center as a place to train scientists on how to clearly communicate with the public.

In this video, he explains the rule of threes.

- Make no more than three points.
- Explain difficult ideas in three different ways.
- Find a subtle way to make an important point three times.

**Watch Alan Alda's 3 key ways to making yourself understood (2 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/JWQmKtza9I/p>)

## Key Takeaways

### Remember This!

- A speaker should pick a speech pattern that fits the goal, audience, and parameters of the speech.
- Following a standard speech pattern helps the speaker be more organized.
- Organized speakers are easier to listen to, are perceived as more credible.
- Using the rule of threes can make your speech easier to listen to and more memorable.

## Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “Organizing a Speech and Harnessing the Power of Three” In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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# TRANSITIONS: BRIDGING IDEAS FOR A SEAMLESS PRESENTATION

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*Good transitions  
can make a speech more important to the audience  
because they feel they are being taken  
to a positive conclusion  
without having to travel a bumpy road.  
– Joe Griffith*

## Transitions

The difference between a novice speaker and an advanced speaker is in how they bridge the gap between ideas. Learning to use transitions effectively will help take your speaking to the advanced level. Transitions can be one word, a phrase, or a full sentence.

The audience is dying to know the relationship between ideas. Their brains are hard-wired for that. It's more important when you are speaking than when you are writing because the listeners can't go back – they have to get it when it happens. If the brain is bored, or gets tired because it's overwhelmed, or gets confused – it can't stay in that place, so it daydreams, creating its own interest.

Speech Coach Max Dixon, Westside Toastmasters.

So, let's get started. I have included various transition types for you to consider. These do little good if you read them and do not use them. This list works best if you read it now and then revisit it every time you write a speech.

## Beginning

- Let's begin with...
- First, I'd like to share with you...
- Now that you're aware of the overview, let's begin with...
- Our first stop is...
- I will first cover...
- My first point covers...

- To get started, let's look at...

## The Order of Things

- After that...
- Next...
- Second thing...
- Our next stop is...
- Let me tell you about your next step.

### Steve Jobs Commencement to Stanford University

#### Watch Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address (15 mins) on YouTube

(<https://youtu.be/UF8uR6Z6KLc>)

Steve Jobs clearly previews his main points, "Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories." He flows smoothly between points with clear transitions.

- "The first story is about connecting the dots."
- "My second story is about love and loss."
- "My third story is about death."

**Source:** Stanford. (2008, March 7). *Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/UF8uR6Z6KLc>

## Between Similar Points

- In the same way...
- In addition...
- Likewise...
- Similarly...

## Between Disagreeing Points

- Conversely...
- Despite this...
- The flip side of the issue...
- However...
- On the contrary...
- On the other hand...
- However ...
- On the other side ...
- Yet, we cannot ignore ...
- The opposing argument ...
- If we examine the opposite side, we see ...

## Introduce an example

- This is best illustrated by an example...
- For instance...
- Take the case of...
- For example...
- To understand this...
- Let me illustrate this by...

## Introduce Research

- To make the point...
- As illustrated by...
- For instance...
- Case in point...
- To solidify this point...
- As researched by...

## Cause and effect

- Therefore...
- Thus...
- Consequently...

- As a result...
- This is significant because...
- Hence...
- Resulting in...
- For that reason ...
- The effect is...

## Elaboration

- Also...
- Besides...
- What's more...
- In addition/additionally...
- Moreover...
- Furthermore...

## Transition to a Demonstration

- Let me show you how this works...
- Let me demonstrate this...
- Now that we've covered the theory, let's see it in action ...
- Next, I'd like to let you see this for yourselves...

## Introducing Your Visual

- As you can see from this chart...
- I'd like you to notice that...
- The table indicates...

## Questions as Transitions

- Now that you know the problem, what do you think will solve it?
- What do you think will solve this crisis?

## Vocabulary

**Connective:**

A word or phrase that connects the ideas of a speech and indicates the relationship between them.

**Transitions:**

A word or phrase that indicates when a speaker had finished one thought and it moving on to another.

**Internal preview:**

A statement in the body of the speech that tells the audience what the speaker is going to discuss next.

**Internal summary:**

A statement in the body of the speech that summarizes the speaker's preceding point or points.

**Signpost:**

A very brief statement that indicates where a speaker is in the speech or that focuses attention on key ideas.

From the *Art of Public Speaking* by Stephen Lucas



Photo by Karine Avetisyan, used under Unsplash license

## Thoughts from a Former Student

*One thing I learned in class that made me a better speechwriter was to pay attention to the*

*transitions. In our outlines, there was space for our main points, but also our transitions between them. At the beginning of the semester, I thought this was a waste of time planning out my transition for a speech and that I would just wing it the day of, but I soon realized how important they were. Transitions are like the finishing touches that make everything fall together in a speech.*

*You may have some interesting points or facts to give to your audience, but without transitions, you have nothing to connect your points and create a narrative. An audience is much more interested in a talk if there is a continuing idea or theme, and transitions help create this. I found this out by watching the other students in my class as they learned to use transitions as well. I loved the speeches that were clearly organized and had a common idea with transitions.*

*Zoe Lawless, Honors Public Speaking, University of Arkansas*

## Movement as Transition

Many people don't think about movement as a type of transition, but it can be a very powerful way to help your audience transition between ideas.

- Setting out a visual or putting it away signals a change in ideas.
- Some speakers will imagine a baseball diamond laid out on the floor and move to each base throughout the speech. Their opening comment is at home plate. Point one is delivered on first, point two on second, and point three on third. They stand back on their home plate to deliver the final closing statements.
- One speaker that I met said he always has a special place that is his big idea place. He may move around during his speech but when he wants the audience to know it is an important point, he stands in the big idea place.

## Silence as a Transition

John Chappellear, speech consultant, suggests that the use of silence can be powerful. It is powerful, but it is not easy. Being able to stand silently in front of a large audience for 15-45 seconds requires practice. Sometimes you can use silence as a way to let the audience catch up and think deeply about what you just said.

## Transitioning Between Slides

- As the next slide shows...
- As you can see...
- Next, I will show you...

## Transitioning to Visuals

- As you can see from this chart...
- I'd like to direct your attention to...
- This diagram compares...
- Now, I'd like to illustrate this with...

## Signaling the End is Near

- In conclusion...
- To sum it up...
- Lastly...
- In a nutshell...
- To recap...
- I'd like to leave you with...
- Finally, I'd like to say...
- The takeaway from all of this is...
- In conclusion...
- To summarise...

## Moving to the Next Speaker

- I told you about the most credible theories about climate change, now John will share with you some examples of what you can do.
- I'm going to turn it over to Malachi, who will take you through the next few points.
- Next, Angie will come up and talk about...
- To help us understand this topic better, we have Beatrice, who will talk us through...
- Look to the next speaker and motion towards them as they walk to the podium, Twila will tell you more...



## Problems with Transitions

These are some of the most common problems with transitions:

- Not planning out transitions and just “winging it.”
- Using fancy phrases inconsistent with the rest of the speech.
- Saying, “I have five points” and then having only four or miscounting the points.
- Overusing the same transitional phrase.
- Long pauses before transitions as the speaker tries to figure out what to say next.

## Tricks on Smoothly Presenting Transitions

Now you have a list of ideas to use when you write your next speech, let’s talk about how to use transitions effectively. Speakers typically struggle as they end one point and seek to move to the next idea. This usually happens because of poor planning, not enough practice, and poor note management. Let’s talk about these one at a time. First, poor planning happens because a speaker does not put enough time and effort into writing the speech. Second, not enough practice happened because even when a speech is practiced, it is practiced with regards to getting through the main points and not about moving smoothly between points. Finally, poor note management. Let me give you some tricks.

- Make your notes large-larger than you think you need.
- Give ample space between main ideas so you can look down and see the gap and know another point is coming.
- On your notecards, make each main idea a different color.
- I usually have a “T” in a circle to remind me that this is a transition statement.
- Practice your speech twice by just reading the transition statements and the next sentence.
- The night before your speech, visualize how you will manage the transitions.

## Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- Using transitions will help your speech flow smoothly.
- Practice using your transitions.
- Plan transitions for impact.

## Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “Transitions: Bridging Ideas for a Seamless Presentation” In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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# CLOSING A SPEECH: END WITH POWER AND LET THEM KNOW IT IS TIME TO CLAP

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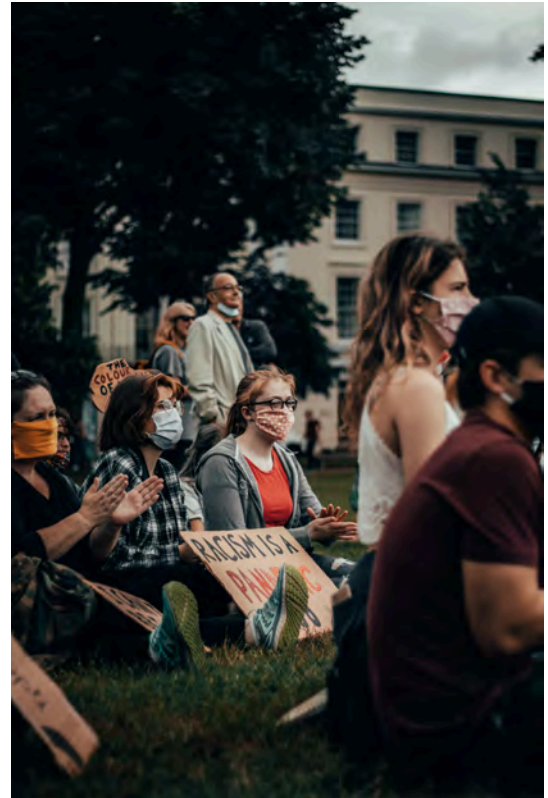


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*Open Your Speech With a Bang  
Close It With a Slam-Dunk  
Westside Toastmasters*

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“Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending,” according to poet Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow. The first few words of your speech make the audience want to listen and the last few sentences help them decide what they feel about you and your topic.

Most of this chapter is dedicated to showing you good examples of different types of speech closings. Let's get started by talking about the purpose of the closing.

## A Strong Closing Does Many Things

1. **Summarizes the points.** By restating your points your audience is more likely to remember them.
2. **Tells the audience when to clap.** Let's face it, it is so awkward when you are done with your speech, and no one claps. Being clear the end is near, relieves the audience of the pressure of wondering if they are clapping at the right time.
3. **Provides resolution.** Your speech should give the audience a sense of resolve or a sense of being challenged.

## The Formula for Closing Most Speeches

- Transition statement to ending.
- Review the main points—repeat the thesis.
- If it is a persuasive speech, tell the audience what you want them to do or think.
- Provide a closing statement.

## Restate the Thesis

Tell them what you are going to say, say it, tell them what you have said. This speech pattern is useful in most types of speeches because it helps the speaker to remember your key points. As you build your closing, make sure you restate the thesis. A good rule of thumb is to write it in such a way that if the audience were asked to restate the main points, their answer would match closely with your thesis.

### Example

Watch as Stella Young gives her thesis and then restates her thesis at the end of the speech as she wraps up.

#### **The thesis of the talk in the introduction:**

We've been sold the lie that disability is a Bad Thing, capital B, capital T. It's a bad thing, and to live

with a disability makes you exceptional. It's not a bad thing, and it doesn't make you exceptional.

**Restates the thesis of the talk at the closing:**

Disability doesn't make you exceptional but questioning what you think you know about it does.

**Watch Stella Young, I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much (9 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/8K9Gg164Bsw>)

This next example is from a student's speech. It is easy to pull out one sentence that clearly summarizes the main points of her speech. Following her summary, she winds the speech down into a thoughtful conclusion and ends with three powerful words.

Now is the time to separate the war on drugs from the war on addiction. Today you've heard the problems, impacts, and solutions of criminalizing addictions. Bruce Callis is 50 years old now. And he is still struggling with his addiction. While you all are sitting out there listening to this, I'm living with it. Bruce Callis is my father and for my entire life, I have watched our misguided system destroy him. The irony here is that we live in a society where we are told to recycle. We recycle paper, aluminum, and electronics. But why don't we ever consider recycling them most precious thing on Earth—the **human life**.

Student Tunnette Powell, Winner of the 2012 Interstate Oratorical Association Contest.

## Closing Phrases

After you restate your thesis, you should carefully deliver your closing phrases. Your closing should provide a resolution to your speech and/or it should challenge the audience. *Frantically Speaking* writer Hrideep Barot suggests “a conclusion is like tying a bow or ribbon to a box of your key ideas that your audience will be taking along with them.”

A speech closing is not just about the words you say, but it is also the way you say it. Change the pace near the end of your speech. Let your tone alone should signal the end is near. It is about deliberate voice control, don't let your voice weakly away.

In the next section, I will cover these ways to end your speech:

- End with powerful words
- End with a quote
- End with a graphic
- End with parallel construction
- End on a positive note
- End with a challenge
- End with a question
- End with inspiration

- End with well-wishing
- End with humor
- End with a call to action
- End with a feeling of resolve
- End with a prop

The best way to teach you about advanced closings is to show not tell. For this section, I will briefly explain each type of closing and then provide a video. Each video is queued so you can play the video and watch the closing statement. I included a transcript under each video if you want to follow along. It will be most beneficial for you to watch the clip and not just read the text. By watching, you will have a chance to hear the subtle changes in the speaker's voice as they deliver their closing statements.

## End with Powerful Words

As you design your closing, look at the last three to five words and examine them to see if they are strong words. Oftentimes, you can rearrange a sentence to end with a powerful word. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

**Watch What really matters at the end of life (19 mins) on YouTube** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/bj\\_miller\\_what\\_really\\_matters\\_at\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life)) for how BJ Miller ends with a powerful thought and a powerful word.

Parts of me died early on, and that's something we can all say one way or another. I got to redesign my life around this fact, and I tell you it has been a liberation to realize you can always find a shock of beauty or meaning in what life you have left, like that snowball lasting for a perfect moment, all the while melting away. If we love such moments ferociously, then maybe we can learn to live well — not in spite of death, but because of it. **Let death be what takes us, not lack of imagination.**

**Source:** Miller, B. J. (2015). *BJ Miller – What really matters at the end of life* [Video]. TED.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/bj\\_miller\\_what\\_really\\_matters\\_at\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life)

## End by Circling Back to the Opening

Another type of ending is to circle back to what you said in the beginning. You can revisit a quote, share the end to an illustration that was begun in the beginning, or you can put away a prop you got out in the beginning.

**Watch Life begins at the end of your comfort zone – Yubing Zhang (10 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/cmN4xOGkxGo>) for how Zubing Zhang begins and ends with the same quote to circle back around to the main idea.

She starts by telling a story of bungee jumping off the world's highest platform and how she saw a sign with a quote that says, "Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone." After telling her own story about pushing her emotional limits, she circles back around at the end by saying, "As the words said high on the bungee platform, "Life begins at the edge of your comfort zone."

**Source:** TEDx Talks. (2015, June 8). *Life begins at the end of your comfort zone – Yubing Zhang* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/cmN4xOGkxGo>

## End With Quote

If you end your speech with a quote, attend to the following.

1. Always say the author of the quote before the quote for example, "I want to leave you with a leadership quote 'What you do has far greater impact than what you say,' Steven Covey." The problem with this ending is that "Stephen Covey" are the last two words of the speech and that is boring. Consider instead this ending. "I think Robin Sharma said it best 'Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence, and inspiration.'" In this arrangement, the last three words are powerful—*influence and inspiration*.
2. Provided context for the quote before or after. Make sure the quote is meaningful and not just an easy way to end.

**Watch How to escape education's death valley (19 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/wX78iKhInsc>) for how Sir Ken Robinson ends with a quote. Notice how he says the author and then the quote.

Also, notice how he then ties his speech to the quote with a final few sentences and ends with the powerful word—"revolution" and how he uses a strong vocal emphasis as he says his last word. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

There's a wonderful quote from Benjamin Franklin. "There are three sorts of people in the world: Those who are immovable, people who don't get it, or don't want to do anything about it; there are people

who are movable, people who see the need for change and are prepared to listen to it; and there are people who move, people who make things happen.” And if we can encourage more people, that will be a movement. And if the movement is strong enough, that’s, in the best sense of the word, a revolution. **And that’s what we need.**

**Source:** TED. (2013, May 10). *How to escape education’s death valley – Sir Ken Robinson* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/wX78iKhInsc>

## End with a Graphic

You might want to use a visual to make your final point. Bringing in a picture, graphic, or object, reengages the audience to pay attention to your final ideas.

**Watch The paradox of choice (19 mins) on TED** ([https://www.ted.com/talks/barry\\_schwartz\\_the\\_paradox\\_of\\_choice](https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_the_paradox_of_choice)) for how Barry Scharz uses the magic words “so to conclude” and then he creatively uses a picture of a fishbowl to narrow in on his point. Notice how his final word is spoken with urgency as he says “disaster.”

So, to conclude. (He shows a picture of fish in a fishbowl) He says, “You can be anything you want to be — no limits.” You’re supposed to read this cartoon and, being a sophisticated person, say, “Ah! What does this fish know? Nothing is possible in this fishbowl.” Impoverished imagination, a myopic view of the world –that’s the way I read it at first. The more I thought about it, however, the more I came to the view that this fish knows something. Because the truth of the matter is, if you shatter the fishbowl so that everything is possible, you don’t have freedom. You have paralysis. If you shatter this fishbowl so that everything is possible, you decrease satisfaction. You increase paralysis, and you decrease satisfaction. Everybody needs a fishbowl. This one is almost certainly too limited –perhaps even for the fish, certainly for us. But the absence of some metaphorical fishbowl is a recipe for misery and, I suspect, disaster.

**Source:** Schwartz, B. (2005). *The paradox of choice* [Video]. TED. [https://www.ted.com/talks/barry\\_schwartz\\_the\\_paradox\\_of\\_choice](https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_the_paradox_of_choice)

## End with Parallel Construction

Parallel construction is a series of repeated phrases. It can be a powerful tool to use in a persuasive speech as it creates a feeling of importance.



**Watch Malala Yousafzai addresses United Nations Youth Assembly (18 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/3rNhZu3ttIU>) for how Malala Yousafzai ends with a series of parallel statements to build momentum.

s Notice how her pace perfectly matches her words and you feel her strength when she ends with “education first.” (Video is cued to play just the closing)

Dear brothers and sisters, we must not forget that millions of people are suffering from poverty, injustice, and ignorance. We must not forget that millions of children are out of schools. We must not forget that our sisters and brothers are waiting for a bright peaceful future. So let us wage a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty, and terrorism, and let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education First.

The parallel statements she repeats (underlined above) are: “we must not forget”, “let us”, and “one”

**Source:** United Nations. (2013, July 12). *Malala Yousafzai addresses United Nations Youth Assembly* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/3rNhZu3ttIU>

**End on a Positive Note**

Audiences are constantly evaluating a speaker to determine their attitude and motivation. As you consider your speech closing, ask yourself what type of impression do you want to leave? Do you want to leave them with depression or hope? Sadness or promise? Most of the time, audiences will receive messages that end positively better than speeches that end negatively.

In this speech sample, Hans Rosling showed the audience some hard statistics and he even pointed fingers at the audience as part of the problem. To help them hear his main point, he wisely ends on a positive note.

**Watch DON'T PANIC — Hans Rosling showing the facts about population (60 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/FACK2knC08E>) for how Hans Rosling ends this thought-provoking talk on a positive note.

Now, when thinking about where all this leaves us, I have just one little humble advice for you, besides everything else, look at the data. Look at the facts about the world and you will see where we are today and how we can move forwards with all these billions on our wonderful planet. The challenge of extreme poverty has been greatly reduced and it's for the first time in history within our power to end it for good. The challenge of population growth is, in fact, already being solved, the number of children has stopped growing. And for the challenge for climate change, we can still avoid the worst, but that

requires the richest, as soon as possible, find a way to use their set their use of resources and energy at a level that, step by step, can be shared by 10 billion or 11 billion by the end of this century. I've never called myself an optimist, but I do say I'm a possibilist and I also say the **world is much better than many of you think.**

**Source:** Gapminder Foundation. (2014, December 15). *Don't panic — Hans Rosling showing the facts about population* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/FACK2knC08E>

## End with a Challenge

Leave the audience with a doable personal challenge. Help them mentally make sense of all the information that you shared by helping them know how to file it away and how to use it.

**Watch Why you think you're ugly – Melissa Butler (8 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/imCBztkgus>)** for how Melissa Butler ends with a challenge.

So, I challenge each of you, when you go home today, look at yourself in the mirror, see all of you, look at all of your greatness that you embody, accept it, and love it. And finally, when you leave the house tomorrow, try to **extend that same love and acceptance to someone who doesn't look like you.**

**Source:** TEDx Talks. (2018, October 17). *Why you think you're ugly – Melissa Butler* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/imCBztkgus>

**Watch Darren LaCroix gives his Winning Speech at NSA (10 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/FUDCzbmLV-0&t=512s>)as

Darren LaCroix literally falls face down to anchor the point that when we fall, we “fall forward.”

(I have the video cued to play just the closing)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/dynamicpresentations/?p=202#oembed-15>

Darren LaCroix talks about taking risks and falling down and getting back up, he literally and purposefully falls down during his speech and ends this way:

What's your next step... take it. I didn't want to look back at my life and say you know I never did try that comedy thing, but I died debt-free. All of us are headed toward that goal we are going to teach a point where we get stuck and our feet are like in cement and we can't move but we're so afraid of that ouch but we forget that if we lean forward and take a risk—(He falls face down) and we fall on our face. When we get up, notice, you still made progress. So please, with me, go ahead and fall. **But fall forward.**

**Source:** LaCroix, D. (2010, June 23). *Darren LaCroix gives his Winning Speech at NSA* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/FUDCzblLV-0&t=512s>

## End with a Question

Asking a question at the end is one way to reengage the audience. It helps them think about what your topic might mean for them.

**Watch *Can we create new senses for humans? – David Eagleman (21 mins)* on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/4c1lqFXHvqI>)** for how David Eagleman reminds us about why his topic is important and then ends with a question. Notice how he pauses before his final question and how he changes the pace of his speech for the final sentence. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

So I think there's really no end to the possibilities on the horizon for human expansion. Just imagine an astronaut being able to feel the overall health of the International Space Station, or, for that matter, having you feel the invisible states of your own health, like your blood sugar and the state of your microbiome, or having 360-degree vision or seeing in infrared or ultraviolet. So the key is this: As we move into the future, we're going to increasingly be able to choose our own peripheral devices. We no longer have to wait for Mother Nature's sensory gifts on her timescales, but instead, like any good parent, she's given us the tools that we need to go out and define our own trajectory. **So the question now is, how do you want to go out and experience your universe?**

**Source:** TED. (2015, March 18). *Can we create new senses for humans? – David Eagleman* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/4c1lqFXHvqI>

**Watch *How language shapes the way we think (14 mins)* on TED (<https://www.ted.com/talks/>)**

lera\_boroditsky\_how\_language\_shapes\_the\_way\_we\_think) for how Lera Boroditsky ends with a personal note and a powerful final question.

I want to leave you with this final thought. I've told you about how speakers of different languages think differently, but of course, that's not about how people elsewhere think. It's about how you think. It's how the language that you speak shapes the way that you think. And that gives you the opportunity to ask, "Why do I think the way that I do?" "How could I think differently?" And also, **"What thoughts do I wish to create?"**

**Source:** Boroditsky, L. (2017). *How language shapes the way we think* [Video]. TED.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/lera\\_boroditsky\\_how\\_language\\_shapes\\_the\\_way\\_we\\_think](https://www.ted.com/talks/lera_boroditsky_how_language_shapes_the_way_we_think)

## End with Inspiration

*"Inspiring your audience  
 is all about helping them  
 see their own vision, not yours."*

ANONYMOUS

You may want to end your speech with inspiring and encouraging words. Pick words that resonate with most of your audience and deliver them in such a way that your audience feels your lift in emotion.

### **Watch The danger of a single story – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (19 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/D9lhs241zeg&t=1056s>) for how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ends with an inspiring final note and a powerful last few words "regain a kind of paradise". (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind. "They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained."

I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single-story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, **we regain a kind of paradise.**

**Source:** TED. (2009, October 7). *The danger of a single story – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/D9lhs241zeg&t=1056s>

**Watch The puzzle of motivation – Dan Pink (19 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/rrkrvAUbU9Y&t=1042s>) for how Dan Pink ends with an inspiring final note. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

Let me wrap up. There is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does. Here is what science knows. One: Those 20th century rewards, those motivators we think are a natural part of business, do work, but only in a surprisingly narrow band of circumstances. Two: Those if-then rewards often destroy creativity. Three: The secret to high performance isn't rewards and punishments, but that unseen intrinsic drive– the drive to do things for their own sake. The drive to do things cause they matter.

And here's the best part. We already know this. The science confirms what we know in our hearts. So, if we repair this mismatch between what science knows and what business does, if we bring our motivation, notions of motivation into the 21st century, if we get past this lazy, dangerous, ideology of carrots and sticks, we can strengthen our businesses, we can solve a lot of those candle problems, and maybe, maybe —**we can change the world. I rest my case.**

**Source:** TED. (2009, August 25). *The puzzle of motivation – Dan Pink* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/rrkrvAUbU9Y&t=1042s>

### End with Well Wishing

There are several types of closings where the speaker wished the audience well.

**The Benediction Close:** May God bless and keep you....

**The Presidential Close:** God bless you and may God bless the USA

**The Congratulatory Close:** I congratulate you on your accomplishment and wish you continued success.

## End with Humor

You can end on a fun lighthearted note. It is important to always run your humor by a variety of people to make sure you are funny, and your humor is appropriate.

### **Watch Valedictorian reveals he's autistic during speech (13 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/GtPGrLoU5Uk&t=680s>) for how Andrew Dunham uses humor throughout his speech and ends with a funny one-liner.

(I have the video cued to play just the closing)

I wish you all the best as we begin this journey on our paths and I sincerely hope and pray that your time and success have proven to be as memorable and spiritually rewarding as mine. If not, there's always summer school.

**Source:** Dunham, J. (2019, May 16). *Valedictorian reveals he's autistic during speech* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/GtPGrLoU5Uk&t=680s>

## **End with a Call to Action**

If you are delivering a persuasive speech, let the audience know exactly what you want them to do.

## **End with a Feeling of Resolve**

Paul Harvey made famous the line “And now you know...the rest of the story.” Your closing should allow us to know the rest of the story or to know how a situation was resolved.

### **Watch The three secrets of resilient people – Lucy Hone (16 mins) on YouTube**

(<https://youtu.be/9-5SMpg7Q0k?t=913>) for how Lucy Hone ends this tough but inspiring talk with a feeling of resolve. (I have the video cued to play just the closing)

If you ever find yourself in a situation where you think there's no way I'm coming back from this, I urge you to lean into these strategies and think again. I won't pretend that thinking this way is easy and it doesn't remove all the pain. But if I've learned anything over the last five years, it is that thinking this way really does help. More than anything it has shown me that it is possible to live and grieve at the same time. **And for that I will be always grateful.**

**Source:** TEDx Talks. (2019, September 25). *The three secrets of resilient people – Lucy Hone* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/9-5SMpg7Q0k?t=913>

## End with a Prop

Nancy Duarte says you should give your audience, SOMETHING THEY will ALWAYS REMEMBER—S.T.A.R. One way to do that is with an action or statement that will have the audience talking about it for a long time. President Obama did it with a mic drop.

**Watch President Obama complete remarks at 2016 White House Correspondents' Dinner (C-SPAN) (33 mins) on YouTube** (<https://youtu.be/hA5ezR0Kh80&t=1915s>)

## Memorize Your Conclusion

Know your ending so well you can say it without looking at your notes. The audience is deciding what they think about you and your topic so end strong by having a plan, sticking with your plan, using strong eye contact, and a clear strong voice.

## End on Time

Audiences stop listening when the time is up. If you go over, they will start checking their watches, looking at the door, or just mentally check out.

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Do not diminish the effect of a great speech  
with a bloated,  
aimless conclusion.  
Dan Rothwell.

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Photo by Jose Aragones, used under Unsplash license

## Never End a Speech This Way

So, we've talked about ending with power, now let's talk about ways not to end your talk— be sure to avoid these.

### “Times about up.”

Don't end with any references to time. It is like a giant stop sign saying, “stop listening.” Don't highlight that you ran over time or that it is almost time for lunch. You want them to think about your speech, not the clock.

### “Any Questions?”

You want them to feel a sense of closure for your speech. End with something powerful and let them applaud. After the applause, you can offer to answer questions. Similarly, projecting your last slide with the words, “Any Questions” is a weak ending.

### “Let Me Add This Point I Missed”

If you forget something in the body of your speech, it is usually best to leave it out. Most of the time you are the only one who will miss it.



## “Thank You to the Team”

**There is a time to thank the organizers and those who helped you but it is not at the end of your speech. Your focus should be on your audience and what they need and what they need to hear is your idea. Send a thank you letter to the team if you want them to feel your appreciation.**

## “I’m Sorry”

“Sorry again for the technology issue,” “I apologize for going over time,” “I regret I have no answer to this.” These are all negative phrases. Keep to your topic that is what they need to hear and stay focused.

## “I’ll Close with this Video”

No, you should close with talking about the big idea.

## Rambling

If you don’t have a plan at the end, you will ramble. “Steer clear of meandering endings they kill a story,” according to the Moth Storytelling website. “Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!”

## To Thank or Not to Thank, That is the Question

There is a debate amongst speech professionals, speech teachers, and speech coaches about whether or not you should thank the audience. Here are their main arguments.

### **Why You Should *Not* Say Thank You**

1. You want to end with powerful words. “Thank you” are not strong words.

2. The recency effect suggests they will remember the last words you spoke. You want them to remember more than just “thank you.”
3. It is not a very creative way to end.
4. It can be a sign of a lazy speaker, “I have no idea how to end this, I’ve run out of good things to say so I’ll say ‘Thank you’ so you will clap now.”

### **Why You Should Say Thank You**

1. It has come to be the expected ending in many settings. Violating their expectations can cause them to have a negative reaction.
2. It clearly signals you are finished so the audience knows when to clap. This relieves the pressure from both you and the audience.
3. It expresses gratitude.

I will leave it up to you to decide what works for you. As for me, I plan on trying to find more creative ways to end other than just saying “thank you.”

### **Maximizing the Primacy Recency Effect**

If I were to read you a list of thirty things on my grocery list and then asked you to list all that you can remember, chances are you would remember the first items on the list and the last items on the list (and any ones you found interesting from the middle). When people engage in listening, they tend to remember the first and last things they hear, it is called the primacy-recency effect. This is just one more reason that your introduction and conclusion should be so well planned out. It is those first words and last words that the audience is going to remember.

The primacy recency effect influences, not only what people pay attention to in a speech, but also which speech we pay the most attention to in a series of speeches. For example, if there is a lineup of six speakers, the first and last speakers tend to get the most attention.

As a speaker, you can use this information to your advantage by volunteering to go first or last. If you are giving a long presentation, you can break it up by allowing the audience to move around or talk to a neighbor. When you come back from break, you have re-engaged that primacy effect and moved them back to a high state of attention.

## Do You Have Everything You Need for a Strong Closing?

- Have I signaled my speech is coming to an end with my words or my voice?
- Have I restated my main points?
- If I am persuading my audience, do they know what I want them to do or think?
- Have I written the last three to five words in such a way that I end with powerful words?
- Have I memorized my closing?

## Getting Off the Platform is Part of Your Closing

Plan on making a strong exit. Whether you are stepping off a stage or simply going to your seat, you should consider that the audience is watching you.

I have had students who finished their speech and then walked over to the trashcan and in a large, exaggerated movement, they threw their notecards in the trash. In our minds, we threw their message away with those cards. I've seen speakers, sit in their chairs and then announce, "I can't believe my hands were shaking so much." I've sat there and thought, "I didn't notice." I then realized that the comments they made influenced my perception of them and my perception of their topic.

You said your last word and the audience is applauding, now what? Look at your audience and smile and nod in appreciation before walking off the stage. If you will be answering questions, wait until after the applause stops to begin your question and answering period.

When practicing your speech, it is a good idea to start from your chair, walk up to a spot and then give your speech, and then walk back to your chair and sit down. Your "speech" impression begins and ends from your chair.

## Key Takeaways

### Remember This!

- A speech closing should include a review of the main points and a purposeful closing sentence.
- Persuasive speech endings should tell the audience specifically what they should do or think about.
- The recency effect suggests that people remember the most recent things they have heard which is one reason the closing is so important.
- Change the pace of your speech and the tone of your voice to signal the end of the speech.

## Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from “Closing a Speech: End with Power and Let Them Know It is Time to Clap” In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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