

Organizing A Speech

Every good speech has three distinct parts:

An Opening or Introduction

A Body

A Conclusion or Summary

The person who introduces you will give your speech title, so it's not necessary to waste those precious message moments repeating it. A salutation (to the person who introduced you and the members of your audience) is needed. Now proceed right into the speech.

The Introduction of the speech should get your audience's attention, establish your purpose and give the listeners a good reason for listening to you. Some good introductions include humor, unusual statements, quotes, rhetorical questions, an illustrative story, attention-getting actions or unusual word selections. During the introduction, be sure your listeners clearly understand what you intend to tell them and why that information is important to them. Allocate about 10% of your projected speech time to the introduction (for a 5 minute speech, 30 seconds is good.)

The Body of your speech should contain the "meat" of the speech. This is the place you explain why you believe as you do about the subject, the benefits of the action you propose, give pertinent information about your subject and give examples or illustrations to support your position. For a 5, 6, or 7 minute speech, no more than three major points should be included. The message of the speech is given, substantiated and documented in the body of the speech.

The Conclusion wraps it all up. This is the part which your listeners are most likely to remember, so be sure to re-state your major points. The conclusion also contains your call for action - tell your listeners what you want them to do with or about the information you've presented. The conclusion should be about 10% of your total time.

- - Some steps to follow in preparing your speech - -

1. Select our speech topic - something you (and hopefully your audience) are interested in.
2. Establish your general purpose: inform, persuade, convince or entertain your audience.
3. Establish a specific purpose: What is the goal you wish to achieve with this speech? Write this purpose in a single declarative sentence.
4. Make a list of all you know about the topic. Do you need further research? How many major points have you included? Is there unnecessary information on this list? Keep the pertinent and exclude the excess. If there is too much pertinent, try narrowing the topic and purpose.
5. Write the body of the speech first, then the conclusion, finally the introduction.
6. Edit the written speech. Are your transitions clear? Do the thoughts flow smoothly and are they easily understood? Do you need to add some points of interest to insure that you keep your listener's attention (humor or anecdotes, for example?)
7. Practice the speech orally. Change words and phrases that are easily misunderstood or hard to say.
8. Practice the finally-edited speech several times, then you'll be ready for a top-notch delivery!