Project 2 - Organize Your Speech

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Good speech organization is essential if your audience is to follow and understand your presentation. You must take the time to put your ideas together in an orderly manner. You can organize your speech in several different ways; choose the outline that best suits your topic. The opening should catch the audience's attention, the body must support the idea you want to convey, and the conclusion should reinforce your ideas and be memorable. Transitions between thoughts should be smooth.

OBJECTIVES:

- Select an appropriate outline which allows listeners to easily follow and understand your speech.

- Make your message clear, with supporting material directly contributing to that message.

- Use appropriate transitions when moving from one idea to another.

- Create a strong opening and conclusion.

Time: Five to seven minutes

You have delivered your first prepared speech and participated in Table Topics and other meeting roles. Now you're ready to concentrate on structuring an effective speech.

As a speaker, your role is to tell others about your ideas and occasionally persuade them to take some action. Your audience will be more receptive to your efforts if you take the time to assemble your thoughts in a logical manner. Well-organized speeches have several benefits for the audience. They are:

- Easier to understand. Your audience wants to know what your speech is about and the point you are trying to make. A well-organized speech helps them do so.

- Easier to remember. A well-organized speech enables the audience to better identify and remember the points you made.

- More credible. Speakers who take the time to carefully organize their presentations are perceived as more knowledgeable and believable than those who give rambling, disjointed speeches.

- More enjoyable. Audiences appreciate presentations that are thoughtfully crafted and lead them step by step from the beginning to the end.

Organizing your speech helps you, too. When you plan the points you want to make and the order in which you want to present them, you will be less likely to forget anything and your presentation will be more effective.

Select Your Topic

Your first step in creating your speech is to decide what to talk about. Novice speakers sometimes find this difficult. The world is full of possible speech topics. Your challenge is to select the best one for you and your audience. Finding a topic doesn't require special ability or long hours of research or thought. Consider, for example,

- Discussions you've had recently with friends or coworkers

- Magazine or newspaper articles that attracted your interest

- Your expertise on certain topics - real estate, writing, personal computers, etc.

- Everyday experiences - shopping, commuting, family relationships.

Any of these can generate speech ideas.

Eventually, as you become a more experienced speaker, you will encounter situations that will cause you to think, "That would make a good speech topic." Write down these ideas and file them. You can refer to them later.

You'll find more tips on selecting speech topics in the appendix and in *The Better Speaker Series* program "Selecting Your Topic" (Catalog No. 274).

Be sure the topic is not too broad. For example, instead of talking about sports - a general topic - narrow the subject to

children's sports or, more specific still, children's gymnastics. Remember, you will be speaking for only a few minutes, and you will need all of that time to fully develop a single facet of the larger subject. Be sure your topic is timely and relevant for your audience.

Once you know your topic, determine the point you want to make. If the topic is children's sports, for example, do you want to convince listeners that adults are making children's sports too competitive? Do you want to entertain your audience with funny stories about your child's soccer team?

Make an Outline

The next step in preparing your speech is to logically assemble your ideas into a sequence that will help you achieve your objective. There is no "best" way to organize your speech. There are several different ways to organize, and the method you choose often depends on the topic you select and your objective.

Chronological. The topic is arranged by time. For example, in a speech about your town's upcoming centennial celebration, you would begin with details about its founding, followed by information about its growth over the years, then its current status. Or your speech could describe steps in a process, such as a speech about the five steps in making a career change.

Spatial. This *type* of speech follows a direction. For example, in a speech about planning a flower garden, you could first discuss low-growing flowers appropriate for the front of a garden, followed by slightly taller flowers suitable for the center of the garden, then taller flowers appropriate for the rear of the garden.

Causal. This type of speech shows cause/effect relationships. Often the effect is discussed first, then the cause. A speech about hurricanes that
describes how a hurricane is formed and its destructiveness fits this organizational pattern.

Comparative. You compare and contrast different proposals or plans, usually to persuade the audience that one plan or proposal is better. For example, in a presentation to your company's executives, you could compare and contrast two different proposals concerning a new product to convince the executives that one proposal is better than the other.

Topical. This speech splits the main topic into subtopics. For example, a speech about changing radio programming could address three different types of programming: music, news and talk shows.

Problem-solution. You present a problem that needs to be solved and a solution to that problem. This type of organization is effective if you are trying to motivate your audience to take some kind of action. For example, a speech describing the effect of water pollution on people and the environment fits this organizational pattern, provided it lists sources of water pollution in your town and describes what can be done to stop it.

Develop the Opening

In Project 1 you learned that every speech has an opening, body and conclusion.

The opening should immediately catch the audience's attention and tell the audience what you will be talking about. Examples of a good opening are:

- A startling question or a challenging statement

- An appropriate quotation, illustration or story

- A display of some object or picture

- An attention-getting generalization that ties in with your subject

Avoid these weak openings:

- An apologetic statement

- A story or joke that does not relate to your topic

- A commonplace observation delivered in a commonplace manner

- A long or slow-moving statement or story

- A trite question, such as "Did you ever stop to think...?"

Draft the Body

The body is the main part of your speech and consists of the facts or ideas you want to present. The amount of information you include in the body will be limited by the amount of time available to you and how much the audience

can remember. Most listeners will remember only three to five main facts or ideas. For a five- to seven-minute talk, three facts or ideas are plenty.

What facts or ideas do you want to convey?

You may find it helpful to write down all of those related to your topic on small note cards, using one card per idea or fact and one sentence per idea or fact. Then select the three best or most important facts or ideas. These will be the main facts or ideas you will present. Arrange them in the order that will most effectively present your message.

For example, if you are writing a speech about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, the three main points you could select are:

1. Eating fruits and vegetables provides nutrients your body needs to function.

2. Eating fruits and vegetables protects against the effects of aging.

3. Eating fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of cancer and heart disease.

The next step in developing the body of your speech is to elaborate on each main point with subpoints. A subpoint clarifies, emphasizes or proves the idea or fact it supports. Subpoints make the speech more interesting and help listeners remember the main point or idea. For example, a subpoint for point number one above could be: "They contain carbohydrates, proteins and fats the body uses to generate energy or build cells."

Supporting material then follows each subpoint. Supporting material can include:

- Statistics. These are numerical ways of conveying information about incidents, data and events.

- Testimony. These are quotes or opinions from people with expertise on the matter.

- Examples, stories or anecdotes. These usually relate an event that happened to you or someone you know, or someone you've read about.

- Visual aids. These could be diagrams, charts, pictures, models or other objects. (More

- information about using visual aids appears in Project 8.)

- Facts. Facts are verifiable information.

Whichever support method you choose, make sure it is relevant to the point you are making.

The Conclusion

The conclusion is your final opportunity to convey your message and main points in a manner that will help the audience remember them. It should reinforce your ideas and leave listeners with a lasting impression. If you were informing the listeners, you could conclude with a summary of the ideas presented in the body of the speech. If you were persuading or motivating the audience to take some action, you could suggest a course of action listeners could take. You could then conclude with a final remark, such as a challenge, question, anecdote or quotation.

Occasionally, as you deliver the conclusion, you may remember something you forgot to say earlier. Resist the temptation to talk about it now. Introducing new material in the closing may confuse the audience. Also, don't apologize for anything you may or may not have done or said during your talk. Finish forcefully and confidently.

Sample Speech Outline

Following is an outline for a speech containing three main points:

A. Opening
   1. Captures audience attention 2. Leads into speech topic

B. Body

   1. Main point
      a. Subpoint
      b. Support material

   2. Main point
      a. Subpoint
      b. Support material

   3. Main point
      a. Subpoint

b. Support material

C. Conclusion

    1. Review or summary
    2. Call to action or memorable statement

Pay Attention to Transitions

Audiences need help in moving smoothly from one topic to another. Transitions provide these valuable bridges, helping the audience to follow the ideas being presented and to see the relationship of those ideas. Transitions usually are used as you move

- from the speech introduction to the body

- from a main point to a subpoint

- from a subpoint to support material

- from support material to another main point

- from the last support material to the conclusion.

Transitions can be words, phrases, statements or questions. Some transitional words are *afterward, also, but, consequently, consider, finally, instead, later, meanwhile, moreover, next, then, yet.* Some transitional phrases are: *according to, as a result, for example, for instance, in addition, let's begin with, more importantly, this means, to illustrate.* Some transitional statements or questions are: "If this program is so valuable, why is everyone resisting it?" "We must consider three things in developing this new product. First is ... Second is ... Third is..."

Your Assignment

In this project, the focus is on effective speech organization. Your assignment is to:
- Select an outline that's appropriate for your topic and allows your listeners to easily follow and understand your presentation.

- Make your message clear to the audience; the main points, subpoints and support materials should contribute to that message.

- Use appropriate transitional words, phrases, statements or questions as you move from one idea to another.

- Create a strong opening and conclusion. You may find it helpful to memorize them as you did in Project 1.

- Incorporate suggestions from your evaluation for Project 1 as you prepare and rehearse this speech.

For more information on speech organization, refer to The Better Speaker Series program "Organizing Your Speech" (Catalog No. 276). Review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 as you prepare your speech.

Evaluation Guide for
Organize Your Speech

Title _____

Evaluator_____ Date _____

NOTE TO THE EVALUATOR: *The speaker is to present a talk that is organized in a manner that leads the audience to a clearly defined goal. The speech includes a beginning, a body and a conclusion; major facts or ideas; and appropriate support material, with smooth transitions between the facts and ideas. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this evaluation form by rating the speech in each category and offering comments or specific recommended action where warranted.*

1	=	Excellent
2	=	Above average for the speaker's experience level
3	=	Satisfactory
4	=	Could improve
5	=	Needs attention

CATEGORY	RATING	COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS
• **Speech Value** (Interesting, meaningful to audience)	5 4 3 2 1	
• **Preparation** (Research, rehearsal)	5 4 3 2 1	
• **Organization** (Logical, clear)	5 4 3 2 1	
• **Opening** (Attention-getting, led into topic)	5 4 3 2 1	
• **Body** (Flowed smoothly, appropriate support material)	5 4 3 2 1	
• **Conclusion** (Effective)	5 4 3 2 1	
• **Transitions** (appropriate, helpful)	5 4 3 2 1	

- What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

- What did you like about the presentation?