



The Speech Body



There are many forms that the body of your speech can take, but it should always have good structure. An informative speech will usually have 3-4 main points that are introduced, developed, and then restated. A narrative speech will usually follow a storyline. Another option is to figure out where you want to end up and work backwards from there. Even entertaining talks and "roasts" should have both cohesion and direction to help the audience follow along.

It is important to know your audience and speak to their level and (usually) their point of view. You should always establish some common ground with the audience, even if your talk will be contrary to their beliefs. If you are trying to persuade your audience, keep in mind that you will probably have more success making small attitude changes than in altering someone's convictions.

When using facts in your speech, you should be prepared to support them with statistics, quotes, displays, or some other measure of authority. It is often best to briefly mention the source in your speech, but be prepared to give more detail if needed. Other ways to enhance the points you make include illustrations, comparisons, analogies, and showing the weaknesses of opposition (in a persuasive speech).

The body of your speech should almost never be written down verbatim. The exception is when you are delivering information that must be conveyed precisely. When you first start speaking you may have the temptation to write every word down, but this will generally deter greatly from your delivery and should only be used as a last resort.

The best way to stop using notes is to practice. You should first try to move from written speaking to 3x5 cards, writing down keys points, transitions, and areas where you have difficulty. If you need to write the whole speech down, try highlighting the major areas and work toward only using the notes at these areas. As you progress, you can learn to use a simple outline on a single card.

Since your opening and closing should be memorized, the body of the speech gives you the opportunity to adapt your speech and ad-lib. Personalizing your talk by asking questions or by talking directly to an individual can help build a good rapport with the audience.

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