Organizing and Brainstorming

Inquire: Challenges of Presenting

Overview

When you are told to put together a presentation, where do you start? How do you brainstorm your topics? What parts do you need to come up with when making a presentation? This lesson will help you answer these questions. You will learn how to choose a topic, how to write a thesis, how to mind map, how to structure your writing, and finally, how to find your own style of writing.

Big Question: What is the hardest part of making a presentation?

Watch: Cooking with Franklin

Franklin is in a public speaking class where he has been assigned a speech assignment. The speech needs to be about five minutes long and informational in style. In the next few minutes, we are going to watch Franklin create an outline for a simple, informative speech.

First, Franklin needs to pick a topic. He thinks about things he knows a lot about, and decides that his passion, cooking, is a great topic to talk about! Franklin needs to narrow this topic down, so he uses the mind mapping technique to do so. He writes “cooking” on a piece of paper, then starts drawing branches coming out of it. He writes “omelets,” “soups,” and “cakes.” Then, he decides to cross out “omelets” and “cakes.” From “soups,” he draws some branches out and labels them with his three favorite soups, “potato,” “tortilla,” and “chili.” Franklin thinks these are all great soups for Fall. He decides to use these soups to inform his class about three great soup choices this Fall.

Next, Franklin needs to write an outline. An outline has four main parts: introduction, thesis statement, body, and conclusion. For his introduction, Franklin decides to tell a story about his grandma cooking soup when he was younger, then tell how he discovered his love of cooking from his grandmother. After the introduction, Franklin writes his thesis statement: “This fall, warm up with any or all of the following three soups: potato soup, tortilla soup, or chili!” He knows the body of his speech will have three points, each soup flavor. He writes some subpoints below each main point with cooking tips he will discuss about each soup. Then, he writes a short conclusion, referring back to the story he told in his introduction.

Many times, getting started can be the hardest part of writing a speech. This lesson will teach you how to make the hardest step the easiest! Once you have a solid starting point, it makes the rest of the process easier as well. A good foundation is key to setting yourself up for success.
Read: Choosing a Topic

Overview
When you need to give a presentation at work or in class, the place to start is finding a topic. This lesson will help you figure out how to choose your topic, what you'll need in a thesis, how to brain map, how to structure your presentation, and how to find your own style.

How to Select a Topic
Picking a topic can be challenging. The first thing to consider is how much you like the possible topics. Find something that interests you. If you like the topic, it becomes easier to get your audience to like your topic as well.

After you have a topic, start researching your topic area. More often than not, your presentation won't be you talking about your topic without some sort of research or data to support what you are saying. You need to be able to find research to support what you are presenting.

Finally, narrow your topic down to an appropriate focus and length. You want to make sure your presentation is within whatever time limit you have been given, and that it focuses on the area you have been asked to present about. Running too long, or not speaking long enough, can reflect poorly on your presentation, so make sure you have enough information to be within your time constraints, but not too much information that you run over your time.

What is a Thesis?
A thesis is the central point of your presentation. All information presented in your presentation needs to relate back to your thesis and prove it as true or false. If the information doesn't relate to your thesis, it doesn't need to be in the presentation. That's the best way to narrow the focus of your presentation and to keep on target when putting together your presentation. Always ask yourself, “How does this relate to my thesis?” If you can’t answer that question, then you don’t need that information.

When writing your thesis, start by knowing the kind of presentation you need to present and the topic you are presenting. If you need to present a persuasive speech about the importance of vaccinations, then your thesis needs to reflect that. Are you trying to convince people that vaccines are important? Your thesis should be a statement of your intent to do that. “This presentation will show the importance of vaccines.” A thesis is simple to construct when you know what kind of presentation you have and what topic you are talking about.

What is Mind Mapping?
Mind mapping is a brainstorming technique that organizes your central topic at the middle of a map and shows possible ideas that are related to your topic branching from it.

Mind mapping is a great tool for deciding what to talk about in your presentation. Finding ideas and topics related to your main topic can be challenging. Mind maps are a fantastic way to find ideas related to your main point. They also allow you to find subpoints related to those newfound discussions.
The challenge of mind mapping is that it can be overwhelming. If you don't have a rather specific topic in the middle, you can find more related ideas than you need, which can be overwhelming. If you struggle to make decisions, mind mapping might be more harmful than helpful to you. However, this drawback can be avoided in two ways. The first is to have a narrow topic already chosen. The second is to practice doing it so you can identify important ideas, or significant ideas more easily.

How to Structure Your Writing

Putting together a presentation can be a daunting task. The first thing to realize is that writing an outline will make it significantly easier to actually make the presentation. Knowing how to write an outline is an important skill in ensuring an easier time building a presentation. The first thing to do is to know your purpose. Different presentations need different formats. Persuasive presentations need a section with solutions, or where you actually tell your audience how they should change their mind. Informative presentations might need a section that talks about the cause of a problem and the effect of that problem. Knowing what your presentation needs to entail helps you write the outline.

Next, you need an introduction. An introduction is an explanatory section at the start of your presentation. This is where you introduce your topic, introduce your thesis, explain any background information your audience needs to know, and preview the main points of your presentation.

After the introduction comes the body. The body is the section of the presentation with the main information you are presenting. The body of your speech is divided into main points that each serve to support your thesis in a different way. These main points should be well researched and have data to prove the information you are presenting.

The end of your speech wraps up with a conclusion. A conclusion is the end of your presentation that summarizes everything you presented. A conclusion should remind the audience of the main points you presented, bring the thesis back, and explain how you either proved it true or disproved it.

Find Your Own Style

When writing your presentation, you want to keep in mind your speaking style. Everyone presents themselves differently. Finding your own style can be a big deal in making yourself more comfortable actually presenting. The first thing to keep in mind is that you should be clear and concise. Rambling, repeating, or including extra fluff information can distract from the main point, so you want to avoid doing so.

Second, you want to make it make sense to you. If you don’t understand the information you are presenting, your audience won’t either. Once you understand it, you can better explain it to others. Third, proofread your own work. Just because something sounds good to you when you write it the first time doesn’t mean it is good. Double check yourself to make sure you have everything you need. Finally, have someone else look over it too. If everything looks good to you, a second set of eyes can find the parts that don’t make sense to someone else. A second set of eyes will help you find out what you need to fix and what you did well.

Reflect Poll: How do you Brainstorm?

Do you use mind mapping when brainstorming or a different brainstorming technique?

- Mind mapping
- Something else
Expand: Other Kinds of Brainstorming

Overview

There are many ways to brainstorm ideas and concepts when coming up with presentation information. This lesson will present several of these ways so you can find the technique that works best for you.

Types of Brainstorming

There are three ways to brainstorm how to solve a problem. **Reverse brainstorming** is when you identify your problem and figure out ways to cause that problem so you can start fixing those possible causes. **Gap filling** has you explain where you are and where you need to be. Then you brainstorm ways to get from point A to point B. **Drivers analysis** is where you identify a problem then figure out what is driving that problem to happen. Once you have identified the causes, you can brainstorm solutions. All of these are great ways to brainstorm a presentation centered around solving problems for an organization.

There are two ways to work as a group in the brainstorming process. **Brain-netting** is online brainstorming using online communication tools to collaborate and brainstorm options. **Brainwriting** is when people anonymously write down an idea on a note card, then choose one notecard at random to start the conversation. These options are great for groups that either need to work together from far away or contain quiet members that struggle to contribute in traditional brainstorming options.

Sometimes the brainstorming process hits a wall. When that happens "**what if brainstorming**" can help. What if brainstorming is when members of a group change the scenario facing them to try to generate ideas. What if we had to solve this problem stranded on an island? What if we were solving this problem in a Marvel movie? Changing the scenario can spark a creative solution that was eluding group members previously. Sometimes the answers aren't practical, but with some creative thinking, those outlandish solutions can become a real answer to a problem.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

An article providing five organizational patterns based on what you are presenting

- Link to resource: https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorgan/2011/09/06/5-quick-ways-to-organize-a-presentation/#41c1ff33241c

An article providing four suggestions on how to choose a topic for your presentation

- Link to resource: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/4-tips-on-how-to-choose-a-good-presentation-topic_us_59cf1ddce4b0f58902e5cc5f

An article providing some tips on how to maximize your efficiency when using a mind map

- Link to resource: https://mindmapsunleashed.com/mind-mapping-101
Lesson Glossary

thesis: the central point of your presentation
mind mapping: a brainstorming technique organizing your central topic at the middle of a map and showing possible ideas that are related to your topic branching from it
introduction: an explanatory section at the start of your presentation
body: the section of the presentation with the main information you are presenting
conclusion: the end of your presentation that summarizes everything you presented
reverse brainstorming: a brainstorming technique where you identify your problem and figure out ways to cause that problem so you can start fixing those possible causes
gap filling: a brainstorming technique that has you explain where you are and where you need to be
drivers analysis: a brainstorming technique where you identify a problem then figure out what is driving that problem to happen
brain-netting: online brainstorming using online communication tools to collaborate and brainstorm options
brainwriting: a brainstorming technique where people anonymously write down an idea on a note card, then choose one notecard at random to start the conversation
what if brainstorming: a brainstorming technique where members of a group change the scenario facing them to try to generate ideas

Check Your Knowledge

1. Double checking your writing is important.
   a. True
   b. False
2. You should be interested in the presentation topic you choose.
   a. True
   b. False
3. Writing an outline will make your presentation easier to put together.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:
1. A  2. A  3. A

Citations

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