Developing and Preparing Your Speech

Inquire: Public Speaking in the Real World

Overview

Public speaking is a facet of life that you won’t be able to avoid. No matter the profession you go into, you will have some sort of public speaking obligation at some point. This lesson will cover the three kinds of public speaking that exist, how to select a topic for your speech, different outlines and how to choose between them, and how to prepare notes for use in your speech.

Big Question: What kinds of public speaking have you done in the past?

Watch: The Basics of Public Speaking

When asked to give a presentation, many people start with a topic. But that’s not always the best place to start. This lesson recommends you first start by knowing which kind of speaking you need to employ: impromptu, extemporaneous, or manuscript.

Impromptu speaking is a speech with little preparation time; you are put on the spot and have to start speaking right away! Extemporaneous speaking requires more preparation time, but the delivery doesn’t use many notes to get your point across. Instead, you try to have a natural conversation based on the content you have prepared. Finally, a manuscript speech is one where you either memorize the speech or read it from a transcript. This is the type of speech often given by politicians.

Once you know which kind of speaking to employ, it becomes easier to prepare a presentation. This is the time to choose your topic. Keep in mind the purpose, your interests, and time limits for the presentation. These considerations will help you decide how big, or small, of a topic you can tackle when it comes time for the presentation.

Once you have a topic in mind, it’s time to start preparing your presentation. There are two kinds of outlines to help you prepare: a preparation outline and a speaking outline. The preparation outline has full sentences ordered in a way to help you make sense of your presentation. During this step, you are still trying to figure out the best flow for the information you want to present. Once you have that nailed down, make a speaking outline: something with much less information that makes sense to you and helps you remember what to say.

Once you are all ready to go, it's speaking time. When on your feet there are a few things to help you feel the most prepared. Notes are a great tool when you speak. This lesson will cover two kinds of notes: note cards and teleprompters. These tools serve different purposes and can help you with different kinds of presentations.
You can’t avoid presentations in your professional life, but following these four steps will help you feel prepared for presenting and help you plan a presentation in the most successful way.

Read: Preparing a Presentation

Overview

Presentations are a permanent fixture in your professional life. No matter your job, there will inevitably come a day when you have to present something. This lesson will provide tips to go from unprepared to presentation ready. You will learn about the kinds of public speaking that exist, how to select a topic, what kind of outline to use, and how to prepare speaking notes.

Kinds of Public Speaking

There are three kinds of public speaking that you may have to do: **impromptu speaking**, **extemporaneous speaking**, and **manuscript speaking**. Impromptu speaking is a speech given with very little preparation but where the speaker usually has some prior knowledge of the topic. This might be a toast at a wedding or maybe an introduction at a business meeting. Extemporaneous speaking is a speech that is prepared in advance but is delivered with minimal use of speaking notes. Most business presentations or sales pitches fit in this category. Manuscript speaking is a memorized speech where everything said is scripted ahead of the presentation. Political speeches are usually this kind of speaking, as well as keynote speeches and eulogies.

Selecting a Topic

When it comes time to prepare a presentation and choose a topic, keep three things in mind: your purpose, your interests, and your time limits. If you know what your presentation is supposed to accomplish, it will be easier to put together. When you have a sales report, you need to figure out the best way to present those sales figures. If you are pitching a specific product, that product is the topic of the presentation. Once you know the purpose of the presentation, you need to figure out what your interests in that topic are. Use the presentation as an opportunity to learn and grow by finding out what about the topic is interesting and relevant to you. Finally, limiting your topic to whatever time constraint you have is the last thing to consider. If you only have five minutes, you should stick to the big and important issues. If you have an hour, you might be able to explain a few more detailed points.

What Kind of Outline Should be Used

There are two kinds of outlines to put together as you develop your presentation. First, a **preparation outline** is a full sentence outline that visually represents the flow of your speech based on the information you have gathered. This outline is useful to put together when first researching the topic so you can find out what things fit well together and organize the information in an order that makes sense. Once you have organized the information, it’s time to make a **speaking outline**. A speaking outline is a shortened version of the preparation outline that does not rely on full sentences unless you are directly quoting a source. This is the outline you will use to make your speaking notes — or in some cases, what you will speak from — so you want to make sure that whatever you put on the outline makes sense to you.
How to Prepare Speaking Notes

Depending on the kind of presentation you are giving, you need different kinds of notes. Impromptu speaking often doesn’t provide enough time to prepare speaking notes, but both extemporaneous and manuscript speaking rely on notes. Extemporaneous speaking uses notecards to help you remember what to cover. These might be actual notecards, or they might be presenter notes on a powerpoint. Whatever they are, such notes should be brief summaries of your talking points that you can reference but don’t actively read from. They should be neat, organized, and help the presentation rather than distract from it. You should have one card for each main point, with one or two words for each sub point, to remind you of what you should say. Be sure to include any relevant quotation or data on the notecard so you can easily reference that information to your audience.

When presenting a manuscript speech you will often have the speech displayed on a teleprompter for you to read from. Make sure to practice reading from the teleprompter so you are used to how it moves and so that the teleprompter person is used to moving it at a speed that you can stay fluid with. Just because a manuscripted speech is read doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t practice reading it over before you present!

Reflect Poll: Professional Public Speaking

What kind of public speaking do you think you will use the most in your ideal profession?

● Impromptu
● Extemporaneous
● Manuscript

Expand: Public Speaking in the Workforce

Overview

Many people are afraid of public speaking, but it’s prominent in many professions. This section will cover a few major professional areas and explain what forms of public speaking they use on a regular, if not daily, occurrence.

Education

When people think of teachers, they usually think of someone standing in front of a class teaching. That classroom time is one of the primary forms of public speaking an educator does. Be it impromptu speaking to answer student questions or hold parent conferences, or extemporaneous speaking to prepare and deliver a lesson, there are few days when a teacher doesn’t use public speaking.

However, the classroom isn’t the only place teachers use public speaking skills. Teachers also attend conferences where they present or learn new teaching techniques. Sometimes they have meetings with other faculty members, school administrators, or parents. These meetings and conferences are not something that immediately come to mind, but they actually employ the same public speaking skills as day-to-day classroom activities.
STEM

Many people think scientists or engineers get to avoid public speaking obligations, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Major breakthroughs often require these individuals to attend conferences where, like teachers, their findings must be explained to other professionals.

Before these scientists can have major breakthroughs, they need to have someone fund their work. This often employs another kind of public speaking used in the STEM fields: grant applications. Finally, engineers have to present reports to the companies they work for about what they have been able to accomplish, even if it doesn’t include cutting edge breakthroughs.

Business Settings

The corporate world also makes use of public speaking skills quite regularly. When you have an idea or a product that you want to sell, the proposal process relies heavily on public speaking. Even, the interview process to get a job is a form of impromptu public speaking. Business reports and meetings also make extensive use of public speaking skills.

No matter what field you want to go into, you won’t avoid public speaking obligations. Rather than fear it, it’s best to practice public speaking so that when it comes time to perform, you’re ready to be as effective as possible.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

A video providing tips for preparing and delivering an impromptu speech
- Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GefKPy5YYHI

A video providing tips for preparing and delivering an extemporaneous speech
- Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zn6yKoj5CRA

An article providing tips for preparing and delivering a manuscript speech
- Link to resource: https://www.richspeaking.com/articles/manuscript_speech.html

Lesson Glossary

*impromptu speaking*: a speech given with very little preparation, where the speaker usually has some prior knowledge of the topic

*extemporaneous speaking*: a speech prepared in advance but delivered with minimal use of speaking notes

*manuscript speaking*: a memorized speech where everything said is scripted ahead of the presentation

*preparation outline*: a full sentence outline that visually represents the flow of your speech based on the information you have gathered when preparing

*speaking outline*: a shortened version of the preparation outline that does not rely on full sentences unless you are directly quoting a source
Check Your Knowledge

1. Impromptu speaking is a memorized or scripted speech.
   a. True
   b. False
2. Manuscript speaking is a memorized or scripted speech.
   a. True
   b. False
3. Extemporaneous speaking is a speech prepared in advance and delivered with minimal use of notes.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:

Citations

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