Using Psychology for Recall and Understanding

Inquire: How Do You Remember?

Overview

When writing a speech there are some things to keep in mind to help both you and your audience remember it. A memorable presentation will not only make you feel better about how the presentation went, but also ensure that the ideas you put forward are considered by your peers. This lesson will teach you what parts of the speech should be memorable, what chunking is, how to use it, what an effective transition is, and how much information to include in a presentation.

Big Question: How do you help yourself remember information for a presentation?

Watch: Memory Techniques at Work

Writing a speech or creating a presentation can be nerve-wracking when you’re not sure what to include or how to organize information. In this lesson, you will learn how to organize and create content in order to make your speech memorable to you and your audience. In a full-sentence outline, a speaker organizes the parts of her speech that need to be memorable. Let's watch Crissina write her full-sentence outline, and pay attention to the techniques she uses.

Crissina is presenting an informational speech about her passion for music. She thinks about all the things she can share: her love for beatboxing, her favorite pop songs, her piano lessons, and even her business idea for a guitar store. Crissina thinks about how much information is too much information and decides to narrow it down to talk only about her love for beatboxing. She organizes her speech into three main points: how she got introduced to beatboxing, why she loves doing it, and how others can get started in beatboxing. Since she knows her three main points, Crissina writes her thesis statement: “Today I will discuss how I got introduced to beatboxing, why I love the art of beatboxing, and how you too can get started in this incredible hobby!” Each of her points have several parts to them, but they logically go together. This is why she decides to “chunk” the information into these three main points.

To help her audience understand her organization, Crissina writes her first transition statement between her first and second point: “After being introduced to beatboxing, I knew I would love this new hobby. There are two main reasons I love beatboxing: the challenge it provides and the limitless techniques you can learn.” Her transition statement includes a small internal summary of the point she just spoke about, then an internal preview about what the next point will be.

Crissina is confident she will be able to present a memorable presentation that gives just enough information, and after this lesson, you will be too!
Read: Remembering Your Presentation

Overview
When writing a speech, there are some things to keep in mind to make it memorable to you and your audience. This lesson will teach you what parts of a speech should be memorable, what chunking is, how to use it to remember information, what an effective transition is, and how much information to include in a presentation.

Memorable Parts of a Speech
When crafting your presentation, there are three things to make stand out to your audience: your thesis, the main supporting points, and the conclusions you draw. The thesis, since it is the main argument you make in the presentation, needs to be memorable. You want people to be able to tell why you are presenting in the first place. The supporting points after the thesis are evidence that what you are saying is true or should be listened to. You want these points to be memorable so people can tell both why you are talking and why you are right in what you are saying. Finally, the conclusion should be memorable as well. In the conclusion, you will summarize your findings and the things that still need to be done. If your presentation proves that some part of your business is inefficient and you suggest ways to make it better, you want those recommendations to be remembered. It does no good to give a presentation if no one can tell you why you were talking, why you were correct, and what you wanted them to do with the information you provided.

Chunking
When putting together a speech, you don’t want to think of things as separate or individual. All parts of a speech should work together in some way, and the individual parts should support each other. For instance, the first main point of a speech should support itself by providing evidence to prove the point true. At the same time, that evidence should have some influence in proving your thesis true.

One way to remember parts of a speech is to chunk the components that go together. Chunking is a method of taking small pieces of information and grouping them together in a larger chunk so you can remember them more easily. Chunking helps both the speaker remember what concepts to talk about and the audience remember sections of the speech that were brought up together.

We use chunking all the time in our everyday lives. We don’t remember individual digits in a phone number; rather, we chunk the three digit area code together, the first three digits of a phone number together, and the last four digits together. You can use this technique to remember what parts of a speech go together in a certain order, but it can also help in other parts of your life like remembering things for classes or the order of certain tasks. Finding a system of remembering that helps you is important in improving your public speaking skills.

Effective Transitions
One way to help you remember where you are and where you are going in a speech is to have effective transitions. Transitions are statements that connect two parts of a speech together. An effective transition should have an internal summary, a signpost, and an internal preview. An internal summary is a brief summary of the information you delivered in the point you just concluded. For example, you might say, “Now that we know the three causes for the problem…” or, “The three causes for this issue are X, Y, and
Z.” After the internal summary, you have a signpost. A **signpost** is a statement that lets your audience know you are moving from one part of a speech to the next, such as, “Let’s now talk about the causes for these problems.” After the signpost is an **internal preview**, or a statement that outlines the information you will present in your next point. For example, you might say, “We will cover two main causes: A and B.”

We use these three components to help your audience remember where you are, as well as to provide sections that are easier to follow along with and easier to remember. It is easier for both you and your audience to remember specific parts of a speech rather than the speech as a whole.

**How Much is Too Much Information?**

Another way to make remembering your speech easier is to know how much information to present. The human brain has a limit on the amount of new information it can learn at one time. An easy rule of thumb is to introduce five, plus or minus two, new concepts in a presentation. The human brain is capable of remembering three to seven new concepts in a short time. Keeping your presentation within that limit will make it easier for all involved to remember what was covered.

Visual aids are also important tools to help people remember, but you don’t want to overload those either. When making a visual aid, keep in mind a rule of four. Try to have only four bullet points on a slide that aren’t much longer than four key words each. Additionally, you want to explain your visual aid; you don’t want the visual aid to have to explain itself.

Both of these suggestions are just that: suggestions. They are handy things to keep in mind but are not hard and fast rules. When gauging if you have included too much information, it is important to consider audience input. If people look lost, take a moment to explain a concept a little deeper so they have time to mentally digest the information being presented. Audience feedback is a great tool to avoid presenting too much information.

**Reflect Poll: The Most Important Part**

People remember the most important part of a presentation the easiest. Which part of a presentation do you think is most important?

- Thesis
- Body Points
- Conclusions/Recommendations

**Expand: Speaking Notes That Help You**

**Overview**

You won’t always be able to remember everything that you need to for a presentation; that’s where notes come in! When you’re making notes, there are some things to keep in mind to make them as useful as possible.

**Understanding Your Notations**

The most important part of using notes is being able to read them. If you can’t read them, they are no help to you. You might need to type your notes out or take extra time writing them so they are neat. Whatever
it takes, you want to make sure your notes are not going to be a hindrance. You don’t want to be presenting and need to pause just to decipher what you have written down. That doesn’t look good, and more importantly, it doesn’t feel good. If you are already nervous about having to present, it only gets worse if you aren’t able to present in the best possible manner.

Next, you want to make sure to practice using your notes. When practicing your presentation, use the notes exactly how you’re going to during the presentation. You want to know when to change slides and when you are using different pieces of evidence; notes can help you keep track of these things. It’s important to be comfortable using and referencing your notes so you don’t have to pause and find your place again. When you practice, you get familiar with the content on the note cards themselves and can better keep track of where you are in the presentation. Practicing with your notes is important in giving the best possible presentation you can.

The last tip is to use shorthand for your notes. You don’t want to have large chunks of text in your notes; more often than not you’ll just end up reading it directly from the notes if you do. Instead, just include the important parts in your notes and use abbreviations that make sense to you. Notes should help make your presentation easier to give, so find ways to make them helpful to you. It’ll look different for every person, but the more you practice the easier it will become.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

An article providing tips on how to remember presentation material
  ● Link to resource: https://www.activia.co.uk/blog/6-easy-ways-to-remember-your-presentation-material

An article providing an in-depth look at transitions and how to create them
  ● Link to resource: https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/transitions/

An article providing tips on how to use chunking to improve your memory
  ● Link to resource: https://lifehacker.com/5946606/improve-your-memory-with-the-chunking-technique

Lesson Glossary

chunking: taking small pieces of information and putting them together in a larger chunk so you can remember them more easily
transition: a statement that connects two different parts of a speech together
internal summary: a brief summary of the information you delivered in the point you just concluded
signpost: a statement that lets your audience know you are moving from one part of the speech to the next
internal preview: a statement that outlines the information you will present in your next point

Check Your Knowledge

1. Your thesis should be memorable.
   a. True
2. Your conclusions do not matter to your audience, so it does not matter if your audience remembers them.
   a. True
   b. False

3. The human brain can learn up to nine new things at once.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:

Citations

Lesson Content:

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