Delivering Your Speech

Inquire: Presentation Time!

Overview
Once you have done all the preparation work, it’s time for the big event: presenting your speech! This lesson will first cover the importance of practicing your speech. You will then learn how to stay on track during your presentation using your thesis as a guide, and finally, how to conclude the presentation in a strong manner.

Big Question: What parts of a speech do you pay the most attention to as a member of an audience?

Watch: A Successful Seminar
After spending so much time discussing ways to prepare to present a speech, it is finally time to discuss delivering the speech itself. This lesson will teach you effective ways to practice, how to preview the sections of your speech, how to follow your thesis statement, and finally how to conclude your speech in style. Let’s watch as Leah begins her presentation.

Leah has spent three weeks working to prepare the largest presentation of her professional career: a seminar on how her department managed to increase enrollment by more than double the projected rate. She knows this presentation will be attended by many people that could help her advance in her career. She wants to give the best performance she can. Once she has finished preparing the presentation, she sets out practicing her presentation. The entire week before her seminar, she practices in different ways. First, she practices in her bathroom, talking to her mirror. Then, she begins to practice for her dog, who happily listens to the whole speech as many times as Leah wants. Finally, she records her speech so she can find the things that need to change.

On the day of the presentation, Leah begins her speech by explaining to the crowd what her department has managed to accomplish in increasing her school’s enrollment and the three steps others can follow to do the same. This is her preview statement. Now that she has previewed her speech, she has a roadmap to follow to stay on topic and provide all the information she needs in order to support her thesis.

As she concludes her speech, she knows that the information she included is being well received. Her last step is to conclude the speech and end on a high note! She first reminds her audience of her thesis, then she reminds them how she proved her thesis, before finally concluding by telling her audience how many new students her school has gotten thanks to her methods and how easily replicable her process is!
Leah’s speech was a success! And if you follow the advice found in this lesson, you too can give the best presentation possible.

Read: Walking Through a Presentation

Overview

Come presentation time, delivering your speech can be nerve-wracking. This lesson will help you better navigate presenting. First, we’ll go over the importance of practicing before you present. Then, we’ll talk about how you should preview your speech. After that, we’ll talk about using your thesis statement to guide your presentation. Finally, we’ll go over how to conclude your presentation in a strong way.

Should I Practice Before the Real Delivery?

Students always wonder, “Do I actually have to practice this speech, or is that just something teachers say?” Yes, you really should practice your speech. Practicing is a great way to get out of your head and get comfortable presenting the information. It also helps you get more confident with the information you are presenting on. There are three stages of practice to follow to get the most out of your practice. Before we go over those, it’s important to note that you should always practice in the same way you will have to present. If you will have to stand, practice while standing. If you will have to speak loudly to a large group, practice speaking louder than usual. Don’t just “practice” by reading over your outline in your head.

The first way you can practice is in front of a mirror. Practicing in front of a mirror is helpful to see how you look at the beginning stages. Some people are self-conscious about what their face is doing while presenting. This first level of practice helps you solve that problem. It also lets you practice in front of an audience that won’t heckle or interrupt you. You should be your biggest fan for presentation time, so starting by presenting to yourself is a great way to get the ball rolling in your favor.

Second, practice in front of a friend, pet, or family member. It should be one person (or pet) whom you trust will build you up, be excited to listen, and won’t unnecessarily criticize you. This person is here to give helpful feedback. However, they shouldn’t say things that will hurt your confidence in the presentation. The feedback they can provide you is invaluable though. It gives an outside audience the chance to tell what you are explaining well and what you aren’t. They can give input on whether something makes sense, or if something doesn’t really relate to the thesis of the presentation.

Finally, record yourself. This seems the same as practicing in a mirror, but there are a few differences. First, you can see your whole body rather than just your face. You can practice where you put your hands and see if you are bouncing or pacing or moving too much. You can simply watch your presentation instead of thinking about what is not working while still speaking. It lets you be an audience member, which can help you put the finishing touches on the presentation.

How to Preview Your Speech

One small thing you want to be sure to include in your presentation is a preview statement. A preview statement is a sentence that outlines the main points of information in the presentation for your audience. Similar to a road map or GPS on a road trip, your preview statement lets your audience know where things are going with the presentation. It also lets you know where you’re going to keep you focused on the important parts without getting off topic. When the members of your audience know where the speech is going, they can better pay attention.
Once you’ve given your preview statement, it is important to follow through on it: also known as following your roadmap. The roadmap is the order in which you present information based on your preview statement. One way to ensure you follow your roadmap is with the use of transitions. Transitions are statements that connect two parts of a speech together. These transitions help you move from one main point to another, while making it feel natural. Random jumps from one topic to another make your speech hard to follow and remember, both for you and your audience. Transitions make following along easier so everyone can be on the same page.

Stay on Target

Using Your Thesis Statement as a Guide for Your Speech

Your thesis statement is the main argument of your presentation. Clearly identifying your thesis statement helps you stay on point. You want to use your presentation to prove your point. We use main points to do so. Main points are the primary sources of information in a presentation that support your thesis statement. When including information, it is important to ask yourself, “Does this relate to my thesis?” If the information does, it might help to include it. This question is exceptionally important if you decide to go off script and ad lib information into your presentation. You want to keep it focused in on the thesis so you don’t get too far off topic.

Concluding with Style

At the end of your presentation, there are three things to do to feel confident in how you finish the speech. First, review your thesis. Since your thesis is the whole point of the speech, it is important to remind people of it at the end. Explaining your idea, presenting it, then reminding your audience of your idea is a great strategy when presenting information. The last step — reiterating your idea — is the point of the conclusion, so after reviewing your thesis, it is important to review your main points and your conclusions or implications. It is especially important to include this step if your speech is a call to action or change.

Finally, finish strong by starting strong. When beginning your speech, use an attention getter, and at the end, remind people of that attention getter by either concluding the story, reiterating a statistic, or making the punchline of your joke relevant again. Looping your beginning around to the end clearly signals to your audience that the speech has come to an end, and avoids awkward moments where people don’t know whether you have finished.

Reflect Poll: Practice Makes Perfect

What kind of presentation practice helps you the most?

- Practice in a mirror
- Practice for a pet, friend, or family member
- Record your practice

Expand: Thesis Writing 101

Overview

This section will cover how to create a strong thesis: the central part of a presentation, and the most important thing to develop well.
Thesis Construction and Support

The first thing you need to figure out when trying to develop a thesis is the specific purpose of the presentation. A thesis should be specifically tailored to address whatever the speech hopes to accomplish. The first step in writing a thesis is to write a general purpose statement for the presentation. This purpose will guide you as you go forward in writing the rest of the speech.

Once you have a purpose, it’s time to develop the thesis. Have an open mind in this phase. Don’t assume you know what you will find when you choose your thesis. Once you have chosen a thesis, it’s time to write it. Writing your thesis before you do the research for the rest of your presentation is important. You want the thesis to be something provable, but you don’t want the presentation tainted by a biased thesis. Once you have written your thesis, it’s time to do the research. When researching, you want to find objectively accurate information, not information that is skewed to support your thesis. It’s okay if you prove your thesis wrong during your presentation. You will have a section in your speech that will explain if your thesis is true or false and why that’s important for your audience to know. Proving something false can be just as important as proving something true! Just because you found a way that won’t improve productivity doesn’t mean you failed. You now know for sure what solution won’t work to address your problem, which is a great start in finding the solution that will work.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings

An article explaining ways to organize points and how to preview them in a presentation
- Link to resource: https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/page.cfm?pageid=1067&guideid=52

An article offering exciting ways to conclude your speech
- Link to resource: http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/10-ways-to-end-your-speech/

An article providing things to check when constructing your thesis statement
- Link to resource:http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/tips/thesis/

Lesson Glossary

preview statement: a sentence outlining the main points of information in your presentation for your audience
roadmap: the order in which you present information based on your preview statement
transitions: statements that connect two parts of a speech together
thesis statement: the main argument of your presentation
main points: the primary sources of information in a presentation that support your thesis statement

Check Your Knowledge

1. All information in a presentation should relate back to your thesis.
   a. True
   b. False
2. Practicing is not important to the success of a presentation.
   a. True
   b. False
3. You should write your thesis before doing the research for your presentation.
   a. True
   b. False

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

Citations

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