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## Writing@CSU Writing Guide

# Planning and Presenting an Informative Speech

In this guide, you can learn about the purposes and types of informative speeches, about writing and delivering informative speeches, and about the parts of informative speeches.

## Purposes of Informative Speaking

Informative speaking offers you an opportunity to practice your researching, writing, organizing, and speaking skills. You will learn how to discover and present information clearly. If you take the time to thoroughly research and understand your topic, to create a clearly organized speech, and to practice an enthusiastic, dynamic style of delivery, you can be an effective "teacher" during your informative speech. Finally, you will get a chance to practice a type of speaking you will undoubtedly use later in your professional career.

The purpose of the informative speech is to provide interesting, useful, and unique information to your audience. By dedicating yourself to the goals of providing information and appealing to your audience, you can take a positive step toward succeeding in your efforts as an informative speaker.

## Major Types of Informative Speeches

In this guide, we focus on informative speeches about:

1. Objects



2. Processes
3. Events
4. Concepts

These categories provide an effective method of organizing and evaluating informative speeches. Although they are not absolute, these categories provide a useful starting point for work on your speech.

In general, you will use four major types of informative speeches. While you can classify informative speeches many ways, the speech you deliver will fit into one of four major categories.

### **Speeches about Objects**

Speeches about objects focus on things existing in the world. Objects include, among other things, people, places, animals, or products.

Because you are speaking under time constraints, you cannot discuss any topic in its entirety. Instead, limit your speech to a focused discussion of some aspect of your topic.

Some example topics for speeches about objects include: the Central Intelligence Agency, tombstones, surgical lasers, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the pituitary gland, and lemmings.

To focus these topics, you could give a speech about Franklin Delano Roosevelt and efforts to conceal how he suffered from polio while he was in office. Or, a speech about tombstones could focus on the creation and original designs of grave markers.

### **Speeches about Processes**

Speeches about processes focus on patterns of action. One type of speech about processes, the demonstration speech, teaches people "how-to" perform a process. More frequently, however, you will use process speeches to explain a process in broader terms. This way, the audience is more likely to understand the importance or the context of the process.



A speech about how milk is pasteurized would not teach the audience how to milk cows. Rather, this speech could help audience members understand the process by making explicit connections between patterns of action (the pasteurization process) and outcomes (a safe milk supply).

Other examples of speeches about processes include: how the Internet works (not "how to work the Internet"), how to construct a good informative speech, and how to research the job market. As with any speech, be sure to limit your discussion to information you can explain clearly and completely within time constraints.

### **Speeches about Events**

Speeches about events focus on things that happened, are happening, or will happen. When speaking about an event, remember to relate the topic to your audience. A speech chronicling history is informative, but you should adapt the information to your audience and provide them with some way to use the information. As always, limit your focus to those aspects of an event that can be adequately discussed within the time limitations of your assignment.

Examples of speeches about events include: the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington, Groundhog's Day, the Battle of the Bulge, the World Series, and the 2000 Presidential Elections.

### **Speeches about Concepts**

Speeches about concepts focus on beliefs, ideas, and theories. While speeches about objects, processes, and events are fairly concrete, speeches about concepts are more abstract. Take care to be clear and understandable when creating and presenting a speech about a concept. When selecting a concept, remember you are crafting an informative speech. Often, speeches about concepts take on a persuasive tone. Focus your efforts toward providing unbiased information and refrain from making arguments. Because concepts can be vague and involved, limit your speech to aspects that can be readily explained and understood within the time limits.



Some examples of topics for concept speeches include: democracy, Taoism, principles of feminism, the philosophy of non-violent protest, and the Big Bang theory.

## **Strategies for Selecting a Topic**

In many cases, circumstances will dictate the topic of your speech. However, if the topic has not been assigned or if you are having difficulty figuring out how to frame your topic as an informative speech, the following may be useful.

Begin by thinking of your interests. If you have always loved art, contemplate possible topics dealing with famous artists, art works, or different types of art. If you are employed, think of aspects of your job or aspects of your employer's business that would be interesting to talk about. While you cannot substitute personal experience for detailed research, your own experience can supplement your research and add vitality to your presentation. Choose one of the items below to learn more about selecting a topic.

### **Learn More about an Unfamiliar Topic**

You may benefit more by selecting an unfamiliar topic that interests you. You can challenge yourself by choosing a topic you'd like to learn about and to help others understand it. If the Buddhist religion has always been an interesting and mysterious topic to you, research the topic and create a speech that offers an understandable introduction to the religion. Remember to adapt Buddhism to your audience and tell them why you think this information is useful to them. By taking this approach, you can learn something new and learn how to synthesize new information for your audience.

### **Think about Previous Classes**

You might find a topic by thinking of classes you have taken. Think back to concepts covered in those classes and consider whether they would serve as unique, interesting, and enlightening topics for the informative speech. In astronomy, you learned about red giants. In history, you learned about Napoleon. In



political science, you learned about The Federalist Papers. Past classes serve as rich resources for informative speech topics. If you make this choice, use your class notes and textbook as a starting point. To fully develop the content, you will need to do extensive research and perhaps even a few interviews.

## **Talk to Others**

Topic selection does not have to be an individual effort. Spend time talking about potential topics with classmates or friends. This method can be extremely effective because other people can stimulate further ideas when you get stuck. When you use this method, always keep the basic requirements and the audience in mind. Just because you and your friend think home-brew is a great topic does not mean it will enthrall your audience or impress your instructor. While you talk with your classmates or friends, jot notes about potential topics and create a master list when you exhaust the possibilities. From this list, choose a topic with intellectual merit, originality, and potential to entertain while informing.

## **Framing a Thesis Statement**

Once you settle on a topic, you need to frame a thesis statement. Framing a thesis statement allows you to narrow your topic, and in turns allows you to focus your research in this specific area, saving you time and trouble in the process.

Selecting a topic and focusing it into a thesis statement can be a difficult process. Fortunately, a number of useful strategies are available to you.

### **Thesis Statement Purpose**

The thesis statement is crucial for clearly communicating your topic and purpose to the audience. Be sure to make the statement clear, concise, and easy to remember. Deliver it to the audience and use verbal and nonverbal illustrations to make it stand out.

## **Strategies For Framing a Thesis Statement**



Focus on a specific aspect of your topic and phrase the thesis statement in one clear, concise, complete sentence, focusing on the audience. This sentence sets a goal for the speech. For example, in a speech about art, the thesis statement might be: "The purpose of this speech is to inform my audience about the early works of Vincent van Gogh." This statement establishes that the speech will inform the audience about the early works of one great artist. The thesis statement is worded conversationally and included in the delivery of the speech.

### Thesis Statement and Audience

The thesis appears in the introduction of the speech so that the audience immediately realizes the speaker's topic and goal. Whatever the topic may be, you should attempt to create a clear, focused thesis statement that stands out and could be repeated by every member of your audience. It is important to refer to the audience in the thesis statement; when you look back at the thesis for direction, or when the audience hears the thesis, it should be clear that the most important goal of your speech is to inform the audience about your topic. While the focus and pressure will be on you as a speaker, you should always remember that the audience is the reason for presenting a public speech.

Avoid being too trivial or basic for the average audience member. At the same time, avoid being too technical for the average audience member. Be sure to use specific, concrete terms that clearly establish the focus of your speech.

### Thesis Statement and Delivery

When creating the thesis statement, be sure to use a full sentence and frame that sentence as a statement, not as a question. The full sentence, "The purpose of this speech is to inform my audience about the early works of Vincent van Gogh," provides clear direction for the speech, whereas the fragment "van Gogh" says very little about the purpose of the speech. Similarly, the question "Who was Vincent van Gogh?" does not adequately indicate the direction the speech will take or what the speaker hopes to accomplish.



If you limit your thesis statement to one distinct aspect of the larger topic, you are more likely to be understood and to meet the time constraints.

## **Researching Your Topic**

As you begin to work on your informative speech, you will find that you need to gather additional information. Your instructor will most likely require that you locate relevant materials in the library and cite those materials in your speech. In this section, we discuss the process of researching your topic and thesis.

Conducting research for a major informative speech can be a daunting task. In this section, we discuss a number of strategies and techniques that you can use to gather and organize source materials for your speech.

### **Gathering Materials**

Gathering materials can be a daunting task. You may want to do some research before you choose a topic. Once you have a topic, you have many options for finding information. You can conduct interviews, write or call for information from a clearinghouse or public relations office, and consult books, magazines, journals, newspapers, television and radio programs, and government documents. The library will probably be your primary source of information. You can use many of the libraries databases or talk to a reference librarian to learn how to conduct efficient research.

### **Taking Notes**

While doing your research, you may want to carry notecards. When you come across a useful passage, copy the source and the information onto the notecard or copy and paste the information. You should maintain a working bibliography as you research so you always know which sources you have consulted and so the process of writing citations into the speech and creating the bibliography will be easier. You'll need to determine what information-recording strategies work best for



you. Talk to other students, instructors, and librarians to get tips on conducting efficient research. Spend time refining your system and you will soon be able to focus on the information instead of the record-keeping tasks.

## Citing Sources Within Your Speech

Consult with your instructor to determine how much research/source information should be included in your speech. Realize that a source citation within your speech is defined as a reference to or quotation from material you have gathered during your research and an acknowledgement of the source. For example, within your speech you might say: "As John W. Bobbitt said in the December 22, 1993, edition of the *Denver Post*, 'Ouch!'" In this case, you have included a direct quotation and provided the source of the quotation. If you do not quote someone, you might say: "After the first week of the 1995 baseball season, attendance was down 13.5% from 1994. This statistic appeared in the May 7, 1995, edition of the *Denver Post*." Whatever the case, whenever you use someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words, you must provide a source citation to give proper credit to the creator of the information. Failure to cite sources can be interpreted as plagiarism which is a serious offense. Upon review of the specific case, plagiarism can result in failure of the assignment, the course, or even dismissal from the University. Take care to cite your sources and give credit where it is due.

## Creating Your Bibliography

As with all aspects of your speech, be sure to check with your instructor to get specific details about the assignment.

Generally, the bibliography includes only those sources you cited during the speech. Don't pad the bibliography with every source you read, saw on the shelf, or heard of from friends. When you create the bibliography, you should simply go through your complete sentence outline and list each source you cite. This is also a good way to check if you have included enough reference material within the speech. You will need to alphabetize the bibliography by authors last name and include the following information: author's name, article title, publication title, volume, date, page number(s). You may need to include additional information; you need to talk with your instructor to confirm the required bibliographical format.



## Some Cautions

When doing research, use caution in choosing your sources. You need to determine which sources are more credible than others and attempt to use a wide variety of materials. The broader the scope of your research, the more impressive and believable your information. You should draw from different sources (e.g., a variety of magazines--*Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News & World Report*, *National Review*, *Mother Jones*) as well as different types of sources (i.e., use interviews, newspapers, periodicals, and books instead of just newspapers). The greater your variety, the more apparent your hard work and effort will be. Solid research skills result in increased credibility and effectiveness for the speaker.

## Structuring an Informative Speech

Typically, informative speeches have three parts:

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Conclusion

In this section, we discuss the three parts of an informative speech, calling attention to specific elements that can enhance the effectiveness of your speech. As a speaker, you will want to create a clear structure for your speech. In this section, you will find discussions of the major parts of the informative speech.

### Introduction

The introduction sets the tone of the entire speech. The introduction should be brief and to-the-point as it accomplishes these several important tasks. Typically, there are six main components of an effective introduction:

- Attention Getters
- Thesis Statement
- Audience Adaptation
- Credibility Statement
- Preview



- Transition to the Body

As in any social situation, your audience makes strong assumptions about you during the first eight or ten seconds of your speech. For this reason, you need to start solidly and launch the topic clearly. Focus your efforts on completing these tasks and moving on to the real information (the body) of the speech. Typically, there are six main components of an effective introduction. These tasks do not have to be handled in this order, but this layout often yields the best results.

## Attention Getters

The attention-getter is designed to intrigue the audience members and to motivate them to listen attentively for the next several minutes. There are infinite possibilities for attention-getting devices. Some of the more common devices include using a story, a rhetorical question, or a quotation. While any of these devices can be effective, it is important for you to spend time strategizing, creating, and practicing the attention-getter.

Most importantly, an attention-getter should create curiosity in the minds of your listeners and convince them that the speech will be interesting and useful. The wording of your attention-getter should be refined and practiced. Be sure to consider the mood/tone of your speech; determine the appropriateness of humor, emotion, aggressiveness, etc. Not only should the words get the audiences attention, but your delivery should be smooth and confident to let the audience know that you are a skilled speaker who is prepared for this speech.

## A Story

The crowd was wild. The music was booming. The sun was shining. The cash registers were ringing.

This story-like re-creation of the scene at a Farm Aid concert serves to engage the audience and causes them to think about the situation you are describing. Touching stories or stories that make audience members feel involved with the topic serve as good attention-getters. You should tell a story with feeling and deliver it directly to the audience instead of reading it off your notecards.



**Example Text:**

One dark summer night in 1849, a young woman in her 20's left Bucktown, Maryland, and followed the North Star. What was her name? Harriet Tubman. She went back some 19 times to rescue her fellow slaves. And as James Blockson relates in a 1984 issue of *National Geographic*, by the end of her career, she had a \$40,000.00 price on her head. This was quite a compliment from her enemies (Blockson 22).

**Rhetorical Question**

Rhetorical questions are questions designed to arouse curiosity without requiring an answer. Either the answer will be obvious, or if it isn't apparent, the question will arouse curiosity until the presentation provides the answer.

An example of a rhetorical question to gain the audiences attention for a speech about fly-fishing is, "Have you ever stood in a freezing river at 5 o'clock in the morning by choice?"

**Example Text:**

Have you ever heard of a railroad with no tracks, with secret stations, and whose conductors were considered criminals?

**Quotation**

A quotation from a famous person or from an expert on your topic can gain the attention of the audience. The use of a quotation immediately launches you into the speech and focuses the audience on your topic area. If it is from a well-known source, cite the author first. If the source is obscure, begin with the quote itself.

**Example Text:**

"No day dawns for the slave, nor is it looked for. It is all night--night forever . . . ."  
(Pause) This quote was taken from Jermain Loguen, a fugitive who was the son of his Tennessee master and a slave woman.

**Unusual Statement**



Making a statement that is unusual to the ears of your listeners is another possibility for gaining their attention.

**Example Text:**

"Follow the drinking gourd. That's what I said, friend, follow the drinking gourd." This phrase was used by slaves as a coded message to mean the Big Dipper, which revealed the North Star, and pointed toward freedom.

## Humor

You might choose to use tasteful humor which relates to the topic as an effective way to attract the audience both to you and the subject at hand.

**Example Text:**

"I'm feeling boxed in." [PAUSE] I'm not sure, but these may have been Henry "Box" Brown's very words after being placed on his head inside a box which measured 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 1/2 feet for what seemed to him like "an hour and a half." He was shipped by Adams Express to freedom in Philadelphia (Brown 60,92; Still 10).

## Shocking Statistic

Another possibility to consider is the use of a factual statistic intended to grab your listener's attention. As you research the topic you've picked, keep your eyes open for statistics that will have impact.

**Example Text:**

Today, John Elway's talents are worth millions, but in 1840 the price of a human life, a slave, was worth \$1,000.00.

## Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is crucial for clearly communicating your topic and purpose to the audience. Be sure to make the statement clear, concise, and easy to remember. Deliver it to the audience and use verbal and nonverbal illustrations to make it stand out.



**Example Text:**

Today I'd like to tell you about the Underground Railroad.

**Audience Adaptation**

In your introduction, you need to adapt your speech to your audience. To keep audience members interested, tell them why your topic is important to them. To accomplish this task, you need to undertake audience analysis prior to creating the speech. Figure out who your audience members are, what things are important to them, what their biases may be, and what types of subjects/issues appeal to them. In the context of this class, some of your audience analysis is provided for you--most of your listeners are college students, so it is likely that they place some value on education, most of them are probably not bathing in money, and they live in Colorado. Consider these traits when you determine how to adapt to your audience.

As you research and write your speech, take note of references to issues that should be important to your audience. Include statements about aspects of your speech that you think will be of special interest to the audience in the introduction. By accomplishing this task, you give your listeners specific things with which they can identify. Audience adaptation will be included throughout the speech, but an effective introduction requires meaningful adaptation of the topic to the audience.

You need to find ways to get the members of your audience involved early in the speech. The following are some possible options to connect your speech to your audience:

**Reference to the Occasion**

Consider how the occasion itself might present an opportunity to heighten audience receptivity. Remind your listeners of an important date just passed or coming soon.

**Example Text:**

This January will mark the 130th anniversary of a "giant interracial rally" organized by William Still which helped to end streetcar segregation in the city of Philadelphia (Katz i).

**Reference to the Previous Speaker**



Another possibility is to refer to a previous speaker to capitalize on the good will which already has been established or to build on the information presented.

**Example Text:**

As Alice pointed out last week in her speech on the Olympic games of the ancient world, history can provide us with fascinating lessons.

## **Credibility Statement**

The credibility statement establishes your qualifications as a speaker. You should come up with reasons why you are someone to listen to on this topic. Why do you have special knowledge or understanding of this topic? What can the audience learn from you that they couldn't learn from someone else? Credibility statements can refer to your extensive research on a topic, your life-long interest in an issue, your personal experience with a thing, or your desire to better the lives of your listeners by sifting through the topic and providing the crucial information.

Remember that Aristotle said that credibility, or ethos, consists of good sense, goodwill, and good moral character. Create the feeling that you possess these qualities by creatively stating that you are well-educated about the topic (good sense), that you want to help each member of the audience (goodwill), and that you are a decent person who can be trusted (good moral character). Once you establish your credibility, the audience is more likely to listen to you as something of an expert and to consider what you say to be the truth. It is often effective to include further references to your credibility throughout the speech by subtly referring to the traits mentioned above.

## **Competence**

Show your listeners that you are qualified to speak by making a specific reference to a helpful resource. This is one way to demonstrate competence.

**Example Text:**

In doing research for this topic, I came across an account written by one of these



heroes that has deepened my understanding of the institution of slavery. Frederick Douglass', *My Bondage and My Freedom*, is the account of a man whose master's kindness made his slavery only more unbearable.

## Good Will

Your listeners want to believe that you have their best interests in mind. In the case of an informative speech, it is enough to assure them that this will be an interesting speech and that you, yourself, are enthusiastic about the topic.

### Example Text:

I hope you'll enjoy hearing about the heroism of the Underground Railroad as much as I have enjoyed preparing for this speech.

## Preview the Main Points

The preview informs the audience about the speech's main points. You should preview every main body point and identify each as a separate piece of the body. The purpose of this preview is to let the audience members prepare themselves for the flow of the speech; therefore, you should word the preview clearly and concisely. Attempt to use parallel structure for each part of the preview and avoid delving into the main point; simply tell the audience what the main point will be about in general.

Use the preview to briefly establish your structure and then move on. Let the audience get a taste of how you will divide the topic and fulfill the thesis and then move on. This important tool will reinforce the information in the minds of your listeners. Here are two examples of a preview:

## Topical

Simply identify the main points of the speech. Cover them in the same order that they will appear in the body of the presentation.

For example, the preview for a speech about kites organized topically might take this form: "First, I will inform you about the invention of the kite. Then, I will explain the evolution of the kite. Third, I will introduce you to the different types of kites.



Finally, I will inform you about various uses for kites." Notice that this preview avoids digressions (e.g., listing the various uses for kites); you will take care of the deeper information within the body of the speech.

**Example Text:**

I'll tell you about motivations and means of escape employed by fugitive slaves.

**Chronological**

Simply identify the main points of the speech. Cover them in the same order that they will appear in the body of the presentation.

For example, the preview for a speech about the Pony Express organized chronologically might take this form: "I'll talk about the Pony Express in three parts. First, its origins, second, its heyday, and third, how it came to an end." Notice that this preview avoids digressions (e.g., listing the reasons why the Pony Express came to an end); you will cover the deeper information within the body of the speech.

**Example Text:**

I'll talk about it in three parts. First, its origins, second, its heyday, and third, how it came to an end.

**Transition to the Body**

After you accomplish the first five components of the introduction, you should make a clean transition to the body of the speech. Use this transition to signal a change and prepare the audience to begin processing specific topical information. You should round out the introduction, reinforce the excitement and interest that you created in the audience during the introduction, and slide into the first main body point.

**Body**

Strategic organization helps increase the clarity and effectiveness of your speech. Four key issues are discussed in this section:



- Main Ideas
- Organizational Patterns
- Connective Devices
- References to Outside Research

The body contains the bulk of information in your speech and needs to be clearly organized. Without clear organization, the audience will probably forget your information, main points, perhaps even your thesis. Some simple strategies will help you create a clear, memorable speech. Below are the four key issues used in organizing a speech.

## Main Ideas

Once you settle on a topic, you should decide which aspects of that topic are of greatest importance for your speech. These aspects become your main points. While there is no rule about how many main points should appear in the body of the speech, most students go with three main points. You must have at least two main points; aside from that rule, you should select your main points based on the importance of the information and the time limitations. Be sure to include whatever information is necessary for the audience to understand your topic. Also, be sure to synthesize the information so it fits into the assigned time frame. As you choose your main points, try to give each point equal attention within the speech. If you pick three main points, each point should take up roughly one-third of the body section of your speech.

## Organizational Patterns

There are four basic patterns of organization for an informative speech.

- Chronological order
- Spatial order
- Causal order
- Topical order

There are four basic patterns of organization for an informative speech. You can choose any of these patterns based on which pattern serves the needs of your speech.



## Chronological Order

A speech organized chronologically has main points oriented toward time. For example, a speech about the Farm Aid benefit concert could have main points organized chronologically. The first main point focuses on the creation of the event; the second main point focuses on the planning stages; the third point focuses on the actual performance/concert; and the fourth point focuses on donations and assistance that resulted from the entire process. In this format, you discuss main points in an order that could be followed on a calendar or a clock.

## Spatial Order

A speech organized spatially has main points oriented toward space or a directional pattern. The Farm Aid speech's body could be organized in spatial order. The first main point discusses the New York branch of the organization; the second main point discusses the Midwest branch; the third main point discusses the California branch of Farm Aid. In this format, you discuss main points in an order that could be traced on a map.

## Causal Order

A speech organized causally has main points oriented toward cause and effect. The main points of a Farm Aid speech organized causally could look like this: the first main point informs about problems on farms and the need for monetary assistance; the second main point discusses the creation and implementation of the Farm Aid program. In this format, you discuss main points in an order that alerts the audience to a problem or circumstance and then tells the audience what action resulted from the original circumstance.

## Topical Order

A speech organized topically has main points organized more randomly by sub-topics. The Farm Aid speech could be organized topically: the first main point discusses Farm Aid administrators; the second main point discusses performers; the third main point discusses sponsors; the fourth main point discusses audiences. In this format, you discuss main points in a more random order that labels specific



aspects of the topic and addresses them in separate categories. Most speeches that are not organized chronologically, spatially, or causally are organized topically.

## Connective Devices

Within the body of your speech, you need clear internal structure. Connectives are devices used to create a clear flow between ideas and points within the body of your speech--they serve to tie the speech together. There are four main types of connective devices:

- Transitions
- Internal Previews
- Internal Summaries
- Signposts

Within the body of your speech, you need clear internal structure. Think of connectives as hooks and ladders for the audience to use when moving from point-to-point within the body of your speech. These devices help re-focus the minds of audience members and remind them of which main point your information is supporting. The four main types of connective devices are:

## Transitions

Transitions are brief statements that tell the audience to shift gears between ideas. Transitions serve as the glue that holds the speech together and allow the audience to predict where the next portion of the speech will go. For example, once you have previewed your main points and you want to move from the introduction to the body of the Farm Aid speech, you might say: "To gain an adequate understanding of the intricacies of this philanthropic group, we need to look at some specific information about Farm Aid. We'll begin by looking at the administrative branch of this massive fund-raising organization."

## Internal Previews

Internal previews are used to preview the parts of a main point. Internal previews are more focused than, but serve the same purpose as, the preview you will use in the introduction of the speech. For example, you might create an internal preview



for the complex main point dealing with Farm Aid performers: "In examining the Farm Aid performers, we must acknowledge the presence of entertainers from different genres of music--country and western, rhythm and blues, rock, and pop." The internal preview provides specific information for the audience if a main point is complex or potentially confusing.

## Internal Summaries

Internal summaries are the reverse of internal previews. Internal summaries restate specific parts of a main point. To internally summarize the main point dealing with Farm Aid performers, you might say: "You now know what types of people perform at the Farm Aid benefit concerts. The entertainers come from a wide range of musical genres--country and western, rhythm and blues, rock, and pop." When using both internal previews and internal summaries, be sure to stylize the language in each so you do not become redundant.

## Signposts

Signposts are brief statements that remind the audience where you are within the speech. If you have a long point, you may want to remind the audience of what main point you are on: "Continuing my discussion of Farm Aid performers . . . "

## References to Outside Research

When organizing the body of your speech, you will integrate several references to your research. The purpose of the informative speech is to allow you and the audience to learn something new about a topic. Additionally, source citations add credibility to your ideas. If you know a lot about rock climbing and you cite several sources who confirm your knowledge, the audience is likely to see you as a credible speaker who provides ample support for ideas.

Without these references, your speech is more like a story or a chance for you to say a few things you know. To complete this assignment satisfactorily, you must use source citations. Consult your textbook and instructor for specific information on how much supporting material you should use and about the appropriate style for source citations.



Conducting research for a major informative speech can be a daunting task. In this section, we discuss a number of strategies and techniques that you can use to gather and organize source materials for your speech.

## Conclusion

While the conclusion should be brief and tight, it has a few specific tasks to accomplish:

- Re-assert/Reinforce the Thesis
- Review the Main Points
- Close Effectively

Take a deep breath! If you made it to the conclusion, you are on the brink of finishing. Below are the tasks you should complete in your conclusion:

### Re-assert/Reinforce the Thesis

When making the transition to the conclusion, attempt to make clear distinctions (verbally and nonverbally) that you are now wrapping up the information and providing final comments about the topic. Refer back to the thesis from the introduction with wording that calls the original thesis into memory. Assert that you have accomplished the goals of your thesis statement and create the feeling that audience members who actively considered your information are now equipped with an understanding of your topic. Reinforce whatever mood/tone you chose for the speech and attempt to create a big picture of the speech.

### Review the Main Points

Within the conclusion, re-state the main points of the speech. Since you have used parallel wording for your main points in the introduction and body, don't break that consistency in the conclusion. Frame the review so the audience will be reminded of the preview and the developed discussion of each main point. After the review, you may want to create a statement about why those main points fulfilled the goals of the speech.

### Close Effectively



Finish strongly. When you close your speech, craft statements that reinforce the message and leave the audience with a clear feeling about what was accomplished with your speech. You might finalize the adaptation by discussing the benefits of listening to the speech and explaining what you think audience members can do with the information.

Remember to maintain an informative tone for this speech. You should not persuade about beliefs or positions; rather, you should persuade the audience that the speech was worthwhile and useful. For greatest effect, create a closing line or paragraph that is artistic and effective. Much like the attention-getter, the closing line needs to be refined and practiced. Your close should stick with the audience and leave them interested in your topic. Take time to work on writing the close well and attempt to memorize it so you can directly address the audience and leave them thinking of you as a well-prepared, confident speaker.

## **Outlining an Informative Speech**

Two types of outlines can help you prepare to deliver your speech. The complete sentence outline provides a useful means of checking the organization and content of your speech. The speaking outline is an essential aid for delivering your speech. In this section, we discuss both types of outlines.

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### **The Complete Sentence Outline**

A complete sentence outline may not be required for your presentation. The following information is useful, however, in helping you prepare your speech.

The complete sentence outline helps you organize your material and thoughts and it serves as an excellent copy for editing the speech. The complete sentence outline is just what it sounds like: an outline format including every complete sentence (not fragments or keywords) that will be delivered during your speech.



## Writing the Outline

You should create headings for the introduction, body, and conclusion and clearly signal shifts between these main speech parts on the outline. Use standard outline format. For instance, you can use Roman numerals, letters, and numbers to label the parts of the outline. Organize the information so the major headings contain general information and the sub-headings become more specific as they descend. Think of the outline as a funnel: you should make broad, general claims at the top of each part of the outline and then tighten the information until you have exhausted the point. Do this with each section of the outline. Be sure to consult with your instructor about specific aspects of the outline and refer to your course book for further information and examples.

## Using the Outline

If you use this outline as it is designed to be used, you will benefit from it. You should start the outline well before your speech day and give yourself plenty of time to revise it. Attempt to have the final, clean copies ready two or three days ahead of time, so you can spend a day or two before your speech working on delivery. Prepare the outline as if it were a final term paper.

## The Speaking Outline

Depending upon the assignment and the instructor, you may use a speaking outline during your presentation. The following information will be helpful in preparing your speech through the use of a speaking outline.

This outline should be on notecards and should be a bare bones outline taken from the complete sentence outline. Think of the speaking outline as train tracks to guide you through the speech.

## Writing the Outline

Many speakers find it helpful to highlight certain words/passages or to use different colors for different parts of the speech. You will probably want to write out long or cumbersome quotations along with your source citation. Many times, the hardest passages to learn are those you did not write but were spoken by someone else.



Avoid the temptation to over-do the speaking outline; many speakers write too much on the cards and their grades suffer because they read from the cards.

## Using the Outline

The best strategy for becoming comfortable with a speaking outline is preparation. You should prepare well ahead of time and spend time working with the notecards and memorizing key sections of your speech (the introduction and conclusion, in particular). Try to become comfortable with the extemporaneous style of speaking. You should be able to look at a few keywords on your outline and deliver eloquent sentences because you are so familiar with your material. You should spend approximately 80% of your speech making eye-contact with your audience.

## Delivering an Informative Speech

For many speakers, delivery is the most intimidating aspect of public speaking. Although there is no known cure for nervousness, you can make yourself much more comfortable by following a few basic delivery guidelines. In this section, we discuss those guidelines.

### The Five-Step Method for Improving Delivery

1. Read aloud your full-sentence outline. Listen to what you are saying and adjust your language to achieve a good, clear, simple sentence structure.
2. Practice the speech repeatedly from the speaking outline. Become comfortable with your keywords to the point that what you say takes the form of an easy, natural conversation.
3. Practice the speech aloud...rehearse it until you are confident you have mastered the ideas you want to present. Do not be concerned about "getting it just right." Once you know the content, you will find the way that is most comfortable for you.
4. Practice in front of a mirror, tape record your practice, and/or present your speech to a friend. You are looking for feedback on rate of delivery, volume, pitch, non-verbal cues (gestures, card-usage, etc.), and eye-contact.
5. Do a dress rehearsal of the speech under conditions as close as possible to those of the actual speech. Practice the speech a day or two before in a classroom. Be sure to incorporate as many elements as possible in the dress rehearsal...especially visual aids.



It should be clear that coping with anxiety over delivering a speech requires significant advanced preparation. The speech needs to be completed several days beforehand so that you can effectively employ this five-step plan.

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**Citation:** Please adapt for your documentation style.

Anderson, Thad, & Ron Tajchman. (1994). Informative Speaking. *Writing@CSU*. Colorado State University. <https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=52>

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