

SPEECH TOPIC AND PURPOSE WORKSHEET

This worksheet is designed to help you narrow or broaden your topic to best accommodate a 5- to 7- minute speech and to provide a framework for defining your purpose. By focusing on broad ideas and narrowing down to themes and concepts that meet your purpose, you can design a speech with strong, well-developed content that fulfills your purpose and meets expectations of any audience.

Take a minute to write your topic in very broad terms. For example, if you were planning to talk about types of clouds, your broadest view of that topic might be weather or the atmosphere.

Broad topic options

Now consider several options for narrower topics based on your selected broad topic. This is brainstorming. It does not matter if a topic sounds ridiculous or far-fetched to you. Write them all down.

If we look at the topic of weather, some of the narrower topics might be hurricanes, types of clouds, lightning, or even umbrellas. There are several lines provided here but feel free to use a separate document to add more.

Narrow topic options

Once you have a list of possible topics, it is important to define your purpose. Take a moment to consider the general purpose of your speech. You are limited to a single general purpose. Select only one from the list below. Consider the Pathways project you are completing and any requirements of your assignment.

- To inform To persuade To entertain To inspire



It is time to describe your specific purpose for this speech. Like the topic-selection activity, this is brainstorming.

In the example, the broad topic might be weather. The narrow speech topic could be fluffy, or cumulus, clouds. The general purpose could be to inform. A few specific purposes could be: know when to go inside, recognize cloud shapes, plan your wardrobe based on the types of clouds you see, or recognize when clouds indicate dangerous weather.

From the list of specific purposes you created, choose the four or five that are most important to you and rank them in order.

Turn your top-priority specific purpose into a purpose statement. In our example, the speaker wants to inform and selects a specific purpose of helping audience members to recognize when clouds indicate dangerous weather. The purpose statement might sound like this: "The audience will be able to recognize non-threatening fluffy, or cumulus, clouds and identify the difference between those and the more dangerous storm, or cumulonimbus, clouds."

You may need to write several purpose statements before it feels right. Remember that a specific purpose must be a single sentence written from audience members' point of view that is also attainable.

Purpose statements

Once you clarify your general and specific purposes, let's return to your topic. Of the topics you brainstormed, which one has the strongest connection to your purpose? For example, our speaker might have had "choose the best umbrella," and "recognize when the weather is turning dangerous," on their topics list. Either topic could work with the purpose statement but they would produce very different speeches.

Now that you have set a general purpose, defined a specific purpose, and selected a topic that fulfills both, you are ready to plan and write a successful speech.