ORGANIZING THE SPEECH

LEARNING OUTCOME:

At the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Understand how to make the transition from a specific purpose to a series of main points.
2. Explain how to prepare meaningful main points.
3. Understand how to choose the best organizational pattern, or combination of patterns, for a specific speech.
4. Understand how to use a variety of strategies to help audience members keep up with a speech's content: internal previews, internal summaries, and signposts.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a series of important and ground-breaking studies conducted during the 1950s and 1960s, researchers started investigating how a speech's organization was related to audience perceptions of those speeches. The first study, conducted by Raymond Smith in 1951, randomly organized the parts of a speech to see how audiences would react. Not surprisingly, when speeches were randomly organized, the audience perceived the speech more negatively than when audiences were presented with a speech with clear, intentional organization. Smith also found that audiences who listened to unorganized speeches were less interested in those speeches than audiences who listened to organized speeches (Smith, 1951). Thompson furthered this investigation and found that unorganized speeches were also harder for audiences to recall after the speech. Basically, people remember information from speeches that are clearly organized—and forget information from speeches that are poorly organized (Thompson, 1960). A third study by Baker found that when audiences were presented with a disorganized speaker, they were less likely to

be persuaded, and saw the disorganized speaker as lacking credibility (Baker, 1965).

These three very important studies make the importance of organization very clear. When speakers are not organized they are not perceived as credible and their audiences view the speeches negatively, are less likely to be persuaded, and don't remember specific information from the speeches after the fact.

We start this chapter discussing these studies because we want you to understand the importance of speech organization on real audiences. If you are not organized, your speech will never have its intended effect. In this chapter, we are going to discuss the basics of organizing the body of your speech.

1.1 DETERMINING YOUR MAIN IDEAS

While speeches take many different forms, they are often discussed as having an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction establishes the topic and whets your audience's appetite, and the conclusion wraps everything up at the end of your speech. The real "meat" of your speech happens in the body. In this section, we're going to discuss how to think strategically about structuring the body of your speech.

We like the word strategic because it refers to determining what is important or essential to the overall plan or purpose of your speech. Too often, new speakers just throw information together and stand up and start speaking. When that happens, audience members are left confused and the reason for the speech may get lost. To avoid being seen as disorganized, we want you to start thinking critically about the organization of your speech. In this section, we will discuss how to take your speech from a specific purpose to creating the main points of your speech.

1.2 WHAT IS YOUR SPECIFIC PURPOSE?

Before we discuss how to determine the main points of your speech, we want to revisit your speech's specific purpose. Recall that a speech can have one of three general purposes: to inform, to persuade, or to entertain. The general purpose refers to the broad goal for creating and delivering the speech. The specific purpose, on the other hand, starts with one of those broad goals (inform, persuade, or entertain) and then further informs the listener about the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the speech.

The specific purpose is stated as a sentence incorporating the general purpose, the specific audience for the speech, and a prepositional phrase that summarizes the topic. Suppose you are going to give a speech about using open-source software. Here are three examples (each with a different general purpose and a different audience):

General Purpose	To inform
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts
General Purpose	To persuade
	Specific Purpose To persuade a group of college students to make the switch from Microsoft Office to the open-source office suite OpenOffice
General Purpose	To entertain
Specific Purpose	To entertain members of a business organization with a mock eulogy of for-pay software giants as a result of the proliferation of open-source alternatives

In each of these three examples, you'll notice that the general topic is the same—open-source software—but the specific purpose is different because the speech has a different general purpose and a different audience. Before you can think strategically about organizing the body of your speech, you need to

know what your specific purpose is. If you have not yet written a specific purpose for your current speech, please go ahead and write one now.

1.3 FROM SPECIFIC PURPOSE TO MAIN POINTS

Once you've written down your specific purpose, you can now start thinking about the best way to turn that specific purpose into a series of main points. Main points are the key ideas you present to enable your speech to accomplish its specific purpose. In this section, we're going to discuss how to determine your main points and how to organize those main points into a coherent, strategic speech.

1.3.1 How Many Main Points Do I Need?

While there is no magic number for how many main points a speech should have, speech experts generally agree that the fewer the number of main points the better. First and foremost, experts on the subject of memory have consistently shown that people don't tend to remember very much after they listen to a message or leave a conversation (Bostrom & Waldhart, 1988). While many different factors can affect a listener's ability to retain information after a speech, how the speech is organized is an important part of that process (Dunham, 1964; Smith, 1951; Thompson, 1960). For the speeches you will be delivering in a typical public speaking class, you will usually have just two or three main points. If your speech is less than three minutes long, then two main points will probably work best. If your speech is between three and ten minutes in length, then it makes more sense to use three main points.

You may be wondering why we are recommending only two or three main points. The reason comes straight out of the research on listening. According to LeFrancois, people are more likely to remember information that is meaningful, useful, and of interest to them; different or unique; organized; visual; and

simple (LeFrancois, 1999). Two or three main points are much easier for listeners to remember than ten or even five. In addition, if you have two or three main points, you'll be able to develop each one with examples, statistics, or other forms of support. Including support for each point will make your speech more interesting and more memorable for your audience.

1.3.2. Narrowing Down Your Main Points

When you write your specific purpose and review the research you have done on your topic, you will probably find yourself thinking of quite a few points that you'd like to make in your speech. Whether that's the case or not, we recommend taking a few minutes to brainstorm and develop a list of points. In brainstorming, your goal is simply to think of as many different points as you can, not to judge how valuable or important they are. What information does your audience need to know to understand your topic? What information does your speech need to convey to accomplish its specific purpose? Consider the following example:

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts
	Define open-source software.
	Define educational software.
	List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
	Explain the advantages of using open-source software.
Brainstorming List of Points	Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software.
	Review the history of open-source software.
	Describe the value of open-source software.
	Describe some educational open-source software packages.
	Review the software needs of my specific audience.
	Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.

Now that you have brainstormed and developed a list of possible points, how do you go about narrowing them down to just two or three main ones? Remember, your main points are the key ideas that help build your speech. When you look over the preceding list, you can then start to see that many of the points are related to one another. Your goal in narrowing down your main points is to identify which individual, potentially minor points can be combined to make main points. This process is called chunking because it involves taking smaller chunks of information and putting them together with like chunks to create more fully developed chunks of information. Before reading our chunking of the preceding list, see if you can determine three large chunks out of the list (note that not all chunks are equal).

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of school administrators about the various open-source software packages that could be utilized in their school districts
Main Point 1	**School districts use software in their operations.** Define educational software. List and describe the software commonly used by school districts.
Main Point 2	**What is open-source software?** Define open-source software. Review the history of open-source software. Explain the advantages of using open-source software. Describe the value of open-source software. Explain the disadvantages of using open-source software. Describe some problems that have occurred with open-source software.
Main Point 3	**Name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider.** Review the software needs of my specific audience. Describe some educational open-source software packages.

You may notice that in the preceding list, the number of sub-points under each of the three main points is a little disjointed or the topics don't go together

clearly. That's all right. Remember that these are just general ideas at this point. It's also important to remember that there is often more than one way to organize a speech. Some of these points could be left out and others developed more fully, depending on the purpose and audience. We'll develop the preceding main points more fully in a moment.

1.3.3 Helpful Hints for Preparing Your Main Points

Now that we've discussed how to take a specific purpose and turn it into a series of main points, here are some helpful hints for creating your main points.

i.   Uniting Your Main Points

Once you've generated a possible list of main points, you want to ask yourself this question: "When you look at your main points, do they fit together?" For example, if you look at the three preceding main points (school districts use software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider), ask yourself, "Do these main points help my audience understand my specific purpose?"

Suppose you added a fourth main point about open-source software for musicians—would this fourth main point go with the other three? Probably not. While you may have a strong passion for open-source music software, that main point is extraneous information for the speech you are giving. It does not help accomplish your specific purpose, so you'd need to toss it out.

ii.   Keeping Your Main Points Separate

The next question to ask yourself about your main points is whether they overlap too much. While some overlap may happen naturally because of the singular nature of a specific topic, the information covered within each main

point should be clearly distinct from the other main points. Imagine you're giving a speech with the specific purpose "to inform my audience about the health reasons for eating apples and oranges." You could then have three main points: that eating fruits is healthy, that eating apples is healthy, and that eating oranges is healthy. While the two points related to apples and oranges are clearly distinct, both of those main points would probably overlap too much with the first point "that eating fruits is healthy," so you would probably decide to eliminate the first point and focus on the second and third. On the other hand, you could keep the first point and then develop two new points giving additional support to why people should eat fruit.

iii.   Balancing Main Points

One of the biggest mistakes some speakers make is to spend most of their time talking about one of their main points, completely neglecting their other main points. To avoid this mistake, organize your speech so as to spend roughly the same amount of time on each main point. If you find that one of your main points is simply too large, you may need to divide that main point into two main points and consolidate your other main points into a single main point.

Let's see if our preceding example is balanced (school districts use software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider). What do you think? Obviously, the answer depends on how much time a speaker will have to talk about each of these main points. If you have an hour to talk, then you may find that these three main points are balanced. However, you may also find them wildly unbalanced if you only have five minutes to speak because five minutes is not enough time to even explain what open-source software is. If that's the case, then you probably need to rethink your specific purpose to ensure that you can cover the material in the allotted time.

iv. Creating Parallel Structure for Main Points

Another major question to ask yourself about your main points is whether or not they have a parallel structure. By parallel structure, we mean that you should structure your main points so that they all sound similar. When all your main points sound similar, it's simply easier for your audiences to remember your main points and retain them for later. Let's look at our sample (school districts use software in their operations; what is open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider). Notice that the first and third main points are statements, but the second one is a question. Basically, we have an example here of main points that are not parallel in structure. You could fix this in one of two ways. You could make them all questions: what are some common school district software programs; what is open-source software; and what are some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider. Or you could turn them all into statements: school districts use software in their operations; define and describe open-source software; name some specific open-source software packages that may be appropriate for these school administrators to consider. Either of these changes will make the grammatical structure of the main points parallel.

v. Maintaining Logical Flow of Main Points

The last question you want to ask yourself about your main points is whether the main points make sense in the order you've placed them. The next section goes into more detail of common organizational patterns for speeches, but for now we want you to just think logically about the flow of your main points. When you look at your main points, can you see them as progressive, or does it make sense to talk about one first, another one second, and the final one last? If you look at your order, and it doesn't make sense to you, you probably need to think about the flow of your main points. Often, this process is an art and not a science. But let's look at a couple of examples.

School Dress Codes Example

Main Point 1   History of school dress codes

Main Point 2   Problems with school dress codes

Main Point 3   Eliminating school dress codes

Rider Law Legislation

Main Point 1   Why should states have rider laws?

Main Point 2   What are the effects of a lack of rider laws?

Main Point 3   What is rider law legislation?

When you look at these two examples, what are your immediate impressions of the two examples? In the first example, does it make sense to talk about history, and then the problems, and finally how to eliminate school dress codes? Would it make sense to put history as your last main point? Probably not. In this case, the main points are in a logical sequential order. What about the second example? Does it make sense to talk about your solution, then your problem, and then define the solution? Not really! What order do you think these main points should be placed in for a logical flow? Maybe you should explain the problem (lack of rider laws), then define your solution (what is rider law legislation), and then argue for your solution (why states should have rider laws). Notice that in this example you don't even need to know what "rider laws" are to see that the flow didn't make sense.

2. USING COMMON ORGANIZING PATTERNS

Previously in this unit, we discussed how to make your main points flow logically. This section is going to provide you with a number of organization patterns to help you create a logically organized speech. The first organization pattern we'll discuss is categorical/topical.

2.1. Categorical/Topical

By far the most common pattern for organizing a speech is by categories or topics. The categories function as a way to help the speaker organize the message in a consistent fashion. The goal of a categorical/topical speech pattern is to create categories (or chunks) of information that go together to help support your original specific purpose. Let's look at an example.

Specific Purpose	To persuade a group of high school juniors to apply to attend Generic University
Main Points	i. Life in the dorms ii. Life in the classroom iii. Life on campus
	In this case, we have a speaker trying to persuade a group of high school juniors to apply to attend Generic University. To persuade this group, the speaker has divided the information into three basic categories: what it's like to live in the dorms, what classes are like, and what life is like on campus. Almost anyone could take this basic speech and specifically tailor the speech to fit her or his own university or college. The main points in this example could be rearranged and the organizational pattern would still be effective because there is no inherent logic to the sequence of points.

Let's look at a second example.

Specific Purpose	To inform a group of college students about the uses and misuses of online learning
Main Points	i. Define and describe online learning. ii. Explain some strategies to enhance your online learning experience. iii. List some potential benefits in online learning.

	In this speech, the speaker is talking about how to find others online and date them. Specifically, the speaker starts by explaining what Internet dating is; then the speaker talks about how to make Internet dating better for her or his audience members; and finally, the speaker ends by discussing some negative aspects of Internet dating. Again, notice that the information is chunked into three categories or topics and that the second and third could be reversed and still provide a logical structure for your speech.

2.2. Comparison/Contrast

Another method for organizing main points is the comparison/contrast speech pattern. While this pattern clearly lends itself easily to two main points, you can also create a third point by giving basic information about what is being compared and what is being contrasted. Let's look at two examples; the first one will be a two-point example and the second a three-point example.

Example 1	
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of physicians about Drug X, a newer drug with similar applications to Drug Y
Main Points	i. Show how Drug X and Drug Y are similar. ii. Show how Drug X and Drug Y differ.
Example 2	
Specific Purpose	To inform a group of physicians about Drug X, a newer drug with similar applications to Drug Y
Main Points	i. Explain the basic purpose and use of both Drug X and Drug Y. ii. Show how Drug X and Drug Y are similar. iii. Show how Drug X and Drug Y differ.

If you were using the comparison/contrast pattern for persuasive purposes, in the preceding examples, you'd want to make sure that when you show how Drug X and Drug Y differ, you clearly state why Drug X is clearly the better choice for physicians to adopt. In essence, you'd want to make sure that when you compare the two drugs, you show that Drug X has all the benefits of Drug Y, but when you contrast the two drugs, you show how Drug X is superior to Drug Y in some way.

2.3. Chronological

The chronological speech pattern places the main idea in the time order in which items appear—whether backward or forward. Here's a simple example.

Specific Purpose	To inform my audience about the sequence of The Lord of The Rings
Main Points	i. Examine the plot and content of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) ii. Examine the plot and content of The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) iii. Examine the plot and content of The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003)

In this example, we're looking at the plot and content of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001). Then, by placing the story in the first LOTR movie sequence into the audience, we develop a system for understanding the next LOTR movie sequence. Note that sometimes, the movie could also use reverse chronological order and progressing backward.

2.4. Problem-Cause-Solution

Another format for organizing distinct main points in a clear manner is the problem-cause-solution speech pattern. In this format you describe a problem, identify what you believe is causing the problem, and then recommend a solution to correct the problem.

Specific Purpose	To persuade the community to stay safe at home during the Movement Control Order (MCO) to break the chain of Covid 19 pandemic.
Main Points	i. Demonstrate that Covid 19 virus will be easily spread out if no pre caution steps are taken to reduce the outbreak. ii. Show that without MCO the pandemic may be difficult to contain. iii. Explain how instituting a mandatory MCO will reduce the outbreak.

In this speech, the speaker wants to persuade people to stay safe at home during the Movement Control Order (MCO) to break the chain of Covid 19 pandemic. To help persuade the community members, the speaker first demonstrate that Covid 19 virus will be easily spread out if no pre caution steps are taken to reduce the outbreak. Once the speaker has shown the problem, the speaker then explains that without MCO the pandemic may be difficult to contain. Lastly, the speaker provides the explanation on how instituting a mandatory MCO will reduce the outbreak. The problem-cause-solution format for speeches generally lends itself to persuasive topics because the speaker is asking an audience to believe in and adopt a specific solution.

2.5 Psychological

A further way to organize your main ideas within a speech is through a psychological speech pattern in which "a" leads to "b" and "b" leads to "c." This

speech format is designed to follow a logical argument, so this format lends itself to persuasive speeches very easily. Let's look at an example.

Specific Purpose	To persuade a group of nurses to use humour in healing the person
Main Points	i. How laughing affects the body ii. How the bodily effects can help healing iii. Strategies for using humour in healing

In this speech, the speaker starts by discussing how humour affects the body. If a patient is exposed to humour (a), then the patient's body actually physiologically responds in ways that help healing (b—e.g., reduces stress, decreases blood pressure, bolsters one's immune system, etc.). Because of these benefits, nurses should engage in humour use that helps with healing (c).

3. SELECTING AN ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN

Each of the preceding organizational patterns is potentially useful for organizing the main points of your speech. However, not all organizational patterns work for all speeches. For example, as we mentioned earlier, the biographical pattern is useful when you are telling the story of someone's life. Some other patterns, particularly comparison/contrast, problem-cause-solution, and psychological, are well suited for persuasive speaking. Your challenge is to choose the best pattern for the particular speech you are giving.

You will want to be aware that it is also possible to combine two or more organizational patterns to meet the goals of a specific speech. For example, you might wish to discuss a problem and then compare/contrast several different possible solutions for the audience. Such a speech would thus be combining elements of the comparison/contrast and problem-cause-solution patterns. When considering which organizational pattern to use, you need to keep in

mind your specific purpose as well as your audience and the actual speech material itself to decide which pattern you think will work best.

1. What are the organizational patterns for public speaking that we have discussed?

2. Can we combine different organizational patterns? Discuss.

3. What is the best way to present problem-based speech? Discuss.

1. Research shows that a well-organized speech can increase the speaker's competence and trustworthiness in the minds of listeners. **T** or **F**

2. _____ organization involves putting a speech together in a particular way to achieve a particular result with a particular audience.
   a) Logical
   b) Strategic
   c) Linguistic
   d) Formal

3. The _____ is the longest and most important part of the speech.

   a) Introduction
   b) Body
   c) Conclusion

3. It is important to know your main points before you begin researching your speech. **T** or **F**

4. Most speeches should have six to ten main points. **T** or **F**

5. The most effective order of main points in a speech depends on your
   a) Topic, Purpose, and Audience.
   b) Assignment, Credibility, and Research.
   c) Supporting Materials, Connectives, and Introduction.
   d) Conclusion, Reasoning, and Background.

6. _____ order is a method of speech organization in which the main points follow a directional pattern.
   a) Causal
   b) Chronological
   c) Spatial

7. Here are the main points for an informative speech:
   I.   In 1827, the Cherokee tribe of Georgia declared themselves an independent state.
   II. From 1828 to 1834, the Georgia legislature passed laws that destroyed the Cherokee political structure.
   III. During the winter of 1838, the Cherokee were driven out of Georgia in a tragic march along a route that became known as the Trail of Tears.

   These main points are arranged in _____ order.

   a) Spatial
   b) Chronological
   c) Topical

9. _____ order results when you divide the speech topic into subtopics, each of which becomes a main point in the speech.

   a) Topical
   b) Structural
   c) Formal

10. Here are the main points for an informative speech about UFOs:

i. Roswell, New Mexico, has been the focus of intense speculation about UFOs since a mysterious aircraft crashed there in 1947.
ii. Area S-4 of Nellis Air Force range in Groom Lake, Nevada, is believed by some people to be a scene of UFO activity.
iii. Other places known for reported UFO activities include Wisconsin, Alabama, and upstate New York.

These main points are arranged in _____ order.

a) Spatial
b) Analytical
c) Scenic

11. A _____ is a word or phrase that connects the ideas of a speech and indicates the relationship between them.

a) Link
b) Connective
c) Bridge

12. If the following statement occurred in the body of a speech, it would be an example of what kind of connective?

As I shall explain next, solving the problem of groundwater contamination involves two steps: limiting new development and requiring builders to use more efficient septic systems.

a) Transition
b) Internal Summary
c) Internal Preview
d) Paraphrase

13. As explained in your textbook, words or phrases that indicate when a speaker has completed one thought and is moving to another are called bridges. T or F

14. Words such as "First," "Next," "Finally," and "Above all" are often used as _____ to indicate where a speaker is in the speech or to help focus attention on key issues.

   a) Transitions
   b) Tags
   c) Signposts

15. Questions are particularly effective as signposts because they invite subliminal answers and thereby get the audience more involved in the speech. T or F

16. According to your textbook, if the following statement occurred in the body of a speech, it would be an example of what kind of connective?

   So far we have learned that Ms Maryam was a nationalist who lived during the seventeenth century and that she was exceptionally educated for a woman of her time.

   a) Transition
   b) Internal Summary
   c) Paraphrase

17. Which organizational pattern would be most effective for arranging the main points of a speech with this specific purpose: "To inform my audience about the four major elements in a landscape painting"?

   a) Topical
   b) Chronological
   c) Causal

18. Here are the main points for an informative speech about hospital-acquired infections:

   i. Over the past 20 years, the rate of hospital-acquired infections has increased dramatically.

ii. The two major causes for this increase are poor sanitary procedures in hospitals and the emergence of new strains of infections.

These main points are arranged in _____ order.

a) Topical
b) Chronological
c) Causal

19. When preparing main points for a speech, you should

a) phrase them as questions to gain attention
b) vary the wording of each point to maintain interest
c) try to get as many ideas as possible into each point
d) balance the amount of time devoted to each point.

20. Here are the main points for a speech about swing music:

i. Swing music involves a slight rhythmic hesitation.
ii. Swing music is rooted in jazz forms such as ragtime and blues.
iii. Swing music is closely identified with the "Big Band" sound.

These main points are arranged in _____ order.

a) Formal
b) Chronological
c) Topical

21. Which organizational pattern would be most effective for arranging a speech with this central idea: "The problem of adult illiteracy can be solved by a combination of individual and government action."

a) Topical order
b) Problem-Solution order
c) Chronological order
d) Causal order

22. Here are the main points for a speech about the major steps of treating a person in shock.

    i. First, you must position the victim to prevent further injury.
   ii. Second, you need to keep the victim warm.
  iii. Third, you should administer fluids if the victim is conscious.

   These main points are arranged in _____ order.

   a) descending
   b) chronological
   c) topical