**Dandelions: The Uncommon Weed**

**By Susan R. Hirsch**

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**(this guide is color coded:**

* **BLACK=The text of the speech itself**
* **RED=Explanation of the part of the speech**
* **BLUE=parts of the speech that are not good/could be cut**
* **PURPLE=Moving from one part of the speech to the next)**

**INTRODUCTION**

**What starts out yellow and ends up as a fluffy white ball? If I told you it was *Taraxacum officinale,* would that ring a bell? What if I told you it was of the family *Compositae--*would that excite your senses?**

**This is the attention-getter part of the introduction. The speaker is asking a question to get the audience thinking about the topic.**

**If you haven’t figured it out by now, the subject of which I am speaking is none other than the common, ordinary dandelion.**

**This is the statement of topic. The author clearly lets the audience know what she is going to be talking about, and she answers the question she posed in the attention-getter.**

**Yes, those bright, yellow flowers which we all, as kids, eagerly snapped off the stems while chanting the words, “Mama had a baby and its head popped off!” I’m sure all of us remember having blown the fluffy white tufts into the air above.**

**Although we have these pleasant memories from our childhoods, most homeowners consider the dandelion as the most irritating and troubling of all weeds--partly because their deep root system makes them almost impossible to get rid of.**

**This is nothing. It is not part of the intro, does not add anything to the content of the speech, and, due to the fact that it is not a recognized part of the intro, could confuse listeners and thus needs to be cut. *Be sure to maintain consistent organization as your audience is counting on it! Remember, they do not have the outline in front of them, so if you add in something like this, they will be confused!***

**However, from a botany class, I learned that the dandelion, in reality, is a very useful plant. From further research,**

**These are the speaker’s attempts at establishing credibility.**

* **She could state more information about the botany class, including where she took it, with whom, and when; this sort of information would have bolstered her credibility**
* **Simply stated “from research” is not enough to establish credibility; “research” could be anything from reading a Wikipedia article (don’t cite Wikipedia!) to reading an academic journal, and anything in-between. She simply does not give use enough information to know if this is credible research or not. In addition, she loses out on the chance to include an oral citation (“According to” . . .)**

**I discovered that the dandelion has both wide medicinal and culinary uses. Today I will explain these uses to you.**

**This is a great thesis and preview statement. She takes the topic of “dandelions,” and, in her thesis, makes a definite claim that she will have to work to prove (they are useful in medicine and cooking). The preview lets us know she will have two main points (medicinal and culinary) and what order those points will be in (medicinal uses of dandelions followed by culinary uses of dandelions).**

**This is the end of the introduction!**

**This is the start of the body!**

**We’ll start by looking at the dandelion’s medicinal value.**

**This is an excellent transition. It clearly lets the audience know that she is moving from the intro to the first main point, and it lets the audience know what the first main point is about. Keep in mind that the transition should act partly as a “topic sentence” for the main point that follows. Here, she is letting us know that she is going to talk about the medicinal value, her first main point.**

**The scientific name of the dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale,* testifies to its value as a medicine. According to Edward Spencer, in his book *All About Dandelions, Taraxacum* refers to medical properties of a plant found in Persia. *Officinale,* the species name, when given to any plant, indicates that it is used by druggists and pharmacists.**

**This is support (in the form of facts) for the first point about medicinal value. In addition, the speaker does a great job offering an oral citation for her information, which further enhances her credibility and avoids any unintentional plagiarism (using someone’s ideas without giving that person credit)**

**Throughout history, dandelions have been used to help cure various medical ailments. Dandelions were reportedly used by the ancient Egyptians to help treat kidney and stomach disorders. The dandelion’s many cures were recorded by Arabian physicians in the tenth century. And in sixteenth-century England, dandelion waters were used in the treatment of illness among the nobility.**

**This is additional support for her first main point about medicinal uses. She is using examples to show how dandelions have been used throughout history to help with medical issues. Here, she opts for chronological organization (even though the rest of the speech is in topical) as it just makes sense to keep time order (indeed, it would seem out of order if she did not). *However, she should add an oral citation as this is not common knowledge. When in doubt, add the citation!***

**Today, scientists know as a fact that the dandelion has great medicinal value. According to Mea Allan, in her book *Weeds,* the plant contains chemicals that stimulate blood circulation, the liver, digestive organs, and especially the kidney and bladder--which has gained the dandelion fame as the so-called “potty herb.” Audrey Hatfield, in her book *How to Enjoy Your Weeds,* says that a tea made from dandelion roots or leaves is helpful in relieving many conditions. It helps relieve liver and lung disorders, and it helps treat anemia. In addition, it serves as a mild laxative and is helpful in aiding digestion. Hatfield also suggests that dandelion tea is highly effective in cases of eczema, scurvy, and similar skin conditions. So valuable is the dandelion in treating medical ailments that 100,000 pounds are imported into the United States each year for this purpose.**

**This is additional support for her first main point about medicinal uses. She is using a mix of facts and examples. In addition, she gets three citations in this section (“According to Mea Allan . . .” “Audrey Hatfield . . .” and “Hatfield also suggests”); these are great examples of ways to vary your oral citations while still giving credit where it is due.**

**If you have no interest in using dandelions for your health, you can still find them of use in the kitchen.**

**This is an excellent example of a summary/preview transition. With “If you have no interest in using dandelions for your health,” the speaker offers a brief summary of what she has just covered (dandelions for health). With “you can still find them of use in the kitchen,” the speaker lets the audience know what the next topic will be (a preview that also serves as a “topic sentence” for what is coming).**

**Historically, dandelions have been used as food for thousands of years. According to an article in *National Wildlife* magazine, they were among the original bitter herbs of Passover, a Jewish holiday which commemorates the Hebrews’ liberation from slavery in Egypt. The English have been using dandelions in salads since the Middle Ages. And currently, many ethnic groups in the United States--such as Greeks, Poles, French, Italians, and even the Amish--all eat dandelions.**

**This is support, in the form of examples, for her point that dandelions have a long history of being used for food, up to the present day. Notice how the speaker keeps chronology, going from the first Passover, to the Middle Ages, to current day. This use of time order keeps the speech very organized (and shows that a speech can seamlessly blend chronological and topical order if the topic allows).**

***That said, “According to an article in National Wildlife magazine” would not earn Susan any citation points. This is simply not enough information for the audience to go look up the article if they were so inclined. What issue? What year? What volume? What is the title of the actual article? Who wrote it?***

***In order to find the article, the audience would have to search through every National Wildlife******to find the one that talked not only about dandelions but specifically about the historical use of dandelions as food.***

**All parts of the dandelion can be utilized to make a variety of delicious foods. Its bitter leaves, if picked before the yellow flowers appear, can be added to a salad. The leaves are usually mixed with other vegetables to vary their flavor. The dandelion’s roots may be roasted in an oven, then ground and used as a caffeine-free coffee substitute. The golden yellow flowers can be steeped in water and then used to produce a delicious wine. And the entire dandelion plant may be used to make beer.**

**These are some excellent examples to show different food options for dandelions! *That said, Susan should provide citations as this information is not common knowledge.***

**With regards to a demonstrative speech, this particular section could be expanded, and she could show us how to make the dandelion foods (maybe not the beer in an on-ground class, but in an online class, sure!).**

***Thus, this speech shows elements of both informative and demonstrative speaking, a distinction that will be covered in the next couple of weeks.***

**In addition to being tasty, dandelions are also extremely nutritious.**

**This is an excellent summary/preview transition! Susan is letting us know that she is done talking about the food stuff and is moving on to the nutrition aspect.**

**Unfortunately, the speaker only set up two main points in the preview. As the audience does not have the outline in front of them, this is the sort of abrupt change that can surprise an audience—and not in a good way.**

**The good news: This is great information that very much ties in with the idea that dandelions are useful for you! The only thing that Susan needs to do is revise her preview of main points to include nutrition.**

**In addition, this shows how you may want to work a bit on organization as you draft your speech. Nutrition is, in many ways, the link between health and food, so it would work great if placed in the middle of the other two points.**

**According to Peter Gail, a professor of economic botany at Cleveland State University, “The dandelion’s nutrient qualities read almost like a One-a-Day vitamin.” Dandelion greens have almost 50 percent more vitamin C than tomatoes, twice as much protein as eggplant, and double the fiber of asparagus. They have as much iron as spinach and more potassium than bananas.**

**This is excellent support for the nutrition point! She provides a great quote and some examples of the nutrition benefits, and there is a clear citation to show where the information is from.**

**All of this may sound strange to you, but not to the people of Vineland, New Jersey, the official Dandelion Capital of the World. In Vineland, the dandelion has grown from being a $68,000 crop in 1977 to almost a half-million-dollar crop today. At the beginning of the season, dandelions sell for as much as $1.25 a pound. Most of Vineland’s dandelion crop ends up in restaurants and markets in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City.**

**Every March the town hosts its annual seven-course dandelion dinner. The menu consist of dandelion soup, dandelion salad, dandelion sausage, dandelions and vegetables, dandelion beef roulade, dandelion sweet cup, and dandelion wine. Tickets for the dinner sell for $25 apiece, with people coming from as far away as Ohio. Former Vineland mayor Patrick Fiorilli has humorously summed up Vineland’s position in the dandelion world: “In your yard, you go out and pull the dandelions out of the grass. Our farmers pull the grass out of the dandelions.”**

**No. Just no.**

**These two paragraphs need to be cut. While this is good information, it does not really align with the thesis that dandelions are useful for all of us. Unless the audience lies in Vineland, then this information does not relate to them or how they could use dandelions.**

**These two paragraphs read like filler, i.e., “I am short on time and need to add something.” If you find yourself short on time, try to add more examples and facts that are directly relevant to your topic.**

**This is the end of the body section (which technically should have ended after the nutrition stuff)**

**CONCLUSION**

**As we have seen, then,**

**This is a great cue to the conclusion!**

**the dandelion is a greatly misunderstood plant. Despite its reputation as an irritating weed, in reality it is a very useful plant. Having various medical and culinary uses, the dandelion stands as one of the most underrated and least appreciated plants in the world.**

**This is an excellent summary of the thesis (the dandelion is a useful plant) and the main points (it has medicinal and culinary uses)**

**Hopefully, in the future, more people will come to recognize the usefulness of the dandelion, thereby reestablishing this “common” weed as a truly uncommon plant.**

**This last line is fluff and should be cut. In this case, Susan could nonverbally convey the end of the speech by stressing “world” from the previous sentence and ending there.**