

How to Write a Speech Outline

The process of outlining a speech is broken down into 4 essential steps.

1. Preparation-

- deciding on your topic
- considering the audience and refining your topic to suit them
- deciding on the purpose of the speech
- choosing an organizational method to support your speech purpose

Topic - decide what you are going to talk about

For example: *residential real estate*

Audience - consider who will be listening to you and what aspects of your topic are best suited to meet their needs

The scope of the topic '*residential real estate*' is huge. A speech could cover financial advice for first home buyers, how to check a house before purchase, the rise of mortgagee default sales, the collapse of property development schemes ...

Before you settle on the exact content of your speech analyze your audience. Why *should* they listen to you? What's in your speech for them?

Refine or Limit Topic - re-frame in view of your audience - decide on the angle you will take and whether or not you need to limit the scope

Your audience analysis should tell you what will be of interest. For example housing affordability with a step by step plan toward buying a first home will likely interest an audience of youngish, (late 20's-30's), people with steady professional incomes. But for another audience, (e.g. older, less financially secure, younger and not yet ready to consider settling ...), it could be completely inappropriate.

Define Purpose - Why are you giving this speech? Is it to persuade, inform, demonstrate, entertain, or welcome? Or is it a combination of these?

What do you want it to achieve? What action do you want people to take as a result of listening to you? Your answers to all of these questions will dictate what organizational pattern you'll use for your speech, its content and tone.

Choosing an organizational pattern or method

There are **6 basic organizational patterns** or methods of arranging the body of your material. Choose the one most appropriate for your need.

These are:

1. **Cause - Effect**
Because event *A* happened, event *B* occurred.
2. **Problem - Solution**
The problem is *X*. The solution is *Y*.
3. **Logical**
This pattern suits a broad topic which is broken down into naturally occurring sub-topics.
E.g. Broad topic: *Vocal Variety*
Sub-topics: *rate of speech, use of pausing, voice tone, volume, articulation...*
4. **Spatial or Geographic**
Topics dealing with physical space.
E.g. *The popular tourism areas in New Zealand*
5. **Time or Chronological**
Historical topics dealing with the sequence of events or demonstration speeches.
E.g. *The history of women's suffrage in USA, How to bake a cake*

6. **Advantage - Disadvantage**

Use this pattern for examining the range of positive and negative aspects of an idea or event.

E.g. *Social housing, work schemes, lowering the drinking age ...*

2. **Introduction-**

- opening greeting and attention getter
- defining your thesis statement (a summary of what your speech is about)
- establishing your credibility
- an overview and the benefit to the audience

Greeting - Attention Getter

How are you going to greet your audience, grab their attention and compel them to listen?

It could be a rhetorical question, a startling statistic, a quotation or a humorous one-liner. To be effective it must be related to your topic and apt for your audience.

Thesis Statement

A one sentence summary of your speech topic and your point of view or angle.

E.g. *Green politics is no longer a fanciful, fringe fad. It is a necessity.*

Credibility

This establishes your right to speak on the topic. It cites your qualification or expertise.

Summative overview

Brief outline of the main points to be covered

Benefit

What's in your speech for your audience? Why will they want to hear what you've got to tell them? Be specific. Tell them.

3. **Body-**

- transition or link between introduction and body
- main ideas with supporting ideas
- examples and details

Transition

This is the link between your introduction and the main body of your speech. How will you tie them together?

Main Idea 1 - Supporting ideas - Details and examples - Visuals or props - Transition to...

Main Idea 2 - Supporting ideas - Details and examples - Visuals or props - Transition to...

Main Idea 3 - Supporting ideas - Details and examples - Visuals or props - Transition to...

4. **Conclusion-**

- summary of main points
- closer or call to action

Summary of main ideas

These are the main points you covered in the body of your speech.

Re-statement of thesis statement

Use the statement from your introduction to reinforce your message.

Re-statement of benefit to audience

Remind the audience of the benefits they'll receive through carrying out whatever you propose. Again this comes from your introduction.

Closer, Clincher or Call to Action

This is your final sentence. To ensure your speech ends with a bang rather than a whimper check out this page on how to end a speech memorably. You'll find options and examples.