



# **chapter 4**

# **Selecting a Topic & Purpose**

# **Brainstorming**

**Generating  
ideas by free  
association of  
words**



# **General Purpose**

**Broad goal of speech**

# **Specific Purpose**

- **Single infinitive phrase**
- **States what speaker hopes to accomplish**



# **Specific Purpose Guidelines**

- **Full infinitive phrase**
- **Statement, not question**
- **Avoid figurative language**



# **Specific Purpose Guidelines**

- **Limit to one distinct idea**
- **Avoid being vague**

# **Full Infinitive Phrase**

Ineffective:      **Calendars**



# **Full Infinitive Phrase**

More Effective: **To inform my audience about the four major kinds of calendars used in the world today.**

# **Statement, Not Question**

Ineffective:

**What is Día de los  
Muertos?**



# **Statement, Not Question**

More Effective:

**To inform my audience  
about the history of  
Mexico's Día de los  
Muertos celebration.**

# Avoid Figurative Language

Ineffective:

**To persuade my audience that campus policy on student parking really stinks.**



# Avoid Figurative Language

More Effective:

**To persuade my audience that the campus policy on student parking should be revised to provide more spaces for students before 5 p.m.**

# **One Distinct Idea**

Ineffective:

**To persuade my audience to become literacy tutors and to donate time to the Special Olympics.**



# **One Distinct Idea**

More Effective:

**To persuade my audience to become literacy tutors.**

More Effective:

**To persuade my audience to donate time to the Special Olympics.**

# Avoid Being Vague

Ineffective:

**To persuade my audience  
that something should be  
done about medical care.**



# Avoid Being Vague

More Effective:

**To persuade my audience that the federal government should adopt a system of national health insurance for all people in the United States.**

# **Specific Purpose Questions**

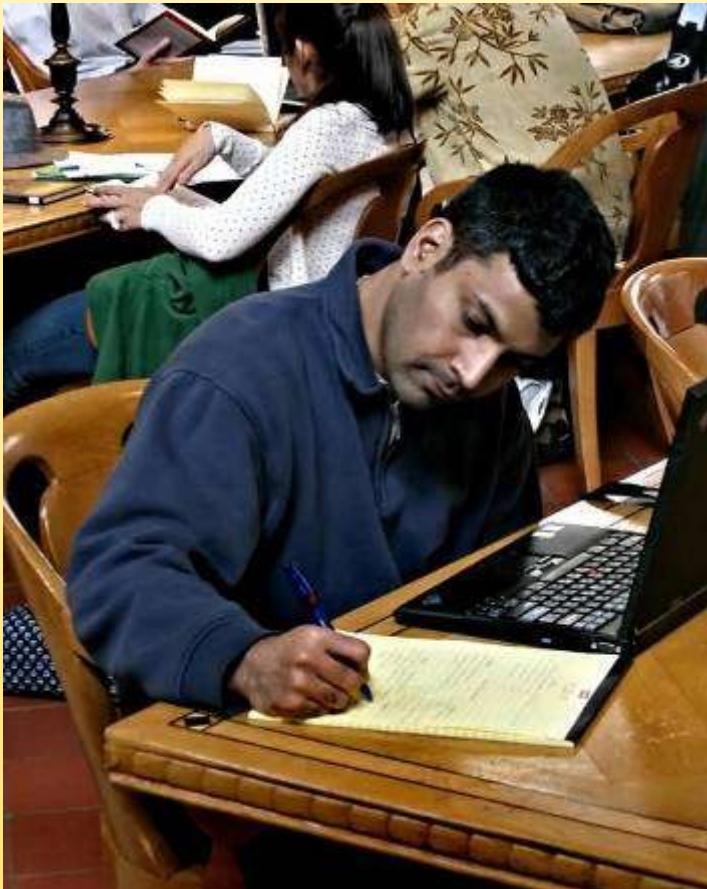
- **Does purpose meet assignment?**
- **Can I accomplish purpose in time allotted?**
- **Is purpose relevant to audience?**



# **Specific Purpose Questions**

- **Is purpose too trivial for audience?**
- **Is purpose too technical for audience?**

# Central Idea



- **One-sentence statement**
- **Encapsulate major ideas of speech**

# Central Idea Guidelines

- Express as full sentence
- Don't express as question
- Avoid figurative language
- Don't be vague

# **Complete Sentence**

Ineffective:

**Problems of fad diets.**



# **Complete Sentence**

More Effective:

**Fad diets can lead to serious health problems by creating deficiencies in vitamins and minerals and by breaking down muscle tissue as well as fat.**

# **Statement, Not Question**

Ineffective: **What are nanorobots?**



# **Statement, Not Question**

More Effective:

**Microscopic in size,  
nanorobots are being  
developed for use in  
medicine, weaponry,  
and daily life.**

# Avoid Figurative Language

Ineffective: **Mexico's Yucatan peninsula is an awesome place for a vacation.**



# Avoid Figurative Language

More Effective:

**Mexico's Yucatan peninsula has many attractions, including a warm climate, excellent food, and extensive Mayan ruins.**

# Avoid Being Vague

Ineffective:

**Paying college athletes a salary is a good idea.**



# Avoid Being Vague

More Effective:

**The NCAA should allow athletes in revenue producing sports to receive a \$250 monthly salary as part of their scholarships.**

# Example Outline

General Purpose: **To inform**

Specific Purpose: **To inform my audience of the three major races in alpine skiing.**

Central Idea: **The three major races in alpine skiing are the downhill, slalom, and giant slalom.**



# Example Outline

- Main Points:
- **The first major race in alpine skiing is the downhill.**
  - **The second major race in alpine skiing is the slalom.**
  - **The third major race in alpine skiing is the giant slalom.**