

Project 3 - Get to the Point

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Every speech must have a general and a specific purpose. A general purpose is to inform, to persuade, to entertain or to inspire. A specific purpose is what you want the audience to do after listening to your speech. Once you have established your general and specific purposes, you'll find it easy to organize your speech. You'll also have more confidence, which makes you more convincing, enthusiastic and sincere. Of course, the better organized the speech is, the more likely it is to achieve your purpose.

OBJECTIVES:

- Select a speech topic and determine its general and specific purposes.
- Organize the speech in a manner that best achieves those purposes,
- Ensure the beginning, body and conclusion reinforce the purposes.
- Project sincerity and conviction and control any nervousness you may feel.
- Strive not to use notes.

Time: Five to seven minutes

As you plan a speech, you must be absolutely clear about what you want the audience to do or know at the end of your talk. Your speech must have a purpose. Once you know your purpose, all other decisions relating to the speech - what information to include, organization and delivery - are easy to make, since you will measure them against their helpfulness in achieving your purpose.

There are two types of purposes: general and specific.

General Purpose

A general purpose is the broad intent of your speech. Most speeches fall into one of four general purposes:

To inform. You present a speech to inform when you want your audience to learn about a new subject, develop a new skill or learn more about a subject they already know something about. Lectures, briefings and demonstrations are all informative talks.

To persuade. A persuasive speech strives to change the audience's attitudes or behaviors, or to convince the audience to accept or approve your point of view. Sales presentations and campaign speeches are examples of persuasive speeches.

To entertain. An entertaining speech strives to amuse or provide enjoyment for the audience. Humorous speeches are the most obvious kind of entertaining speech. However, any speech may be entertaining without being laugh-out-loud funny simply by including anecdotes, such as a speech about some unusual experiences you had while on a business trip.

To inspire. Inspirational speeches ask people to achieve noble goals or ideals or reach their highest potential. They draw on emotions and sentiment. A commencement speech is a typical example of a speech intended to inspire.

Perhaps you've heard a speech that seemed to have two purposes - for example, an informative speech that also was entertaining because the speaker told some funny stories. Using humor doesn't mean the speech had two general purposes. The speech's purpose was to inform, but the speaker used humor to help convey his message. Although it's possible for a speech to have two general purposes, it's not recommended. Your speaking time is limited, making it difficult to effectively achieve two purposes. Also, your audience can be overwhelmed and confused when presented with too much information.

Specific Purpose

Suppose you are planning to give an informative speech about remodeling a home. This is a very broad purpose, and you would have difficulty adequately addressing the subject in a five- to seven-minute speech or even a 30-minute speech. Narrowing the general purpose into a more clearly defined specific purpose will make the presentation more practical and manageable for you, as well as more beneficial for the audience.

The specific purpose is a one-sentence statement about what you hope to accomplish in your speech. It should meet three criteria. The statement should be:

1. **Worded from the audience's viewpoint.** What do you want the audience to be able to do after listening to your speech?
2. **Specific.** The wording is precise.
3. **Attainable.** The specific purpose should be realistic and possible to achieve.

Write the statement from the audience's viewpoint. Instead of saying your purpose is "to inform the audience about remodeling a home," you could say, "After hearing my presentation, the audience will be able to identify the five steps in hiring a competent contractor." In a persuasive speech, your specific purpose could be, "After hearing my speech, the town council will approve the proposal to build an art center."

Be sure to keep the specific purpose reasonable. "After hearing my speech, the audience will be able to repair a bicycle" is not a realistic statement. This is better: "After hearing my speech, the audience will be able to do two simple maintenance tasks that will keep their bicycles safe."

Keep the specific purpose clear and concise. Write it down, paying careful attention to the verbs you use. If you are giving an informative speech, the specific purpose statement could include verbs such as *compare, identify, name, prepare, analyze* and *list*, while a statement for a persuasive speech could include verbs such as *buy, contribute, join, offer* and *vote*. Avoid using words like *know, understand, recognize* and *be aware* - they're vague and not readily measurable. The statement should be worded so that, after your speech, you could actually test the audience to see if you achieved your specific purpose.

Once you have written your specific speech purpose, you can decide the main points you want to make, the facts and ideas that best support the main points, and the most appropriate speech outline to follow. Occasionally you may be tempted to digress. Be careful to include only the main points and supporting facts and ideas that directly contribute to your specific speech purpose.

As you write the speech, make its purpose clear to the audience. The audience wants to know what you are going to talk about, so the beginning of your speech should tell them this succinctly. The body of your speech should provide the information you promised; the conclusion should reiterate what you've told them. By the time you conclude the speech, the audience should be able to state in one simple sentence the specific purpose of your talk.

Speak with Confidence

In Project 2 you learned the importance of speech organization. Knowing your specific purpose and being able to effectively organize your speech to achieve that purpose provide a big benefit for you as a speaker: increased confidence. When you are clear about what you want to accomplish with the speech and the method by which you will accomplish it, you feel better and more confident about yourself and your speech.

You may have discovered, too, that when you are interested in your topic and have strong feelings about it, it is easier to prepare and present the speech. Why? Because you are enthusiastic about the subject, believe in what you have to say and believe your audience will be interested in it, too. This makes you more convincing and sincere. When you are confident, enthusiastic, sincere and convincing, you have more credibility. As a result, the audience pays attention to you and is willing to consider your viewpoint.

When you speak on a subject that interests you and/or evokes strong feelings, you'll experience yet another benefit: You'll become so involved with your talk that you will forget your nervousness. In Project 1 you learned that some nervousness is normal for any speaker. However, if you have been

feeling very nervous when speaking, now is the time to confront it.

First, you should realize that your Toastmasters club members are a receptive, friendly and pleasant audience. They want to help you in your efforts to become a better speaker; you have no reason to be afraid of them. Take advantage of your nervous energy to add excitement to your talk - this will help the audience catch your enthusiasm. Also, use the nervous energy toward thoroughly preparing and rehearsing your speech. When you have a subject that excites you, a clear purpose and well-organized material, and you have rehearsed the speech so much that you are comfortable with it, you no longer have reason to be nervous. You'll find more tips about controlling nervousness on page 71.

Try It Without Notes

For this speech, try not to use notes. You'll want to convey confidence, enthusiasm and sincerity; by relying on notes you might convey the opposite impression. By maintaining eye contact with the audience and speaking from your heart rather than from a script, you'll be more effective.

If you're not ready to abandon notes entirely, try this method: Write each main point of your speech in large letters on a single card in a simple phrase. You can then read each card with a quick glance, which will allow you to keep eye contact with the audience.

Your Assignment

This project focuses on knowing your speech's purpose. You should

- Select a speech topic and determine its general and specific purposes.
- Organize the speech in a manner that best achieves those purposes.
- Ensure that the beginning, body and conclusion all tie into and reinforce the purposes.
- Project sincerity and conviction, and control any nervousness you may feel.
- Strive not to use notes.
- Incorporate suggestions from previous evaluations as you prepare and rehearse this speech.

Review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 as you prepare your speech.

Evaluation Guide for *Get to the Point*

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

NOTE TO THE EVALUATOR: *The speaker is to prepare a speech that has a clear general purpose (to inform, persuade, entertain or inspire) and a specific purpose. The speech is to be organized in a manner that best achieves these purposes. The beginning, body and conclusion should all tie into and reinforce the purposes. The speaker is to project sincerity and conviction and strive not to use notes. Any nervousness displayed should be minimal. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete the evaluation form below by rating the speech in each category.*

- 1 = Excellent
- 2 = Above average for the speaker's experience level
- 3 = Satisfactory
- 4 = Could improve
- 5 = Needs attention

	RATING					COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS
• The general purpose of the speech was clear.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The specific purpose of the speech was clear.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The speech organization supported the speech's specific purpose.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The main points and supporting material contributed to the speech's specific purpose.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The beginning, body and conclusion reinforced the specific purpose.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The speaker achieved the specific purpose.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The speaker appeared confident and sincere, with minimal nervousness.	5	4	3	2	1	
• The speaker did not rely on notes throughout the speech.	5	4	3	2	1	
• What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?						
• What did you like about the presentation?						