

Purposes of Informative Speaking

Informative speaking offers you an opportunity to practice your researching, writing, organizing, and speaking skills. You will learn how to discover and present information clearly. If you take the time to thoroughly research and understand your topic, to create a clearly organized speech, and to practice an enthusiastic, dynamic style of delivery, you can be an effective "teacher" during your informative speech. Finally, you will get a chance to practice a type of speaking you will undoubtedly use later in your professional career.

The purpose of the informative speech is to provide interesting, useful, and unique information to your audience. By dedicating yourself to the goals of providing information and appealing to your audience, you can take a positive step toward succeeding in your efforts as an informative speaker.

Informative Speeches about Objects

Speeches about objects focus on things existing in the world. Objects include, among other things, people, places, animals, or products.

Because you are speaking under time constraints, you cannot discuss any topic in its entirety. Instead, limit your speech to a focused discussion of some aspect of your topic.

Informative Speeches about Processes

Speeches about processes focus on patterns of action. One type of speech about processes, the demonstration speech, teaches people "how-to" perform a process. More frequently, however, you will use process speeches to explain a process in broader terms. This way, the audience is more likely to understand the importance or the context of the process.

A speech about how milk is pasteurized would not teach the audience how to milk cows. Rather, this speech could help audience members understand the process by making explicit connections between patterns of action (the pasteurization process) and outcomes (a safe milk supply).

Other examples of speeches about processes include: how the Internet works (not "how to work the Internet"), how to construct a good informative speech, and how to research the job market. As with any speech, be sure to limit your discussion to information you can explain clearly and completely within time constraints.

Informative Speeches about Events

Speeches about events focus on things that happened, are happening, or will happen. When speaking about an event, remember to relate the topic to your audience. A speech chronicling history is informative, but you should adapt the information to your audience and provide them with some way to use the information. As always, limit your focus to those aspects of an event that can be adequately discussed within the time limitations of your assignment.

Examples of speeches about events include: the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington, Groundhog's Day, the Battle of the Bulge, the World Series, and the 2000 Presidential Elections.

Informative Speeches about Concepts

Speeches about concepts focus on beliefs, ideas, and theories. While speeches about objects, processes, and events are fairly concrete, speeches about concepts are more abstract. Take care to be clear and understandable when creating and presenting a speech about a concept. When selecting a concept, remember you are crafting an informative speech. Often, speeches about concepts take on a persuasive tone. Focus your efforts toward providing unbiased information and refrain from making arguments. Because concepts can be vague and involved, limit your speech to aspects that can be readily explained and understood within the time limits.

Some examples of topics for concept speeches include: democracy, Taoism, principles of feminism, the philosophy of non-violent protest, and the Big Bang theory.

Think about Previous Classes

You might find a topic by thinking of classes you have taken. Think back to concepts covered in those classes and consider whether they would serve as unique, interesting, and enlightening topics for the informative speech. In astronomy, you learned about red giants. In history, you learned about Napoleon. In political science, you learned about The Federalist Papers. Past classes serve as rich resources for informative speech topics. If you make this choice, use your class notes and textbook as a starting point. To fully develop the content, you will need to do extensive research and perhaps even a few interviews.

Talk to Others

Topic selection does not have to be an individual effort. Spend time talking about potential topics with classmates or friends. This method can be extremely effective because other people can stimulate further ideas when you get stuck. When you use this method, always keep the basic requirements and the audience in mind. Just because you

and your friend think home-brew is a great topic does not mean it will enthrall your audience or impress your instructor. While you talk with your classmates or friends, jot notes about potential topics and create a master list when you exhaust the possibilities. From this list, choose a topic with intellectual merit, originality, and potential to entertain while informing.

Delivering an Informative Speech

For many speakers, delivery is the most intimidating aspect of public speaking. Although there is no known cure for nervousness, you can make yourself much more comfortable by following a few basic delivery guidelines. In this section, we discuss those guidelines.

The Five-Step Method for Improving Delivery

1. Read aloud your full-sentence outline. Listen to what you are saying and adjust your language to achieve a good, clear, simple sentence structure.
2. Practice the speech repeatedly from the speaking outline. Become comfortable with your keywords to the point that what you say takes the form of an easy, natural conversation.
3. Practice the speech aloud...rehearse it until you are confident you have mastered the ideas you want to present. Do not be concerned about "getting it just right." Once you know the content, you will find the way that is most comfortable for you.
4. Practice in front of a mirror, tape record your practice, and/or present your speech to a friend. You are looking for feedback on rate of delivery, volume, pitch, non-verbal cues (gestures, card-usage, etc.), and eye-contact.
5. Do a dress rehearsal of the speech under conditions as close as possible to those of the actual speech. Practice the speech a day or two before in a classroom. Be sure to incorporate as many elements as possible in the dress rehearsal...especially visual aids.

It should be clear that coping with anxiety over delivering a speech requires significant advanced preparation. The speech needs to be completed several days beforehand so that you can effectively employ this five-step plan.