



Planning a Speech

When it comes to public speaking, choosing a topic and organizing your thoughts can be the most difficult parts. Below are some tips for when you experience speaker's block.

Understand the Purpose

Understand what type of speech you need to give and the desired outcome of it. If your speech is for a class, this is usually determined for you in your assignment guidelines, but you may also have the opportunity to choose. What are you required to cover in your speech? Is your speech informative? If so, you should focus on providing new insight to your audience without trying to change anyone's actions or beliefs. Is your speech persuasive? If so, you should focus on presenting a compelling argument to your audience to influence their actions or beliefs. Is your speech for a special occasion? If so, you should focus on honoring the person or people you are speaking about.

Understand Your Audience

Consider topics that are especially relevant to your audience. Do your audience members share any commonalities (major, occupation, age, location, income, etc.)? Choosing a topic with your audience in mind means they are more likely to engage with the information when you deliver your speech. For example, we have probably all heard persuasive speeches about politics, but an audience of UCCS students may be more likely to engage with a presentation about parking on campus because it is relevant to their daily lives.

Understand Yourself

Organizing and delivering a speech will be much easier, and much more fun, if you are interested in the topic. Consider topics you are passionate about or would enjoy learning more about. If you are delivering a persuasive speech, think about issues that bother you. When a speaker is indifferent to their topic, the audience can tell; if it bores you, it will probably bore your audience too. Get creative! Again, your audience members are more likely to remember speech topics they have not heard before.

Brainstorm Broadly, Then Narrow Down

Once you have considered your purpose, your audience, and yourself, start brainstorming ideas. Do not hold back. Let your creativity flow! Write your ideas down, discuss ideas with others, or try a brainstorming app. Mind mapping (or webbing), a technique where you write down a central idea then write down related ideas around it, is a good way to narrow down your ideas and determine the main points of your speech. You do not usually have unlimited time to deliver a speech, so pick a topic you can realistically cover within your time constraints. For example, you may not be able to give a speech on the entire French Revolution in five minutes, but you may be able to discuss a significant event or figure from the French Revolution within that time.

Develop a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement expresses the overall idea of your speech in one or two sentences. It lays the roadmap for what your speech is about and what you will cover. You should provide your thesis statement verbally in your speech introduction.

Assemble Supporting Materials

Assemble all the materials you have on hand to support or illustrate your thesis statement and each of your main points. Then, find additional supporting materials as needed. [The Kraemer Family Library OneSearch](#) is a useful online tool for finding scholarly sources. Ensure you are citing your sources properly, both in your outline and verbally in your speech, according to your assignment guidelines.

Outline

Even if you are not required to create an outline of your speech for class, it is always a good idea to do it anyway. Creating a speech outline helps you arrange your thoughts logically, and citing your sources within an outline will prompt you to give verbal credit to them in your speech.

Use an outline template if your instructor has provided one. Otherwise, you can create an outline yourself. Most speeches follow the basic format of an introduction, a body (a few main points and subpoints), a conclusion, and transition statements in between. Plan to start and end your speech with impact! Starting a speech with “hello, my name is...” or ending a speech with “thank you” is not memorable to your audience.

Then, after you have completed your outline, practice, practice, practice! Remember that your outline should serve to cue your thoughts during your speech, but you should not read from it like a script. During your speech delivery, engaging with your audience rather than your outline is more impactful.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](#). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!