



Outlining a Speech

For many public speaking classes, you are required to create outlines for your speeches. However, even if you are not required to create a speech outline, it is always a good idea to do it anyway. Outlining your speech before delivering it helps you organize your thoughts and research in a way that flows. Although you should not read your outline like a script when you are delivering your speech (this limits your ability to engage with your audience), it serves as something to reference if you forget what to say next. How you structure your speech may depend on the speech's guidelines and purpose, but the major sections most speeches include are an introduction, a body, a conclusion, and transitions in between.

Introduction

Capture your audience's attention, communicate your topic, and lay the foundation for the rest of your speech. Here is what to include in the introduction:

- **Attention-Getter:** Starting your speech with “hello, my name is, and this is my topic” is not very engaging for your audience. Instead, pique their interest. Common attention-getters are references to your audience, statistics, stories, quotes, rhetorical questions, analogies, life lessons, bold statements, or anything else that is relevant to your topic and will start and leave your audience thinking.
 - **Example:** I spent Christmas Eve of 2014 in the worst pain of my life. On the way home from church, my family's car slid on ice, and I was rushed to the hospital. To make matters worse, when I arrived there, the doctor barely looked at me when I spoke.
- **Credibility Statement:** State why you are credible to speak on your topic. This is not where you mention your sources, but rather, where you focus on your own credibility.
 - **Example:** This experience inspired me to work in healthcare, so I could care for patients differently. My name is Jane Sullivan, and I have worked as a nursing assistant for five years and am an aspiring doctor.
- **Relevance to Audience:** Explain to your audience how the topic you are about to expand on is relevant to them. This creates buy-in with your audience.
 - **Example:** As medical students, to prepare to care for our future patients holistically, we must practice the art of bedside manners in addition to learning the science of medicine.
- **Thesis and Preview of Main Points:** Provide the central idea of your speech and create a road map for your audience.
 - **Example:** Lack of bedside manners is a problem in healthcare; however, today I will explain a leading cause of the problem and how to go about solving it.

Body

Present the main points of your speech and explain them. This is an opportune place to tie in supporting research. Here is the structure of the body:

- **Main Points:** Clearly state each main point. The number of main points you include in your speech may vary, but three main points are standard.
 - **Example:** Too often, doctors fail to serve their patients kindly and attentively.

- **Subpoints:** Expand on each main point. Make sure each subpoint directly relates to its corresponding main point and that you are not introducing a completely new issue. The number of subpoints you include for each main point may vary, but two subpoints for each main point are standard.
 - **Example:** One in four patients believe their doctor’s bedside manners could improve (Doe, 2022).

Conclusion

Wrap up your speech and leave your audience awed. Here is what to include in the conclusion:

- **Thesis and Summary of Main Points:** Remind your audience what you talked about. This will mirror the thesis/preview of the main points from your introduction.
 - **Example:** Clearly, lack of bedside manners is a problem in healthcare, and lack of education in nonverbal communication is the cause. However, requiring all medical students to take a course in nonverbal communication will remedy this problem.
- **Audience Response Statement:** Let your audience know what insight you hope they walk away with. In a persuasive speech, this could be a call to action.
 - **Example:** Sign up for Nonverbal Communication as one of your elective courses. You will learn valuable skills for treating your patients considerately.
- **Wow Statement:** Instead of ending with “thank you,” end your speech with impact and leave your audience awed. An effective strategy is to tie this back to your attention-getter.
 - **Example:** Make sure none of your patients leave your care feeling the way I felt that Christmas Eve.

Transitions

Between each major section of your speech (introduction, each main point, conclusion), recap where you just were and preview where you are going next. This helps the speech flow.

- **Example:** Hopefully, you also now recognize that poor bedside manners are a pervasive problem in healthcare, but you may be wondering: What is the cause of this issue?

Need more information or assistance?

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