

Speech Preparation Checklist

- TOPIC, PURPOSE & CENTRAL IDEA

Start with choosing the **topic** and the **general purpose** of the speech. Be sure to choose a **topic** that can be adequately explored within the time constraints of the assignment, and that fulfills the purpose of the assignment. Be sure to think carefully about what you want to accomplish with your speech before choosing your speech's **general purpose**.

- The three main types of **general purposes** for speeches are: *to inform*, *to persuade* and *to entertain*.
- The topic you choose is paired with a **specific purpose statement**, which should be a phrase expressed as a statement (not a question), and limited to one distinct idea.
- The last major component to consider when planning a speech is the **central idea** of your speech—a one-sentence statement that sums up the major ideas of the speech (it is the equivalent of a thesis statement in an essay). This statement is essential for the quality and structure of any successful speech, as it should outline all main points.
- Informative Speech Example:
 - o **Topic:** Calendars
 - o **General Purpose:** To inform
 - o **Specific Purpose:** To inform my audience about the four major calendars currently used in the world.
 - o **Central Idea:** The four main calendars used in the world today are the Gregorian calendar, the Hebrew calendar, the Chinese calendar, and the Islamic calendar.
- Persuasive Speech Example:
 - o **Topic:** Campus parking
 - o **General Purpose:** To persuade
 - o **Specific Purpose:** To persuade my audience to petition against our school's plan to reduce the number of campus parking spaces assigned to students.
 - o **Central Idea:** Our school's plan to reduce student parking spaces is an infringement of student rights, will cause unnecessary obstacles for students, and will result in widespread illegal parking.

- AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Audience analysis is an important part of every speech. Speakers should keep their audience in mind throughout the entire speech process, from preparation to presentation.

- Use this checklist to consider your topic in relation to your audience:
 - o Who is your audience for this speech, and what is your speech's specific purpose?
 - o Do you need to narrow your topic and/or the scope of your specific purpose so that it will be appropriate to this audience?
 - o Are any special adaptations necessary in the speech because of audience demographics, such as: *age, sex, religion, racial or ethnic background, group membership, etc.?*
 - o Are any special adaptations necessary in the speech because of situational audience factors, such as: *size, physical setting, knowledge about the topic, interest level in the topic, attitude toward the topic, attitude toward the speaker, attitude toward the occasion?*

- RESEARCHING & SUPPORTING MAIN IDEAS

As in essay writing, **main ideas** in a speech (as outlined in the **central idea**) must be supported with specific details, such as specific examples, statistics, and testimonies. After establishing the main ideas of your speech, you should spend some time **researching** to find **support** for those ideas. This **support** becomes the **subpoints** of the speech's **main points**. Always remember to properly cite all sources used in a speech.

- Use this checklist to ensure that your speech **supports** all of its **main ideas**:
 - o Are your main points all claims or assertions that need to be supported to be understood?
 - o Have you completed your research and found all **support**, such as *examples*, *statistics* and *testimonies*, from credible, unbiased sources?
 - o Have you cited the sources of all your supporting information?
 - i. If using *examples* as support, have you chosen examples that focus on the most important aspect of your claim by either making ideas clear or personalizing ideas?
 - ii. If using *statistics* as support, have you used statistical measures (mean, median, mode) correctly, and have you explained the statistics in relation the audience?
 - iii. If using *expert testimony* as support, have you introduced the source of the testimony within your speech, and established his or her credentials to speak about the topic?
 - o Have you balanced your speech to devote the same amount of time to each main idea?
 - o Have you planned transitions between each main point, so your speech flows smoothly?

- CREATING AN OUTLINE

Most instructors require an **outline** for each speech. Your instructor should provide more detailed examples of what your outline should look like and what it should include (some items are dependent on the type of speech), but this checklist is helpful for understanding the basic components of any speech **outline**:

- o Does your outline clearly state your speech's **topic**, **specific purpose**, and **central idea**?
- o Does your outline include no more than five main points, as outlined in the central idea?
- o Does each **main point** have **subpoints**—more specific, **supporting information**?
- o Does your outline include an **introduction** that grabs the audience's attention, establishes your credibility, and establishes the speech's purpose using its **specific purpose** and **central idea** (like an essay's thesis statement)?
- o Does your outline include a **conclusion** that reviews the speech's **main points** and reinforces its **central idea**?
- o Does your outline include prepared transitions between each section of the speech?
- o Does your outline include citations for all outside sources used as support?

- OTHER TIPS FOR SPEECH PREPARATION:

- If you choose to incorporate **visual aids** into your speech, be sure to prepare them well in advance, make them clear and easy to comprehend, big enough for the whole audience to see, and only include the information necessary to enhance the point.
- Always **practice** your speech beforehand and focus on improving:
 - o Tone and volume of voice, incorporation of visual aids, sense of time and pacing, appropriate pauses, eye contact, complementary body language, and the level of enthusiasm about the topic.