



The Speech Body

Structure and Direction

There are many forms that the body of your speech can take, but it should always have good structure. For example, an *informative speech* will usually have three to four main points that are introduced, developed, and then restated, and a *narrative speech* will usually follow a storyline. Another option is to figure out where you want to end up and work backwards from there. Even entertaining talks and “roasts” should have both cohesion and direction to help the audience follow along.

Audience

It is important to know your audience and speak to their level and (usually) their point of view. You should always establish some common ground with the audience, even if your talk will be contrary to their beliefs. If you are trying to persuade your audience, keep in mind that you will probably have more success making small attitude changes than in altering someone’s convictions.

Since your opening and closing should be memorized, the body of the speech gives you the opportunity to adapt your speech and ad-lib. Personalizing your talk by asking questions or talking directly to an individual can help build a good rapport with the audience.

Facts and Support

When using facts in your speech, you should be prepared to support them with statistics, quotes, displays, or some other measure of authority. It is often best to briefly mention the source in your speech, but be prepared to give more detail if needed. Other ways to enhance the

points you make include illustrations, comparisons, analogies, and showing the weaknesses of opposition (in a persuasive speech).

Delivery

The body of your speech should almost never be written down verbatim. The exception is when you are delivering information that must be conveyed precisely. When you first start speaking you may have the temptation to write every word down, but this will generally deter greatly from your delivery and should only be used as a last resort.

Notes and Outlines

The best way to stop using notes is to practice. You should first try to move from written speaking to index cards, writing down key points, transitions, and areas where you have difficulty. If you need to write the whole speech down, try highlighting the major areas and work toward only using the notes at these areas. As you progress, you can learn to use a simple outline on a single card. However, when starting out it is okay to use multiple note cards as you work towards creating an outline that suit your style and condensing the information from there.

Here are some steps that will help you create your starting outline, which you can then condense as you progress towards completing your speech prep:

Creating a Working Outline

1. State thesis, general purpose, specific purpose, thesis
2. Label each part (introduction, body, conclusion)
3. Establish main points (3-5 recommended)
4. Write out everything in complete sentences
5. Label and write out transitions

Creating a Speaking Outline

1. Gather note cards or small pieces of paper
2. Use key words or phrases versus sentences
3. Write out difficult material (quotes, statistics, etc.)

4. Include prompts for transitions, presentation aids, stage directions
 5. Keep working outline handy for clarification
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If you want more information, check out the following UMW Speaking Center Handouts:

[Brief Guide to Constructing a Speech](#)

Adapted from Stephen M. Fournier, <http://stevefournier01.tripod.com/tips/tips-body.html> with additions from the UNCG Speaking Center with permission, 2020.