

**Speech Content – Choosing Your Topic**

Deciding what to speak about can sometimes feel the hardest part of the entire speech preparation process When deciding your speech topic there are three important decisions to ask yourself - linking your expertise, passion and the audience.

#### **Three questions to ask yourself**

1. **How much do I know about this topic?** Your audience needs to recognise you as a credible speaker and being knowledgeable about your topic is an easy way to do this. This will also help with clearly breaking down and explaining more complex ideas as we saw with Bruce Friedrich in his TED Talk on “The Next Global Agricultural Revolution.”
2. **Am I passionate about the topic?** Your passion on the topic will be immediately obvious and will draw them into your talk. It will affect all areas of your delivery, including [body language](https://virtualspeech.com/blog/8-elements-of-confident-body-language), [eye contact](https://virtualspeech.com/blog/importance-of-eye-contact-during-a-presentation) and energy levels. This will make for better audience engagement and a more interesting talk.
3. **Will the audience be interested in the topic?** The audience need to see how your topic can be of use or interest to them. If not they may switch off during your talk.



**Designing Your Speech**

If a speech is to make sense to an audience, it must be organised into logical form. Organisation is clear thinking, a way for ideas to be put together in an orderly manner

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An effective speech is logically organised into:

·       an opening

·       a body

·       a conclusion

There are many variations on this basic structure and experienced speakers rarely think consciously about these three parts, but all three are present in every good speech. After you have mentally organised your presentation, you should write down an outline to make sure you have included each of the three parts in your talk and to fix each sub-point clearly in your mind.

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### The Opening

The opening of your speech is designed to catch immediate attention. It must arouse the audience's interest in your topic and alert them to the theme of your speech. Of course, your opening must also lead into the subject of the speech. If you merely shock the audience, they will remember the opening clearly, but forget the point of the speech.

Examples of a good opening are:

·       A startling question or a challenging statement

·       An appropriate quotation, illustration, or story (ensure this is not too long)

·       A generalisation that is attention getting and ties in with your subject.

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### The Body

The body of your speech contains the main support for your ideas. You may wish to keep it to three main points. For each point it is best to support it with either a story or facts to back up your ideas.

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### The Conclusion

The conclusion of your speech is the climax, the destination at which you hope to leave your audience. This is where your speech should produce results.

Your conclusion should always *tie in with your opening* and should leave no doubt about what you want your audience to do with the information you have given them. Finish forcefully and with confidence. A weak, inconclusive, or apologetic closing will reduce the impact of your speech.

Examples of a good closing are:

·    A summary of the points you have made and the conclusions to be drawn from them

**·** A specific appeal for action

·       A story, quotation, or illustration that emphasises the point you are making



**Storytelling**

The use of storytelling is a highly effective way to support the ideas you make in your talks. They can personalise dry content and can also give the audience an anchor to hold on to.

### Storytelling Tip 1: Evoke the minds of your audience.

Stories need the audience to be able to visualise what the speaker is talking about. We get too lost if the talk is too dry or abstract. Try to create an image in the audience’s mind and to stimulate their senses in some way. If they can’t see it, touch it or taste it your story won’t be as effective because they won’t interact as much with the information you give them. Think of it as showing the audience instead of telling them. You could say *“He wasn’t a very nice man.”* Or… you could show them by saying *“He stormed out, slammed the door, and kicked the cat.”*

### Storytelling Tip 2: Use your own experience

When you’re telling your story, try to speak from your own experience and feelings about the issue rather than from the outside. Let’s say you are talking about a scary experience while traveling. You wouldn’t learn your lines. You wouldn’t need to. You would hop into your jeep, heart pounding, fumbling with your keys, palms sweating as a tiger tries to attack you and your trusty jeep just simply doesn’t want to start.

As you tell your story you bring your audience with you on your trip… experiencing it all as if they were there. The audience always gains more from hearing your experience rather than just see you read it out loud.

### Storytelling Tip 3: Start with the end in mind.

Excellent stories always have a purpose. You aren’t just telling them for the sake of it. They have an end point that is meaningful for your audience. Work your way to the end point of your story from its very beginning.