

LESSON-38

STRUCTURING THE BODY OF YOUR PRESENTATION

Because the body of your speech contains the major substance of your message, you should organize it first. In developing the body of your speech,

you have three major tasks to accomplish:

1. You must determine your main points'
2. You must arrange your main points effectively.
3. You must decide how to use supporting materials.

Determine Your Main Points

In the course of your research, you will discover that certain themes are stressed or repeated. These themes are the most important concerns and issues connected with your topic. Look at them in terms of how they relate to your specific purpose, thesis statement, and the needs and interests of your listeners. They provide the raw material from which you will fashion the main points of your speech. Your main points are the most prominent ideas of your message, the ones you emphasize most, your principal points of focus. They are the columns that support the structure of your speech,

Let's look at how you might determine the main points for a speech on the causes of the greenhouse effect. To get the best overall picture of themes, prepare a research overview. List your main sources of information and then summarize the major ideas from each source identified on the information and source cards discussed in Chapter 5. Figure 7.2 presents a research overview based on for sources information general information from an encyclopedia entry, a discussion guide published by the National Issues Forums Institute, a magazine article from *Time*, and an article from the *Commercial Appeal* newspaper. Scan the overview, looking for repeated themes and concerns that emerge across the sources. You might come up with the following themes:

The greenhouse effect is a gradual warming of the earth's atmosphere (GE 1, 3; CA 5,c6)

ff The greenhouse effect may be caused by too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (GE 2; NIF 1A; CA 1)

Increased carbon dioxide comes from energy consumption, industrial pollution, and loss of woodlands, especially °in the industrialized nations (NIF 2; CA 2, 3)

The greenhouse effect may cause serious health, environmental, and economic problems (NIF IB, IC, ID; T I, 3;CA 6)

Once you have identified the major themes from your research, you should determine how these relate to the specific purpose and thesis statement of your speech. You should also assess how relevant they are to the needs and interests of your audience. In this example your specific purpose is "to inform my audience of the causes of the greenhouse effect." Your audience may have heard of the greenhouse effect, but their knowledge of the topic is probably vague and they may not be aware of its importance to their lives.

In light of these considerations, you realize that you must start by defining the greenhouse effect to establish a shared base of meaning. As a matter of fact, with this or any other technical topic you must be sensitive to the need for definitions throughout your speech. Such definitions must go beyond simple translations. You should use

explanations and descriptions (discussed in Chapter 6) to bring the topic into the lives of listeners. If your purpose were to persuade listeners, you might develop the alarming consequences predicted for the greenhouse effect as main points to motivate your listeners to support changes in public policy. In your informative speech, however, you decide to mention these consequences in your introduction and as part of your definition to arouse interest and to motivate your audience to listen. Once you have their interest, you can proceed to discuss the causes. In this case, from the major themes revealed by your research overview, you might fashion the following main points:

- III The greenhouse effect is a gradual warming of the earth from human activities.
- II The loss of woodlands adds to the greenhouse effect.
- s Industrial emissions accelerate the greenhouse effect.
- s Increased energy consumption magnifies the greenhouse effect.

Arranging Your Main Points

Once you have determined your main points, you must decide how to arrange them. You need to come up with a way of ordering them that is appropriate for your audience, fits your material, and serves your specific purpose. For example, in the above case the first main point will provide needed definitions and heighten interest. The next three main points will establish, in increasing order of importance, the principal causes of the greenhouse effect. Following the balance requirement of good form, you will spend proportionately more time on each cause as your speech develops.

Beyond these important strategic considerations, other factors help explain why some patterns satisfy the principle of good form more than others. As we noted earlier in this chapter, people organize information into clusters or patterns that are easily recalled. These patterns become habits of the mind, expectations that predetermine how we process our experiences. They function like mental forms or templates into which we pour or fit new information. We see and experience the world through them. How we arrange our speeches must be in harmony with these expectations. *These principles are similarity, proximity, and closure.* In this section we discuss some basic speech designs that relate to these principles of orderliness. More detailed examples of speech designs may be found in Chapters 12 and 13, which discuss informative and persuasive speaking.

Principle of Similarity. The principle of similarity leads people to group things together that seem alike. This tendency underlies the categorical design for speeches. Speakers use categories when they discuss “three major causes of the greenhouse effect” or “the four basic components of a good stereo system.” Categories can be based on the actual divisions of a topic, such as the symptoms of a disease. They also may be used to represent customary ways of thinking about a subject, such as the four basic food groups. Such causes, components, symptoms, and groups go together because they seem alike in relation to their subjects. Socrates may have been thinking of categories when he advised speakers to divide subjects “according to the natural formation, where the joint is, not breaking any part as a bad carver might.”

You also can use a categorical design to talk about a person. For example, you might believe that the public image of Gloria Steinem has been distorted by poor press coverage; therefore, you decide to present a speech that will help the audience understand her activism. You decide on a categorical design so that you can emphasize the factors

leading to her activism. In such a design you might consider (1) personal and family events, (2) professional events, and (3) political events. These categories, related by their similarity as forces in her life, generate the main points of your speech:

- Specific purpose : To inform my audience of critical events that contributed to Gloria Steinem's activism.
- Thesis statement : To understand Gloria Steinem's activism we need to understand the forces that shaped her life.
- Main points : I. Steinem's personal life laid the basis for her activism.
II. Steinem's professional activities exposed her to sexual harassment
III. Steinem's political experiences subjected her to discrimination.

Principle of Proximity. According to the principle of proximity, things that occur close together in time or space should be presented in the order in which they naturally occur. For example, a how-to speech should have a sequential design that presents the steps in the order in which they should be taken. If you want to discuss events that led to a present-day problem, you might use the sequential design to present a historical perspective of the situation. Your research may show that the major events occurred in 1955, 1970, and 1987. If you follow this chronological pattern, your speech will be easy to understand. But if you start talking about 1970, then jump back to 1955, then leap ahead to the present before doubling back to 1987, you will probably lose most of your listeners by violating the principle of proximity.

If you were preparing a speech describing the scenic wonders of Yellow-stone Park, your speech might best follow a spatial design. Such a design is based on the closeness of physical relationships, such as east-west, up-down, or points around a circle. You might begin with your audience at the south visitor's center, take them up the west side to Old Faithful, continue north to Mammoth Hot Springs, then down the east side through the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. This way your audience gets a verbal map to follow as well as a picture of the major attractions in the park.

Principle of Closure. The principle of closure is based on the natural tendency of people to seek completion. 1 1 We like to have patterns carried through to the end so that we feel we have the "whole picture," or know the "whole story." Have you ever gotten engrossed in a magazine article in a waiting room only to find that some previous reader has torn out the last page of the story? Can you remember the annoyance you felt? Your need for closure had been frustrated.

The principle of closure applies to several speech designs. For example, if you omit an important category when developing your topic, listeners may *notice* its omission. If you leave out a necessary step in a sequence, audiences may sense the flaw. Although all speeches should satisfy this need, there are two speech patterns for which closure is absolutely essential. These are *cause-effect* and *problem-solution* designs. Because we want the world to seem purposeful and controllable, we like for all events to have clear causes and for all problems to have satisfactory solutions.

A cause-effect speech can go in two directions: it can begin by focusing on some present situation as an effect and then seek its causes, or it can look at the present as a potential cause of future effects. Sometimes these variations can be combined. You might take a current situation such as the budget deficit and develop a speech tracing its origins. If you had enough time, you might continue by predicting the future effects of the deficit. Understanding the causes could help your listeners see what needs to be done to reduce the deficit. Predicting future effects might make them *want* to reduce it.

Determining and Arranging Your Main Points

1. Prepare a research overview to identify repeated ideas and themes.
2. Frame main points in light of the function and purpose of your speech and the need of your audience.
3. Limit your main points to four or fewer for a short speech.
4. Use the principle of similarity to develop categories.
5. Use the principle of proximity to arrange main points in sequential or spatial patterns.
6. Use the principle of closure to provide completeness in causation and problem-solution designs.

The problem-solution design focuses attention on a problem: and then provides a solution for it. Such speeches often use motivational appeals to bring the problem home to listeners. Once you have aroused strong feelings, your solutions must show how to satisfy them, or the audience may feel frustrated and resentful. Returning to our previous example, the budget deficit could be presented as a problem, a threat to national security and the well-being of future generations; The speaker then should provide a solution. In either of these variations, speakers must discuss both cause and effect or problem and solution in order to satisfy listeners' need for closure.

Let these principles of similarity, proximity, and closure help you select the most effective design for your speech. The design you choose, in turn, helps you determine and arrange your main points.

Adding Supporting Materials

Once you have framed and arranged your main points, you must support them with facts and figures, testimony, examples, or narratives to make them sturdy and reliable. As you develop your main points, you should also consider whether you need to divide them into subpoints. The subpoints contain information or ideas that listeners need before they can understand or accept the main point. For example, assume that you have framed a main point: "The answer to environmental waste on campus is a recycling program." To support this main point, you realize that you must also support two subpoints: "My recycling plan will work" and "My recycling plan is affordable."

You strengthen both main points and subpoints by grounding them in supporting materials. In the instance just mentioned, you could support your subpoint on workability by citing *examples* of other campuses that successfully used a similar plan. You might

even develop a before-and-after *narrative* to describe how one college dealt with its waste disposal problem. To convince listeners that your proposal is cost efficient, you might use *statistics* and *expert testimony*, being certain to cite the sources of your information and to introduce their credentials. Once you have developed these supporting materials, the main point should be acceptable to reasonable listeners.

In chapter 6 we provided some general guidelines for selecting supporting materials. Here we show how to work supporting materials into the structure of your speech. Main points that are developed with supporting materials help fortify a message against the doubts or disagreements of reasonable listeners. Supporting materials answer the practical questions such listeners often ask, either aloud or silently in their minds:

1. What is the basis of that idea? (You answer with facts or statistics)
2. How do you know? Who else says so? (You supply testimony)
3. How does it work? Where is it true? (You offer an example)
4. So what? Why should I care? (You develop a narrative that explains why)

Although the situation will vary from topic to topic, speaker to speaker, and audience to audience, it is possible to set up an ideal model for the support of any main point or important subpoint. This model includes the point plus the following supporting materials:

- . the most important relevant facts and statistics.
- . the most authoritative judgments made by sources the audience respects.
- . at least one interesting story or example that clarifies or brings the idea to life.

Figure 7.3 provides a model format for supporting a point. Let us look at how this format could work in a speech. Assume that you want to demonstrate a main point that suntans are not a sign of good health. Here is one way you could use supporting materials to develop this point:

Statement: Suntans are not as “good” for you as they look on you.

Transition: Let’s examine some of the evidence.

Statement: _____

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Transition into facts or statistics: _____

1. Factual information or statistics that support statement: _____

Transition into testimony _____:

2. Testimony that supports statement: _____

Transition into example or narrative: _____

3. Example or narrative that supports statement: _____

Transition into restatement: _____

Restatement of original assertion: _____

Facts or statistics: According to a 1995 report by the American Cancer Society, prolonged exposure without protection is responsible for about 90 percent of all skin cancers.

Transition: Moreover, exposure without protection also accelerates the aging process.

Expert testimony: According to Dr. John M. Knox, head of dermatology at the Baylor University College of Medicine, “If you do biopsies on the buttocks of people ages seventy-five and thirty-five, you won’t see any differences under the microscope. . . protected skin stays youthful much longer.”

Transition: Let’s look at an example of one person who suffered from overexposure.

Examples: Jane was a fair-skinned blond-haired girl who loved the sun as a child and teen-ager. She would sunburn often but didn’t think there would be any effects other than the short-term pain. Lying in the sun seemed so healthy and appealing, she didn’t dream it could harm her. Now at forty-five, she knows better. She couldn’t believe her ears when her doctor told her she had skin cancer. She felt that she took good care of herself. Now she cannot go out into the sun, even for a few minutes, without using a sunscreen and wearing a hat, a long-sleeved shirt, and long pants.

Transition: What does all this mean?

Restatement: Suntan may make you look healthy, but it is not healthy. Overexposure to the sun causes cancer and premature aging. Are you willing to take that risk just to look good for a brief time?

In this example three forms of supporting material- statistical information, expert testimony, and example - work together to establish the main point. Each contributes its special strength. If each of your main points is well supported, the structure of your speech should stand up even if questioned. or challenged by critical listeners.

We shall have a great deal more to say about building the body of your speech as we discuss the designs of speeches further in connection with the general functions of informing and persuading listeners in Chapters 12 and 13.

USING TRANSITIONS

The example of using supporting materials also illustrates the important work of transitions in a speech. Transitions show your listeners how your ideas connect with each other. They help your listeners focus on the meaning of what you have already discussed and prepare them for what is still to come. They serve as signposts that help listeners see the overall pattern of your message. Transitions also connect your main points and tie the body of a speech to its introduction and conclusion.

Some transitions are simple, short phrases such as “Another point that must be made is. . .” More often, however, transitions are worded as phrases that link ideas, such as

“Having looked at why people don’t pay compliments more often, let’s consider. . . .” This type of transition sums up what you have just said while directing your audience to your next point.

Certain stock words or phrases can be used to signal changes in a speech. For example, words and phrases like *until now* or *only last week* can be used to point out time changes. Transitions such as *in addition* can be used to show that you are expanding on what you have already said. The use of the word *similarly* indicates that a comparison will follow. Phrases such as *on the other hand* cue listeners to a contrast. Cause-and effect relationships can be suggested with words like *as a result* or *consequently*. Introductory phrases like *traveling north* can indicate spatial relationships. Phrases or words like *ill short, finally, or in conclusion* can signal that the speech is coming to its end. Figure 7.4 contains a list of some commonly used transitions.

One special type of transition is the internal summary. An internal summary reminds listeners of the points you have already covered before you move on to the next part of your message. Internal summaries are especially useful in cause-effect and problem-solution speeches, where they can span the gap between the two dimensions of the design. An internal summary signals listeners that you have finished your discussion of the causes or problem and you are now ready to describe the effects or solution. In addition, an internal summary condenses and repeats your ideas, which can help your listeners remember your message. If listeners have somehow missed the point, the transition helps put them back on track. Consider the following example:

So now we see what the problem is. We know the cost in human suffering. We know the terrible political consequences and the enormous economic burden. The question is, what are we going to do about it? Let me tell you about a solution that many experts agree may turn things around.

The speaker condensed the three subpoints concerning the human, political, and economic aspects of a problem into an internal summary that prepared the audience for the solution phase of the speech. Internal summaries should be brief and to the point so that they highlight the major features of your message.

The lack of planned transitions is often apparent when beginning speakers overuse words and vocalized pauses such as *well, you know, okay, or “er”* to replace transitions. Plan a variety of transitions to help your speech flow smoothly. If you find that you can’t develop effective transitions, you may need to rethink the structure of your message. Outline your thoughts to be sure that they move in a clear direction and an orderly sequence. We cover outlining more fully in Chapter 8.

Once you have identified and arranged your main points, decided how to develop them with supporting materials, and planned how to connect them with transitions, you can prepare your introduction and conclusion so that you have a balanced speech that begins and ends effectively. These parts of your speech are especially important because listeners generally are most affected by what they hear at the beginning and end of a message.¹² The introduction allows you to make a good first impression and to set the stage for how your audience will respond. The conclusion provides an opportunity for you to make a lasting impression.