

Preparing a talk

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Preliminary planning

1. Firstly, determine the exact purpose of the speech so that the objective is clear in your mind. If you have a hazy conception of the nature of your subject you cannot expect to leave your audience other than confused.
2. Think about your subject and get to know it thoroughly; read newspapers, books, pamphlets, etc. exhaustively and make jottings of any ideas that might be included in your talk. Collect apt quotations, topical stories and similes. Only when you have thought long and thoroughly about your subject and your audience should you attempt to start writing your talk.
6. It is important that you gain the attention of the audience as quickly as possible. This might be done by:
 - a) a dramatic statement
 - b) a pertinent or rhetorical question
 - c) the production of an exhibit, chart or diagram (which should be removed as soon as it has served its purpose).
 - d) reference to a local subject likely to interest the audience, or
 - e) reference to likely (possible financial) benefits to the audience from what you are going to tell them.

Arrangement of material

3. There are three simple divisions in almost every speech; the introduction; the thesis or discussion; and the conclusion or summary. The introduction clearly states the subject to be discussed; the thesis is a carefully prepared, logically arranged statement of the ideas the speaker wishes to convey; and the conclusion summarises in a few brief sentences the main ideas presented in the thesis.

Introduction

4. The purpose of the introduction, which should last no more than five to six minutes is:
 - a) to give the audience time to adjust itself to you
 - b) to gain their attention
 - c) to give them a reason for listening
 - d) to indicate what is to follow.
5. This is where you thank the person who invited you, refer to any possible local or topical connection with the subject and announce what you are going to do.
7. Tell the audience what you are going to talk about. This involves not only giving them the subject or title, but a statement of your main headings.

Thesis

8. During your preliminary planning you have collected a great many facts and jotted down notes and ideas. Sort these under three, or at the most, five main headings and arrange them in what you consider to be a logical sequence. You will probably find that each of your main points can be conveniently divided into two or three logical sub-sections. At this stage ask yourself again the purpose of your talk and how you can build on the interest of the audience to whom you are to speak. Remember how long you have been allocated to give your talk and drastically discard any material that cannot be reasonably dealt with in the time or is not strictly relevant. Include only as many facts as your audience is likely to be able to absorb.
9. Your talk should be a mixture of generalities, and specific examples. Introduce phrases that create mental pictures. Include stories, examples and illustrations that will help the audience to understand your general points.

Mention your personal experiences, but better still the experiences of the audience. Avoid technical terms that the audience will not understand and never tell a story unless it is strictly relevant to the subject of your speech.

10. **Remember that the value of a talk lies not in what you say, but in what the audience remembers.**

The conclusion

11. The purpose of the conclusion, which should last no longer than three or four minutes, is to sum up your main points and leave the audience with a final favourable impression.
12. Even in a short talk listeners may be a little hazy about your main point, so re-state your headings and show how they have been dealt with and end with the conclusion to which your whole speech should have led.
13. Prepare a good closing sentence. Just as your opening words should be firm and arresting, so should the final words. You might end with an appeal to action, a gradual build up to a climax, or a short apt quotation, but **remember that what is said last is remembered longest**

Rehearsing your talk

14. Now, carefully rehearse your speech, check the timing and make any minor adjustments consistent with your own particular style of delivery. Do not learn it by heart or it will not sound spontaneous and you will not be able to adapt it to suit the mood of your audience. It is, however, a good thing to learn the opening and closing sentences of a speech so as to ensure an arresting beginning and a firm conclusion.

Converting your talk into note form

15. The method you adopt will depend on your own individual requirements. Generally speaking, the less experienced the speaker, the more notes will be needed, but do not

make the mistake of taking your speech along in full or writing complete verbal statements. **Remember that the value of notes lies in ideas, not in words.**

16. Notes should be as terse and as clear as possible, preferably written on small cards (on one side only) that can be held easily and unobtrusively in the hands.
17. On the assumption that your speech will contain five sections - the introduction, three main points, and summary - five cards should suffice, with an extra allowance for quotations or statistics if these are unavoidable. Use block letters for your main headings. Underneath write your sub-headings clearly and well spread out in column form. Do not be afraid of underlining. The salient word, containing the kernel of an idea, should be written clearly so that it strikes the eye. To make sure you can keep going for the allotted time write in black the points you must make and write in red additional points that can be introduced if time permits.
18. So you reach the platform with a planned prepared speech; you know the subject but have not learned the words; you know what you are going to talk about rather than what you are going to say. Your audience can be argued with quietly and persuasively, or, it can be dominated and held. You can do either using the same basic material