How to Prepare a Persuasive Speech

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What is a Persuasive Speech?
- An EXPOSITION that identifies/explains a PROBLEM and offers a viable SOLUTION.
- The TOPIC must be serious in nature, though not necessarily earth-shattering. The speech must not be entirely comedic, though elements of humour used with tact for deliberate effect are acceptable.
- Establish a THESIS, the main idea of the speech, that there is a significant problem and that you are able to provide a successful solution.
- There are two common ways to set up a persuasive speech:
  - Lengthy analysis of the problem with a brief discussion of the solution
  - Brief discussion of the problem with a lengthy focus on the solution
- The lengthier portion of the speech should contain EVIDENCE from research.
- The solution needs to be PLAUSIBLE and contain a CALL TO ACTION from the audience.
- In order for the speech to be effective in persuading the audience to your VIEWPOINT, consider these three elements (woven together throughout the speech):
  - LOGOS – the logic and coherency of your arguments and reasons
  - ETHOS – the believability and credibility of your character
  - PATHOS – the emotional content used to motivate changes in thinking and create action

How should a Persuasive Speech be structured?
- Consider the three elements of any speech (the BEGINNING, the MIDDLE, and the END), which are not unlike formal paragraphs or essays:
  - INTRODUCTION – an effective start to your speech to establish content, tone, and what the audience will be expecting to come in your presentation
  - BODY – a full discussion of the problem and the solution, complete with all of the persuasion required for winning over your audience and moving them to action
  - CONCLUSION – a memorable summary of what the audience has learned and what they must do now, creating the lasting impression that you were successful
What are the elements of a good INTRODUCTION?

- This should be brief and have IMPACT. It is sometimes referred to as the HOOK, with the goal of achieving total audience ENGAGEMENT.
- It also helps you establish a strong FIRST IMPRESSION (Remember: ETHOS).
- Consider the variety of techniques used to start a speech, choosing the one that best helps your overall persuasiveness:
  - DIRECT or SURPRISING CLAIM – a quick statement or stat to immediately grab attention; establish why the audience needs to listen to you
  - ANECDOTE – a compelling narrative can create interest, excitement, or concern while establishing tone, trust, and thirst for more
  - HISTORY – a historical reference that can work to establish a broader context than just your own life’s experience. It allows for a more universal approach
  - QUESTION – asking the audience a rhetorical question is a great way to quickly get your audience thinking, and wondering what YOUR answer will eventually be
  - CONTRADICTION – the method of leading your audience into an area they might not typically expect as you reveal your topic
  - QUOTATION – starting off with a quote from a famous figure helps the audience relate to your approach, especially if the figure is expert, admired, or popular

- After your compelling start, be sure to make your audience aware of your thesis, followed by revealing a quick and simple outline of your speech:
  - ROADMAP – offer the outline of the speech to the audience by telling them what you now intend to do, including the offering of a solution
  - SIGNPOSTING – let your audience know the specific titles of each section or subsection of your speech in order to create anticipation
  - CALL TO ACTION – suggest to the audience that they will have a role to play in your solution

What are the elements of a good BODY?

- This will be the bulk of your speech. Whether your body is a full analysis of a problem with a brief solution or a brief discussion of a problem with a fully developed solution, try to create THREE CONTENTIONS for the larger portion.
- The contentions for the analysis of a problem are similar to the supporting statements used in a formal paragraph or the full paragraphs used in a formal essay. Try to find three pertinent things to talk about when analyzing the problem:
  - SECTIONS - break the problem down into components, categories, stages, etc.
  - ACTORS - explain the groups of people who are creating the problem, or the groups who are dealing with problem
  - HISTORY - develop the story of the problem by examining its historical progression
  - EXAMPLES - develop a broad problem by fully discussing three separate, but related, illustrations, incidents, or situations
  - W5 (aka: who, what, when, where, why) – provide answers to the best three of these questions in order to explain the problem

Continued...
The contentions for the *development of a full solution* should wholly account for:

- **SPLEEM** – consider at least the top three categories that your solution would best address:
  - Social – ramifications for society
  - Political – obligations of the levels of governments
  - Legal – creating or changing existing laws
  - Economic – costs and money sources
  - Environmental – effect on our planet’s ecology
  - Moral – establishment of doing the right thing

- **STEPS** – talk about what steps need to be taken to fully and practically solve or eradicate the problem

- **ACTORS** – identify who needs to be involved in order for the problem to be taken care of

- **CALL TO ACTION** – tell the audience what they must do in order for your solution to be successful *(THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT!)*

Make sure that your contentions are fully explained and supported by EVIDENCE from research; use quotes, citations, statistics, data, etc – and be sure to reveal your (credible) sources for the greatest impact.

The brief discussions and impacts of accompanying problems and solutions need to be considered as well, though they will not be providing as much information; do not forget the call to action in even a brief solution.

**What are the elements of a good CONCLUSION?**

- A good, brief conclusion does two things:
  - Summarizes the entire speech, including both the problem and the solution
  - Provides closure to the entire speech

- Do not add any new information in the conclusion. If more needs to be said about your topic, incorporate it into the body.

- It is a good idea to refer back to your introduction in some way to remind the audience how far you have brought them and create an impactful ending.

- Confidently consider your problem as now solved, thanks to you!

- The conclusion should have memorable final statement to create impact and a positive, lasting impression.

- When the speech is over, the audience should feel motivated to support your solution.
Suggested Persuasive Speech Outlines:

DEVELOPED PROBLEM:

I. Introduction
   A. Hook
   B. Thesis
   C. Roadmap and Signposting

II. Body
   A. First Contention
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Support with evidence
      iii. Connect to Thesis
   B. Second Contention
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Support with evidence
      iii. Connect to Thesis
   C. Third Contention
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Support with evidence
      iii. Connect to Thesis
   D. The Solution
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Call to Action

III. Conclusion
   A. Summary
   B. Refer back to Introduction
   C. Reminder of Call to Action
   D. Memorable final statement

DEVELOPED SOLUTION:

I. Introduction
   A. Hook
   B. Thesis
   C. Roadmap and Signposting

II. Body
   A. The Problem
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Identify the Solution
   B. First Contention
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Support with evidence
      iii. Connect to Thesis
   C. Second Contention
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Support with evidence
      iii. Connect to Thesis
   D. Third Contention
      i. Develop explanation
      ii. Support with evidence
      iii. Connect to Thesis

III. Conclusion
   A. Summary
   B. Refer back to Introduction
   C. Reminder of Call to Action
   D. Memorable final statement