

Components of a Speech: Main Points, Introduction, Conclusion, and Transitions

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the different aspects that comprise an effective speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Components of a Speech
 - a. Main Points
 - b. Introduction
 - c. Conclusion
 - d. Transitions

1. Components of a Speech

A speech is more than simply an essay that is read aloud. Listening to a speaker is inherently different from reading a page, and public speakers should keep that difference in mind as they prepare their work.

A traditional academic essay consists of an introduction, a body with alternating concrete details and commentary, and a conclusion. The role of the introduction and conclusion are similar in speeches and essays, but the "body" is a different matter.

Break free of the essay mindset, and try to think of a speech as the sum of four components:

- The main points
- Introduction
- Conclusion
- Transitions

What's the difference? Read on to see what is special about the components of a speech.

1a. Main Points

Thinking of "main points" rather than a "body" can help speakers remember to keep it simple.

A restless audience may not have patience for the predictable, orderly progression of concrete details and commentary that is typical in the body of an academic essay. Above all, communicate a few important points!

1b. Introduction

The introduction should get the audience's attention, describe the topic, state the thesis or purpose, and give an overview of the speech and its main points.

Open with a detailed map of your speech--giving good directions in the beginning will save your audience from getting lost along the way.

1c. Conclusion

The conclusion should summarize main points and state a strong thesis. Remember that many people struggle with auditory learning, and consequently have trouble focusing on spoken words.

Your listeners may not put everything together on their own, so you should make it easier for them by summarizing your argument and reviewing central ideas in the conclusion.

1d. Transitions

A **transition** is a change or shift from one topic to another. It may be surprising to see that transitions are one of the four key components of a speech. Academic writers tend to think of transitions as important stylistic elements rather than essential building blocks.

However, transitions are crucial for public speakers, since speakers need to compensate for the loss of visual formatting. On a written page, formatting provides a helpful road map: the reader sees topic headings, paragraph breaks, and other visual cues that signal transitions naturally.

Speakers can replicate these cues and signal transitions using visual aids and body language, but it will take more conscious effort than simply hitting "enter" to create a paragraph break. Speakers can emphasize transition points with visual aids, body language, vocal delivery, and transitional words and phrases.

Visual aids such as slides and handouts are a great way to guide the audience through your transitions. A slide or handout with topic headings printed on it is a good road map for a speech, preparing the audience for any twists and turns that may come up.

These transitional words and phrases signal a change, giving the audience a "heads up" about an upcoming transition:

Connecting:

- additionally
- also
- again
- moreover
- furthermore
- coupled with
- for example
- for instance
- likewise
- similarly
- specifically

- indeed
- in fact

Contrasting:

- however
- although
- but
- nevertheless
- on one hand
- on the other hand
- besides
- yet
- on the contrary
- conversely
- comparatively

Concluding:

- overall
- above all
- therefore
- thus
- accordingly
- consequently
- in conclusion
- finally
- in essence
- in other words
- in short



TERM TO KNOW

Transition

The process of change from one form, state, style, or place to another.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the **components of a speech** include the **main points**, the **introduction**, the **conclusion**, and **transitions**. Public speakers can emphasize transition points with visual aids, body language, vocal delivery, and transitional words and phrases.

Source: Boundless. "Components of a Speech: Main Points, Introduction, Conclusion, and Transitions."



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