

Defining a Persuasive Speech

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the purpose and framework of a persuasive speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Definition
2. The Sales Pitch
3. Components of a Persuasive Speech
4. How to Succeed

1. Definition

A **persuasive** speech is a specific type of speech in which the speaker has a goal of convincing the audience to accept his or her point of view.

The speech is arranged in such a way as to hopefully cause the audience to accept all or part of the expressed view. Though the overarching goal of a persuasive speech is to convince the audience to accept a perspective, not all audiences can be convinced by a single speech and not all perspectives can persuade the audience.

The success of a persuasive speech is often measured by the audience's willingness to consider the speaker's argument.



TERM TO KNOW

Persuasion

The process aimed at changing a person's (or a group's) attitude or behavior.

2. The Sales Pitch

An example of a persuasive speech is a sales pitch. During a sales pitch, the speaker is trying to convince the audience to buy his or her product or service. If the salesperson is successful, the audience (the person being sold to) will choose to purchase the product or service.

However, salespeople understand that just because someone does not make a purchase after the first sales

pitch does not mean the pitch failed.

Persuasion is often a process. People may need multiple persuasive pitches and a lot of outside information before they are ready to accept a new view.

3. Components of a Persuasive Speech

While **ethos** is an essential part of a persuasive speech, **pathos** and **logos** are usually combined to form the best possible argument.

While a speaker can attempt to establish ethos, or credibility, with an audience, it is ultimately assigned to them based on the audience's perception. If the audience does not perceive the speaker as a credible source on the topic about which they are speaking, they will ultimately have a hard time considering the speaker's argument.

The logos in a speech, or logical appeals, are arguments that present a set of information and show why a conclusion must rationally be true. For example, arguments heard in court are logical arguments.

Pathos, emotional appeals, are appeals that seek to make the audience feel a certain way so that they will accept a conclusion. Negative political ads, for example, often incorporate emotional appeals by juxtaposing an opponent with a negative emotion such as fear.



TERMS TO KNOW

Ethos

Credibility of the speaker, assigned to them by the audience.

Logos

Logical appeal to the audience; does the speaker's argument make sense?

Pathos

Emotional appeal to the audience.

4. How to Succeed

Using an attention grabbing device is a powerful way to begin a persuasive speech. If you can make your audience laugh, think about a personal experience, or tell an anecdote that produces emotion, they are more likely to listen to the content of your argument. Additionally, keeping a speech within 6-8 minutes makes the audience less likely to let their mind wander away from what you are saying.

The effectiveness of a persuasive speech also depends on factors beyond the words of the speech. The willingness of the audience to accept a new view, the body language of the speaker, and the environment in which the speech is given all can affect the success of a persuasive speech.

A successful speaker will do their best to establish strong ethos with their audience, and combine pathos and logos to form the best possible argument. **Audience analysis** is an important factor when giving a persuasive speech.

➦ **EXAMPLE** If a speaker is trying to convince the audience not to tell their children about Santa Claus, using arguments that relate and resonate with them, such as encouraging them to remember how they felt when they discovered he wasn't real, will be more successful than if the speaker shared a negative personal experience of their own.



TERM TO KNOW

Audience Analysis

The speaker's understanding of the audience's knowledge, personal experience, and proximity to a topic.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that persuasive speeches can come in many forms, such as **sales pitches**, debates, and legal proceedings. The **components of a persuasive speech** typically involve three modes of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is the most important appeal in a persuasive speech. Factors such as body language, the willingness of the audience, and the environment in which the speech is given, all affect the **success of a persuasive speech**. Audience analysis is important in a persuasive speech, as the audience will be convinced for their own reasons, not for the speaker's reasons.

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TERMS TO KNOW

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