

Organizing and Outlining the Speech

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to organize your speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Organizing and Outlining Your Speech
2. Establish a Timeline
3. Your Thesis as the Sum of Its Parts
4. The Broad and the Specific
5. A Sample Outline

1. Organizing and Outlining Your Speech

Now that you have decided on your topic, analyzed your audience, arrived at your thesis, and determined how you will support your claims, it is time to organize your notes and research into one coherent speech.

You did keep all of your notes centrally collected and easily accessible, right? If you put all of your research notes and thoughts onto notecards, it is particularly helpful to lay them out in front of you and begin to organize your points and sub-points in ways that make the most logical sense.

What are some ways to establish logical order?

2. Establish a Timeline

Depending on your subject and the point you are attempting to make, it might make sense to order your research and points in **chronological order**.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** If you are giving a speech on the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, it makes sense to start with its rise, and end with its fall.

Outlining your speech as a series of chronological events or points allows your audience to follow along a linear timeline for easy understanding of your subject matter.



TERM TO KNOW

Chronological

In order of time from the earliest to the latest.

3. Your Thesis as the Sum of Its Parts

Think of your **thesis** like a machine. Each claim is another cog, each example or supporting evidence another lever in that machine, all working together to arrive at the same persuasive conclusion.

Sometimes it is helpful to break up your thesis into each of these smaller parts, to make the information more easily digestible for your audience.



TERM TO KNOW

Thesis

A concise summary of the argument or main points, usually one to three sentences long.

4. The Broad and the Specific

Building on the idea of your thesis as machine, you may present your overall, broad idea, then break it down into smaller, logical steps to reach that big idea.

Conversely, you may start with smaller ideas and expand into the bigger, broader idea. When constructing your arguments from smaller ideas, you are more likely to drive your point home with a broad, sweeping finish.

On the other hand, you can dilute the complexity of a broad idea by breaking it down into smaller, logical pieces of information.

5. A Sample Outline

Here is a sample outline about issues of feminism in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

I. Introduction and Thesis: Brief description of issues that arise when reading "Hamlet"

II. Issues of feminism uncovered through reading "Hamlet"

a. What other scholars have discovered about feminism in "Hamlet"

b. Which of these discoveries was most evident

c. Ideas of feminism I uncovered on my own

III. How uncovering ideas of feminism in "Hamlet" has led me to better understand what Shakespeare thought of the role women played in society



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how to **organize and outline your speech**. To organize your thoughts, consider giving each point or supporting evidence its own note card. Begin to arrange them according to importance and your main points will begin to emerge. Outlines typically begin with your thesis and end with any concluding thoughts. Additionally, it is helpful to think of **your thesis as the sum of its parts**. Depending on your topic or thesis, arranging your points chronologically is an effective way to **establish a timeline** of your argument. If giving an informational speech, you might describe your subject as parts of an object, outlining each part or section. You can move from **broad points to specific points**, or vice versa, depending on the effect you are trying to achieve and the argument you are trying to make. Using the **sample outline** as a guide, you can create your own outline to help map out your speech.

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