

# Structuring Your Presentation

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the different methods you can use to organize your speech in order to communicate all of your information and ideas in a logical sequence. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

## 1. Organizing Principles for Speeches

There are many different ways to organize a speech, and none is better or more correct than the others. The choice of an organizing principle, or a core assumption around which everything else is arranged, depends on the subject matter, the rhetorical situation, and many other factors, including your preference as a speaker. Your strong **productivity skill** will help you make the best decision.

The table below presents several different organizing principles to consider, explains how each principle works, and provides an applied example based on a sample speech about the First Transcontinental Railroad.

As you read each organizational structure, consider how the main points and subheadings might change or be adapted to meet each pattern.

Organizing Principle	Explanation	Applied Example
Time (Chronological)	Structuring your speech by time shows a series of events or steps in a process, which typically has a beginning, middle, and end.	"Before the First Transcontinental Railroad, the events that led to its construction, and its impact on early America..."
Comparison	Structuring your speech by comparison focuses on the similarities and/or differences between points or concepts.	A comparison of pre- and post-First Transcontinental Railroad North America, showing how health and life expectancy remained the same.
Contrast	Structure your speech by using contrasting points highlights the differences between items and concepts.	A contrast of pre- and post-First Transcontinental Railroad North America, by shipping times, time it took to communicate via letter, or how long it took to move out west.
Cause and Effect	Structuring your speech by cause and effect establishes a relationship between two events or situations, making the connection clear.	"The movement of people and goods out west grew considerably from 1750 to 1850. With the availability of a new and faster way to go west, people generally supported its construction."

Problem and Solution	Structuring your speech by problem and solution means you state the problem and detail how it was solved. This approach is effective for persuasive speeches.	"Manufacturers were producing better goods for less money at the start of the Industrial Revolution, but they lack a fast, effective method of getting their goods to growing markets. The First Transcontinental Railroad gave them speed, economy, and access to new markets."
Classification (Categorical)	Structuring your speech by classification establishes categories.	"At the time the nation considered the First Transcontinental Railroad, there were three main types of transportation: by water, by horse, and by foot."
Biographical	Structuring your speech by biography means examining specific people as they relate to the central topic.	1804: Lewis and Clark travel 4,000 miles in over two years across America  1862: President Lincoln signs the Pacific Railroad Act  1876: The Transcontinental Express from New York arrives in San Francisco with a record-breaking time of 83 hours and 39 minutes  2009: President Obama can cross America by plane in less than 5 hours
Space (Spatial)	Structuring your speech by space involves the parts of something and how they fit to form the whole.	"A train uses a heat source to heat water, create steam, and turn a turbine, which moves a lever that causes a wheel to move on a track."
Ascending and Descending	Structuring your speech by ascending or descending order involves focusing on quantity and quality. One good story (quality) leads to the larger picture, or the reverse.	A day in the life of a traveler in 1800; incremental developments in transportation to the present, expressed through statistics, graphs, maps and charts.
Psychological	The speaker calls attention to a need, then focuses on the satisfaction of the need, visualization of the solution, and ends with a proposed or historical action. This is useful for a persuasive speech.	"When families in the year 1800 went out West, they rarely returned to see family and friends. The country as a whole was an extension of this distended family, separated by time and distance. The railroad brought families and the country together."
Elimination	Structuring your speech using the process of elimination involves outlining all the possibilities.	"The First Transcontinental Railroad helped pave the way for the destruction of the Native American way of life in 1870. After examining treaties, relocation and reservations, loss of the buffalo, disease and war, the railroad can be accurately considered the catalyst for the end of an era."

While there are numerous other ways in which a speech can be organized, these are the formats you are most likely to see in a professional context.

  **Productivity: Why Employers Care**

Employers want employees who have the skills needed to make the most appropriate choices when it comes to organizing a speech or other oral presentation based on needs, audience, and purpose.

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## 2. Building a Sample Speech

Let's continue using the example informative speech about the history of the First Transcontinental Railroad. At first, you may have looked at just two sides to the issue: railroaders versus local merchants. Railroad tycoons wanted to bring the country together - moving people, goods, and services in a more efficient way - and make money. Local merchants wanted to keep out competition and retain control of their individual markets.

When you take another look at this issue, you see that several other perspectives have bearing on it. Shipping was done primarily by boat prior to the railroad, so shippers would not want the competition. Recent Chinese immigrants were in need of work. Native Americans did not want to lose their culture or way of life, and a railroad that crossed the country would cut right through the buffalo's migration patterns. We now have five perspectives to the central issue, which makes the topic all the more interesting.

The general purpose is to inform the audience on the First Transcontinental Railroad and its impact on a young but developing United States; the thesis statement focuses on shipping, communication, and cultures across America:

- Topic: First Transcontinental Railroad
- General purpose statement: I want the audience to be more informed about the impact of the First Transcontinental Railroad.
- Thesis statement: The First Transcontinental Railroad changed shipping, communication, and cultures across America.

With the information we have so far, we can now list three main points:

1. Change in shipping
2. Change in communication
3. Change in cultures

Think of each one of these main points as a separate but shorter speech. The point is to develop each of these main points like you have developed your overall speech. What do you want to focus on? The major types of shipping at the time of the First Transcontinental Railroad? One aspect you may want to consider is how familiar your audience is with this time in history.

If your audience is not very familiar, a little background and context can help make your speech more meaningful and enhance its relevance to your thesis statement. By taking time to consider what you want to accomplish with each point, you will help yourself begin to address how you need to approach each point.

Once you have thought about what you want to focus on for each point, list each subheading below the main points:

1. Change in shipping
  - a. Navigating the waterways via barges and boats
  - b. Overland stagecoaches
  - c. Timetables for modes of travel
2. Change in communication
  - a. Letters in the days of the Pony Express

- b. How the Morse code telegraph system followed railroad lines
  - c. Bringing people together across distances
3. Change in cultures
- a. Pre-railroad immigration
  - b. Impact on Native Americans
  - c. Territories become States

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## 3. Five-Finger Model of Public Speaking

By now you've identified your key points and are ready to start planning your speech in more detail.

While your organizational structure will vary from speech to speech, there are nonetheless five main parts of any speech:

1. Attention statement
2. Introduction
3. Body
4. Conclusion
5. Residual message

These are basic to the rhetorical process and you will see time and time again, regardless of audience or purpose, these same elements in some form utilized to communicate in public. They will serve to guide you, and possibly even save you should you get a last minute request to do a speech or presentation.



### THINK ABOUT IT

Place your hand on a table or desk, and you'll more than likely see a thumb and four fingers. Associate your hand with these five elements. Each digit is independently quite weak, but together they make a powerful fist. Your thumb is quite versatile and your most important digit. It's a lot like your attention statement. If you don't gain the audience's attention, the rest of the speech will be ineffective. Each successive digit can represent the remaining four parts of any speech.

One day you may be asked to speak with little or no time for preparation. By focusing on this organizational model, and looking down at your hand, you can quickly and accurately prepare your speech. With the luxury of time for preparation, each step can be even further developed.

The table below summarizes this model and the characteristics of each of its components.

Component	Description
Attention Statement	The attention statement is the way you focus the audience's attention on you and your speech.
Introduction	Your introduction introduces you and your topic, and should establish a relationship with your audience and state your topic clearly.
Body	In the body, or main content area of your speech, you will naturally turn to one of the organizational patterns.
Conclusion	Your conclusion should provide the audience with a sense of closure by summarizing the main points and relating the points to the overall topic.

Residual Message	The residual message is an idea or thought that stays with your audience well after the speech.
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Remember the five-finger model of public speaking, and you will likely stand out as a more effective speaker.

## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are numerous ways to structure your message according to different **organizing principles for a speech**. Any approach can be used, but some may be more suitable than others depending on your general and specific purpose.

When **building a sample speech**, begin by listing your topic, general purpose statement, and thesis statement, and then determine your main points and subpoints according to whatever organizing principle you have selected. Next, you should remember the **five-finger model of public speaking** and develop an attention statement, introduction, body, conclusion, and residual message. Following this process will help you to quickly and accurately prepare your speech.

Best of luck in your learning!

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