



bedford/st.martin's  
Macmillan Learning

## Speech Outlining Guide



## CONTENTS

Speech Topic	p. 02
Speech Title	p. 02
Speech Type	p. 02
Audience Analysis	p. 03
Specific Purpose	p. 05
Thesis Statement	p. 05
Organizational Patterns	p. 06
Causal / Cause-Effect	p. 07
Chronological / Temporal	p. 07
Comparative Advantage	p. 08
Monroe's Motivated Sequence	p. 09
Narrative	p. 10
Problem-Solution	p. 11
Problem-Cause-Solution	p. 11
Refutation	p. 12
Spatial	p. 13
Topical / Categorical	p. 14
Support	p. 14
Transitions	p. 16
Introduction	p. 17
Conclusion	p. 19



## Speech Topic

**Advice:** Pick something that you and your audience will be interested in, and avoid overused topics! Do you feel passionate enough to research, write, and deliver an entire speech about it? Does the topic concern your audience?

## Speech Title

**Advice:** Make it catchy and informative, but also appropriate to your audience. Keep a running list and choose the one you like best.

## Speech Type

**Persuasive** speeches seek to influence the attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions of an audience.

**Informative** speeches provide the audience with new information, insights, or ways of thinking about a topic.

**Special Occasion** speeches are prepared for a specific occasion and purpose dictated by that occasion. Special occasion speeches can be informative or persuasive or a mix of both. However, neither of these functions is the main goal; the underlying function of a special occasion speech is explained in the types listed below.

### Types of Special Occasion Speeches:

#### Entertainment

Many kinds of special occasions call for a speech that entertains. Banquets, awards dinners, and roasts, for example, frequently feature speakers whose main purpose is to entertain those in attendance. In such cases, listeners expect a lighthearted speech that amuses them. Depending on the event, they may also expect the speaker to offer a certain degree of insight into the topic at hand.

#### Celebration

Often a special occasion speech will celebrate a person, a place, or an event. Weddings, anniversaries, retirement parties, and awards banquets all call for speeches that recognize the person(s) or event being celebrated. The audience expects the speaker to praise the subject of the celebration and to cast him or her in a positive light.



The listeners also expect a certain degree of ceremony in accordance with the norms of the occasion.

### **Commemoration**

Certain special occasion speeches, called *commemorative speeches*, focus on remembrance and tribute. Commemorative speeches mark important anniversaries, such as the fiftieth anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination or the anniversary of the first moon landing. Speakers deliver commemorative speeches about events or people of note at memorials dedicated to them or at gatherings otherwise held in their honor.

### **Inspiration**

Inaugural addresses, keynote speeches at conventions, and commencement speeches all have inspiration as their main function. With their examples of accomplishments, achievement, and heroism, many commemorative speeches also inspire audiences as well as pay homage to the person or event being commemorated.

### **Social Agenda–Setting**

Yet another function of the special occasion speech is social agenda–setting—establishing or reinforcing the goals and values of the group sponsoring the event. Occasions that call for agenda-setting speeches include gatherings of issues or cause-oriented organizations, fundraisers, campaign banquets, conferences, and conventions. Speakers asked to deliver keynote addresses at conferences or conventions are charged with establishing the theme of the meeting and with offering a plan of action related to that theme. Similarly, politically oriented organizations also routinely hold meetings at which invited speakers perform the function of agenda-setting.

## **Audience Analysis**

**Question 1:** What do your listeners know about the topic?

**Advice:** If the topic is relatively new to your audience, tell them why it should interest them and make it relevant by relating it to issues, events, people, or activities about which they already have positive attitudes. Stick to the basics. Avoid jargon and define unclear terms.

**Question 2:** How does your audience feel about the topic? What can you do to create or reinforce a positive attitude?

**Advice:**

- If your audience has negative attitudes toward your topic, don't directly challenge them. Focus on establishing common ground and building your own credibility.
- If your audience has positive attitudes toward your topic, tell a vivid story that will reinforce their attitudes.
- Create a common bond with your audience by focusing on areas of agreement.

**Question 3:** Why will your audience be present for your speech? What are they expecting to hear?

**Advice:** If your audience is there by choice, they are probably interested in what you have to say. If they are required to attend your speech, you might have to work harder to get and keep their attention. Be aware of the length of your speech, especially if other speakers precede and follow you.

**Question 4:** Describe the audience's demographics. How might those factors influence your presentation?

**Advice:** Consider some or all of the following factors and try to identify a target audience (i.e., individuals who would be most receptive to your speech):

- *Age* — Grouping people by age can give you insight into their concerns, drives, and motivations. For example, adolescents (ages 12–20) might be on a quest for identity, whereas young adults (ages 20–40) are often establishing careers and families. Keep listeners' generation(s) in mind and make sure they will be familiar with historic or pop culture references.
- *Ethnic or cultural background* — Infuse your speech with trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, and fairness. Identify the values of your listeners to help you communicate with sensitivity and appeal to their interests and needs.
- *Socioeconomic status* — Income affects how people are housed, clothed, and fed, and what they can afford. The nature of their work can shape



what interests them. Likewise, people's level of education often influences how rigid they are in their beliefs.

- *Religion* — Being aware of your audience's religious orientation can be especially helpful when your speech topic is controversial.
- *Political affiliation* — Many people are either very serious or very touchy about their political views. Know where your listeners stand.
- *Gender* — Avoid stereotyping and sexist language, but be aware of commonly held concerns. For example, single women planning a trip are likely to be concerned with issues of safety.

**Question 5:** What will your speech setting be?

**Advice:** Consider some or all of the following factors:

- *Size of audience and physical setting* — An auditorium has a different feel from a classroom. Plan how to position yourself and adjust your voice, sometimes with the aid of acoustical equipment.
- *Time and length of speech* — Find out how long you are expected to speak. Start on time and finish a bit early.
- *Rhetorical situation* — External factors may affect your audience's receptivity. Address these in your speech. Consider where you fall within a group of speakers, whether you precede or follow someone more well-known or dynamic than you, or whether something noteworthy has just occurred in your audience's community.

## Specific Purpose

**Advice:** Write a specific purpose that expresses in action form what you hope to achieve with your speech.

Beginning with the infinitive form of a verb, state precisely what it is about your topic that you want the audience to learn, do, reconsider, or agree with.

## Thesis Statement

**Advice:** Write a single declarative sentence expressing the theme or central idea of your speech.



Students often confuse the specific purpose and the thesis statement. This is probably because the thesis statement is closely related to the specific purpose. While the specific purpose describes in action form what you want to achieve with the speech, the thesis statement concisely identifies what the speech is about.

*Examples:*

*Specific Purpose:* To persuade the audience to raise money on behalf of the Sierra Club.

*Thesis:* A donation to the Sierra Club is an investment in nature.

*Specific Purpose:* To enable audience members to invest their money properly.

*Thesis:* There are six steps to investing in the stock market.

### **How to construct a good thesis statement:**

In a single sentence, state the main thing you want your audience to know about your topic.

Your thesis should cause a listener to ask “Why?” or “How?” The reasons why or how your thesis is true will be the main points of your speech.

Use your thesis to stay focused. When researching supporting materials, ask yourself to what extent their content addresses your thesis. Also, when preparing your speech, state your thesis in the introduction and repeat it periodically.

Include the audience in your thesis statement. Use phrases such as “Few of us know,” “Contrary to popular belief,” “As most of you know,” or “As informed members of the community.” Doing so will attract listeners’ attention and help them see the topic’s relevance.

## **Organizational Patterns**

**Advice:** Before entering your main ideas, select the type of organizational pattern that best matches your topic and purpose.

An organizational pattern is a concrete way to structure your speech. Choose the pattern that best fits your topic and that your audience can easily follow.



**Causal/Cause-Effect** arranges speech points to demonstrate that a particular set of circumstances (causes) leads to a specific result (effects) or, conversely, that various results (effects) follow from a particular set of circumstances (causes)

Sometimes a topic can be discussed in terms of multiple causes for a single effect or a single cause of multiple effects.

*Example:*

TOPIC: College drop-outs.

PURPOSE: To explain why some college students drop out.

THESIS: Several factors contribute to some students' dropping out of college.

- I. Lack of funds (Cause 1)
- II. Unsatisfactory social life (Cause 2)
- III. Unsatisfactory academic performance (Cause 3)
- IV. All of the above contribute to the decision to drop out. (Effect)

**Chronological/Temporal** describes a series of developments in time or a set of actions occurring sequentially.

This organizational pattern follows the natural sequential order of main points. Useful for topics that describe a series of events in time or explain the steps in a process.

*Example:*

TOPIC: The history of the Internet.

PURPOSE: To track the evolution of the present-day Internet.

THESIS: The Internet evolved from a small network designed for academic scientists into a vast system of networks used by billions of people around the globe.

- I. The Internet was first conceived in 1962 as the ARPANET to promote the sharing of research among scientists in the United States.





- II. In the 1980s a team created TCP/IP, a language that could link networks, and the Internet as we know it was born.
- III. In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web.
- IV. At the end of the Cold War, the ARPANET was decommissioned and the World Wide Web made up the bulk of Internet traffic.
- V. In 2014, the Internet celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, with 3 billion people connected worldwide.

**Comparative Advantage** shows how your viewpoint or proposal is superior to one or more alternative viewpoints or proposals. This is most effective when your audience is already aware of the issue or problem and agrees that a need for a solution (or an alternative view) exists. Because listeners are alert to the issue, you don't have to spend time establishing its existence. Instead, you can proceed directly to favorably comparing your position with the alternatives.

In order to maintain your credibility, make sure to identify alternatives that your audience is familiar with and ones supported by opposing interests. If you omit familiar alternatives, your listeners will wonder if you are fully informed on the topic and become skeptical of your comparative alternative as well as your credibility.

The final step in a comparative advantage speech is to drive home the unique advantages of your option relative to competing options with brief but compelling evidence

*Example:*

TOPIC: Controlling the deer population.

PURPOSE: To convince my audience that controlling the deer population through a combination of hunting and contraception is superior to a strategy of fencing, hunting, or contraception alone.

THESIS: Rather than hunting, fencing, or contraception alone, the best way to reduce the deer population is by a dual strategy of hunting and contraception.

- I. **(Advantage of my solution over alternative #1.)** A combination strategy is superior to hunting alone because many areas are too



densely populated by humans to prevent hunting; in such cases contraceptive darts and vaccines can address the problem.

- II. **(Advantage over alternative #2.)** A combination strategy is superior to relying solely on fencing because fencing is far too expensive for widespread use.
- III. **(Advantage over alternative #3.)** A dual strategy is superior to relying only on contraception because only a limited number of deer are candidates for contraceptive darts and vaccines.

**Monroe's Motivated Sequence** is a five-step process that begins with arousing listeners' attention and ends with calling for action.

Step 1: *Attention* — address listeners' core concerns, making the speech highly relevant to them.

Step 2: *Need* — show listeners that they have an important need that must be satisfied or a problem that must be solved.

Step 3: *Satisfaction* — introduce your proposed solution.

Step 4: *Visualization* — provide listeners with a vision of anticipated outcomes associated with the solution.

Step 5: *Action* — make a direct request of listeners that involves changing or strengthening their present way of thinking or acting.

*Example:*

TOPIC: The need for organ donors.

PURPOSE: To convince my audience to consider becoming organ donors.

THESIS: Donating an organ is a simple step you can take that will literally give life to others—to your husband or wife, mother or father, son or daughter—or to a beautiful child whom you've never met.

- I. *(Get audience's attention.)* Many of us are willing, but if we don't take the proper steps, our organs go unused.



- II. (*Demonstrate need.*) According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are approximately 80,000 people on the waiting list for an organ transplant.
- III. (*Propose a solution.*) There are two steps to become an organ donor: Fill out a donor card or add a note to your driver's license and notify your family of your decision.
- IV. (*Show audience how solution will benefit them.*) Tell the story of how Nicholas Green's organs helped seven people and increased organ donations in Italy.
- V. (*Call for action.*) Say yes to organ donation on your donor card and/or driver's license and discuss your decision with your family.

**Narrative** consists of a story or a series of short stories replete with characters, settings, plot, and vivid imagery. Using a dramatic situation can help illustrate your point, but you may need to incorporate elements of other organizational patterns, such as the chronological or causal patterns, in order to give your speech shape.

*Example:*

TOPIC: How I became a writer.

PURPOSE: To tell my audience the story of how I achieved my goal.

THESIS: Becoming a writer seemed like an impossible dream, but with talent, perseverance, and a positive attitude, I made that dream come true. I have always written, even when I was very young.

- I. A college professor pushed me to explore more sophisticated characters and themes.
- II. When I began sending out stories, I received rejection after rejection.
- III. My first novel, too, was rejected.
- IV. Even though I was disappointed, I didn't stop writing.
- V. Eventually, after years of trying, I was signed on by a major publishing house and could afford to write full time.



**Problem-Solution** organizes speech points to demonstrate the nature and significance of a problem and then provide justification for a proposed solution:

- I. Problem (define what it is)
- II. Solution (offer a way to overcome the problem)

**Problem-Cause-Solution** Many problem-solution speeches require more than two points to adequately explain the problem and to substantiate the recommended solution.

Arrange speech points in order to demonstrate problem, reasons for problem, and solution to problem:

- I. The nature of the problem (define what it is)
- II. Reasons for the problem (explain why it's a problem, for whom, etc.)
- III. Unsatisfactory solutions (discuss those that have not worked)  
(*optional step*)
- IV. Proposed solution (explain why it's expected to work)

*Example:*

TOPIC: The NBA draft's effect on young athletes.

PURPOSE: To persuade my audience that the NBA draft should be changed so that young athletes are no longer tempted to throw away their chances to get an education.

THESIS: The NBA draft should be changed so that athletes like you aren't tempted to throw away an opportunity to get an education.

- I. (*Need/problem*) The NBA draft should be revamped so that college athletes are not tempted to drop out of school.
- II. (*Reasons for the problem*) The NBA's present policies lure young athletes to pursue unrealistic goals of superstardom while weakening the quality of the game with immature players.



- III. (*Solution to the problem*) The NBA draft needs to adopt a minimum age of 20.
- IV. (*Evidence of the solution's feasibility*) National leagues in countries X and Y have done this successfully.

**Refutation** addresses each main point and then refutes (disproves) an opposing claim to your position.

The aim here is to bolster your own position by disproving the opposing claim. This pattern can effectively address competing arguments. Refutation is a favorite tool of political candidates, who use it to strengthen their position on an issue and debunk the position taken by the opposing candidate.

If done well, refutation may influence audience members who either disagree with you or are conflicted about where they stand.

Note that it is important to refute *strong* rather than *weak* objections to the claim, since refuting weak objections won't sway the audience. Further, it is probably best to use this pattern when you are confident that the opposing argument is weak and vulnerable to attack.

Main points arranged in a refutation pattern follow a format similar to this:

*MAIN POINT I:* State the opposing position.

*MAIN POINT II:* Describe the implications or ramifications of the opposing claim.

*MAIN POINT III:* Offer arguments and evidence for your position.

*MAIN POINT IV:* Contrast your position with the opposing claim to drive home the superiority of your position.

*Example:*

TOPIC: Increased energy conservation vs. drilling for oil in Alaska.



**PURPOSE:** To convince my audience that, rather than drilling for oil in the ANWAR, we should maintain the refuge's protected status and focus instead on conserving energy.

**THESIS:** Rather than drilling for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWAR), we should focus on energy conservation measures as a way of lessening our dependence on foreign oil.

- I. *(Describe opposing claims.)* Proponents claim that drilling in the Arctic refuge is the only way to increase our energy independence, that it will have little negative impact on the environment, and that if we don't take this step our reliance on foreign energy will only increase.
- II. *(Describe implications and ramifications of opposing claims.)* By claiming that drilling in the refuge is the only solution to our reliance on foreign energy, proponents of this solution sidestep the need for stricter energy conservation policies as well as the need to protect one of the last great pristine lands.
- III. *(Offer arguments and evidence for your position, as developed in subpoints.)* The massive construction needed to access the tundra will disturb the habitat of thousands of species and shift the focus from energy conservation to increased energy consumption, when the focus should be the reverse.
- IV. *(Contrast your position with the opposition's to drive home the superiority of yours.)* The opposition's plan would encourage consumption while also endangering the environment; my plan would encourage stricter energy conservation while protecting one of the world's few remaining wildernesses.

**Spatial** arranges the main points in order of their physical proximity or direction relative to each other. Useful when the purpose of your speech is to describe or explain the physical arrangement of a place, a scene, an object, or an entity such as a company (e.g., where its different branches are located).

*Example:*

**TOPIC:** El Morro National Monument in New Mexico.



**PURPOSE:** To give my audience a sense of why El Morro is a worthwhile place to visit.

**THESIS:** El Morro National Monument in New Mexico is captivating for its variety of natural and historical landmarks.

- I. Visitors first encounter an abundant variety of plant life native to the high-country desert.
- II. Soon visitors come upon an age-old watering hole that has receded beneath the 200-foot cliffs.
- III. Beyond are the famous cliff carvings made by hundreds of travelers over several centuries of exploration in the Southwest.
- IV. At the farthest reaches of the magnificent park are the ancient ruins of a pueblo dwelling secured high atop "the Rock."

**Topical/Categorical** presents categories of a main topic. Useful when your main points are of equal or almost equal importance.

This organizational pattern stresses natural divisions in a topic, in which points can be moved to emphasize audience needs and interests.

*Example:*

**TOPIC:** Choosing Chicago as a place to establish a career.

**PURPOSE:** To show my audience why Chicago is a great place to start a career.

**THESIS:** Chicago is an excellent place to establish a career.

- I. Accessible transportation
- II. Cultural variety
- III. Economic stability

## Support

**Main points:** two to five key ideas or major themes of the speech that make claims to support the thesis and are given relatively equal weight.



**Supporting points:** material that justifies main points and are given relatively less weight, indicated by indentation below coordinating points. Examples, narratives, testimony, and facts and statistics can all be used as supporting points.

**Back up each main point with at least two supporting points.** Using a variety of supporting material—moving from a story to a statistic, for example—sparks interest, builds credibility, and appeals to audience members' different learning styles. At each level of subordination, you must always have at least two supporting points.

*Examples:*

Main point:

- I. Michael Jordan was one of the most dominant basketball players in the history of the game.

Supporting points:

- A. Story about how he won the final game of the 1998 NBA championship against the Utah Jazz (*narrative*)
- B. Quote from journalist David Halberstam's biography of Jordan (*testimony*)
- C. Some of Jordan's lifetime stats (*statistics*)

Main point:

- I. Alternative energy sources are the best solution to the problem of our nation's dependence on oil.

Supporting points:

- A. Discussion of different types of alternative energy sources (*examples*)
- B. Numerical information about the renewable supplies of alternative energy vs. the limited supply of oil (*statistics*)
- C. Quote from an expert on the success of Brazil's sugarcane-based ethanol program (*testimony*)





### Locating supporting materials:

- *Primary research:* Interviews and surveys conducted by the speaker.
- *Secondary research:* Print and online materials found using a library. If you feel overwhelmed or get confused, ask the reference librarian for help.
- *Use a mix of print and online sources:* Library holdings are carefully selected by trained professionals, while some Internet sources distort the facts. On the other hand, the Internet offers current materials, while a library, if small or under-funded, might have a limited or outdated selection.

## Transitions

Transitions are words, phrases, or sentences that tie the speech together. Include transitions between main points, and consider adding them between supporting points. Use transitions to move smoothly from one point to the next and to help listeners easily follow your train of thought.

### *Examples:*

There are several ways you can make transitions:

**Full-sentence transitions:** “But leaving aside the finer distinctions between spyware and other types of computer menaces, what is crystal clear is that spyware represents a growing threat. Consider some of the symptoms and problems associated with spyware.”

**Signposts:** Conjunctions or phrases placed at the beginning of transitional sentences:

- First, . . . (second, third, and so forth)
- Next, . . .
- One way . . . another way . . .
- We now turn to . . .
- Finally, let’s consider . . .
- If you think that’s shocking/interesting/bad/good . . .
- Similarly, . . .
- In addition, . . .
- Finally, let’s consider/look at . . .



**Rhetorical questions:** Questions that do not invite actual response:

“Will contests be too expensive? Well, actually . . .”

“How do the costs of contests stack up against the expense of training new people?”

**Restate-forecast:** Restates the point just covered and previews the point to be covered next:

“Now that we’ve established a need for sales contests [restatement], let’s look at what sales contests can do for us [forecast].”

**Previews:** Tell the audience what to expect next:

“Victoria Woodhull was a pioneer in many respects. Not only was she the first woman to run her own brokerage firm, but she was also the first to run for the presidency of the United States, though few people know this. Let’s see how she accomplished these feats. . . .”

**Summaries:** Draw together ideas before proceeding to another point, thereby helping listeners review and evaluate the argument:

“It should be clear that the kind of violence we’ve witnessed in the schools and in our communities has a deeper root cause than the availability of handguns. Our young children are crying out for a sense of community, of relatedness and meaning, that they just aren’t finding in the institutions that are meant to serve them.”

## Introduction

The introduction prepares the audience to hear the speech. A good opening previews what’s to come in a way that invites listeners to stay the course.

**Gain the Audience’s Attention:**

**Advice:**

- **Use a quotation:** You can quote anyone, as long as the quote is clever. A quote that sums up what you’re trying to say adds credibility to your speech. Especially effective in persuasive speeches and/or with an educated audience.



- **Tell a story:** Stories personalize issues, encourage the audience to identify with the speaker, and entertain, but each story should have a clear point related to your thesis. Effective in informative, persuasive, and special occasion speeches.
- **Pose questions:** They can be rhetorical or invite actual response. Either way, try to answer the questions you posed in your introduction. Especially effective in persuasive speeches.
- **Say something startling:** Usually involves revealing a shocking statistic. Especially effective if addressing an audience unfamiliar with your topic.
- **Use humor:** Builds rapport and makes the audience feel at ease. Keep it tasteful and related to your thesis.
- **Refer to the occasion:** Captures attention, establishes goodwill, and shows your audience you know something about them and their event. Especially effective for special occasion speeches.
- **Establish common ground:** Demonstrates how you and your audience are alike and shows them you respect their interests or values. Effective in informative, persuasive, or special occasion speeches.

### **Summarize your topic and purpose:**

**Advice:** Say what your speech is about, then insert your thesis statement.

### **Preview the main points:**

**Advice:** Following your thesis, lay out your main points. Simply state them directly, one after the other.

### **Make the topic relevant for your audience:**

**Advice:** Show them how the topic pertains to them and what they might gain from listening to you.



### **Establish credibility as a speaker:**

**Advice:** Make a simple statement that tells the audience who you are and what experience you have with the topic. Doing this shows the audience why they should believe you.

## **Conclusion**

### **Signal the close of your speech:**

**Advice:** Use words or phrases such as *in conclusion*, *as I bring this to a close*, or *let me close by saying*.

You can also use pacing and body language. Pause, take a deep breath, slow your words down, or raise your hand to signal something important.

### **Summarize your main points:**

**Advice:** Remind the audience of what you've covered in your speech. Separate your points with *first*, *second*, *third*, *fourth*, etc.

### **Repeat your topic and speech purpose:**

**Advice:** Say what you've been talking about and why it's important. Do it concisely and in a slightly different way than in the introduction.

### **Challenge the audience to respond:**

**Advice:** In an *informative speech*, the speaker encourages the audience to take what they've learned and use it to benefit them. In a *persuasive speech*, the speaker gives a call to action, which asks the audience to do something about what they've learned