

How to Prepare a Persuasive Speech

Jordan Burg, Winnipeg MB

S&DC Instructor / MSDA Outreach Facilitator

What is a Persuasive Speech?

- An EXPOSITION that identifies/explains a PROBLEM and offers a viable SOLUTION.
- The TOPIC must be serious in nature, though not necessarily earth-shattering. The speech must not be entirely comedic, though elements of humour used with tact for deliberate effect are acceptable.
- Establish a THESIS, the main idea of the speech, that there is a significant problem and that you are able to provide a successful solution.
- There are two common ways to set up a persuasive speech:
 - Lengthy analysis of the problem with a brief discussion of the solution
 - Brief discussion of the problem with a lengthy focus on the solution
- The lengthier portion of the speech should contain EVIDENCE from research.
- The solution needs to be PLAUSIBLE and contain a CALL TO ACTION from the audience.
- In order for the speech to be effective in persuading the audience to your VIEWPOINT, consider these three elements (woven together throughout the speech):
 - LOGOS – the logic and coherency of your arguments and reasons
 - ETHOS – the believability and credibility of your character
 - PATHOS – the emotional content used to motivate changes in thinking and create action

How should a Persuasive Speech be structured?

- Consider the three elements of any speech (the BEGINNING, the MIDDLE, and the END), which are not unlike formal paragraphs or essays:
 - INTRODUCTION – an effective start to your speech to establish content, tone, and what the audience will be expecting to come in your presentation
 - BODY – a full discussion of the problem and the solution, complete with all of the persuasion required for winning over your audience and moving them to action
 - CONCLUSION – a memorable summary of what the audience has learned and what they must do now, creating the lasting impression that you were successful

What are the elements of a good INTRODUCTION?

- This should be brief and have IMPACT. It is sometimes referred to as the HOOK, with the goal of achieving total audience ENGAGEMENT.
- It also helps you establish a strong FIRST IMPRESSION (Remember: ETHOS).
- Consider the variety of techniques used to start a speech, choosing the one that best helps your overall persuasiveness:
 - DIRECT or SURPRISING CLAIM – a quick statement or stat to immediately grab attention; establish why the audience needs to listen to you
 - ANECDOTE – a compelling narrative can create interest, excitement, or concern while establishing tone, trust, and thirst for more
 - HISTORY – a historical reference that can work to establish a broader context than just your own life's experience. It allows for a more universal approach
 - QUESTION – asking the audience a rhetorical question is a great way to quickly get your audience thinking, and wondering what YOUR answer will eventually be
 - CONTRADICTION – the method of leading your audience into an area they might not typically expect as you reveal your topic
 - QUOTATION – starting off with a quote from a famous figure helps the audience relate to your approach, especially if the figure is expert, admired, or popular
- After your compelling start, be sure to make your audience aware of your thesis, followed by revealing a quick and simple outline of your speech:
 - ROADMAP – offer the outline of the speech to the audience by telling them what you now intend to do, including the offering of a solution
 - SIGNPOSTING – let your audience know the specific titles of each section or subsection of your speech in order to create anticipation
 - CALL TO ACTION – suggest to the audience that they will have a role to play in your solution

What are the elements of a good BODY?

- This will be the bulk of your speech. Whether your body is a full analysis of a problem with a brief solution or a brief discussion of a problem with a fully developed solution, try to create THREE CONTENTIONS for the larger portion.
- The contentions for the *analysis of a problem* are similar to the supporting statements used in a formal paragraph or the full paragraphs used in a formal essay. Try to find three pertinent things to talk about when analyzing the problem:
 - SECTIONS - break the problem down into components, categories, stages, etc.
 - ACTORS - explain the groups of people who are creating the problem, or the groups who are dealing with problem
 - HISTORY - develop the story of the problem by examining its historical progression
 - EXAMPLES - develop a broad problem by fully discussing three separate, but related, illustrations, incidents, or situations
 - W5 (aka: who, what, when, where, why) – provide answers to the best three of these questions in order to explain the problem

Continued...

- The contentions for the *development of a full solution* should wholly account for:
 - SPLEEM – consider at least the top three categories that your solution would best address:
 - Social – ramifications for society
 - Political – obligations of the levels of governments
 - Legal – creating or changing existing laws
 - Economic – costs and money sources
 - Environmental – effect on our planet’s ecology
 - Moral – establishment of doing the right thing
 - STEPS – talk about what steps need to be taken to fully and practically solve or eradicate the problem
 - ACTORS – identify who needs to be involved in order for the problem to be taken care of
 - CALL TO ACTION – tell the audience what they must do in order for your solution to be successful (THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT!)
- Make sure that your contentions are fully explained and supported by EVIDENCE from research; use quotes, citations, statistics, data, etc – and be sure to reveal your (credible) sources for the greatest impact.
- The brief discussions and impacts of accompanying problems and solutions need to be considered as well, though they will not be providing as much information; do not forget the call to action in even a brief solution.

What are the elements of a good CONCLUSION?

- A good, brief conclusion does two things:
 - Summarizes the entire speech, including both the problem and the solution
 - Provides closure to the entire speech
- Do not add any new information in the conclusion. If more needs to be said about your topic, incorporate it into the body.
- It is a good idea to refer back to your introduction in some way to remind the audience how far you have brought them and create an impactful ending.
- Confidently consider your problem as now solved, thanks to you!
- The conclusion should have memorable final statement to create impact and a positive, lasting impression.
- When the speech is over, the audience should feel motivated to support your solution.

Suggested Persuasive Speech Outlines:

DEVELOPED PROBLEM:

- I. Introduction
 - A. Hook
 - B. Thesis
 - C. Roadmap and Signposting
- II. Body
 - A. First Contention
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Support with evidence
 - iii. Connect to Thesis
 - B. Second Contention
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Support with evidence
 - iii. Connect to Thesis
 - C. Third Contention
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Support with evidence
 - iii. Connect to Thesis
 - D. The Solution
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Call to Action
- III. Conclusion
 - A. Summary
 - B. Refer back to Introduction
 - C. Reminder of Call to Action
 - D. Memorable final statement

DEVELOPED SOLUTION:

- I. Introduction
 - A. Hook
 - B. Thesis
 - C. Roadmap and Signposting
- II. Body
 - A. The Problem
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Identify the Solution
 - B. First Contention
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Support with evidence
 - iii. Connect to Thesis
 - C. Second Contention
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Support with evidence
 - iii. Connect to Thesis
 - D. Third Contention
 - i. Develop explanation
 - ii. Support with evidence
 - iii. Connect to Thesis
- III. Conclusion
 - A. Summary
 - B. Refer back to Introduction
 - C. Reminder of Call to Action
 - D. Memorable final statement