

How to formulate a topic

The ability to develop a good topic is an important skill. An instructor may assign you a specific topic, but most often instructors require you to select your own topic of interest. When deciding on a topic, there are a few things that you will need to do:

- brainstorm for ideas
- choose a topic that will enable you to read and understand the literature
- ensure that the topic is manageable and that material is available
- make a list of key words
- be flexible
- define your topic

Be aware that selecting a good topic may not be easy. It must be narrow and focused enough to be interesting.

How to organize and support ideas

1. **Define the Purpose.** Write down what you are trying to accomplish and then say it out loud. If you need to take a breath while saying, it's too long.
2. **Gather Supporting Materials.** Use a variety of supporting materials that will help you explain the concept you are trying to teach or discuss. As you go through the materials, think about different ways you can illustrate your point.
3. **Determine Top Three Points.** After you gather the supporting materials and have determined your purpose, look at it all and find the top three points only.
4. **Determine the Organizational Pattern.** You can deliver your speech in several different ways, including chronological or sequential order, it depends on the topic.
5. **Create An Outline.** Best practice is to create outline format, maybe even in full sentence format and practice out loud to see what works and what doesn't. When you write it down, it may sound brilliant but when you start saying it out loud, you trip over it or some sentences or it may not make sense. As you practice and become more familiar with the presentation, reduce the full sentence outline to a key word outline. The key word outline is meant as a prompt to remind you what you want to talk about. Ask if the outline accomplishes your purpose (Step 1).

Create Catchy Introductions The purpose of an introduction is to grab your audience's attention, peak their curiosity and interest and connect with them. The introduction should clarify your purpose and preview your main points. Connect with the audience the entire time with good eye contact; it will boost your credibility. You only have a few moments to make a first impression and establish you are credible. Don't fumble papers and NEVER read your introduction, in fact memorize it. Make sure it's short. What doesn't go into an introduction? Statement like "thank you so much for having me speak today" and "what a great audience."

Develop Memorable Conclusions Conclusions should reinforce your image and message and include a call to action. People remember the first and last thing they hear so reinforce your message in your conclusion and leave on a strong note. What goes in a conclusion? Conclusions should not be any longer than your introduction. Summarize your three main points, take something from your introduction and make reference in your conclusion to bring your speech full circle. Never end with “okay, that’s it, we’re done” or ask “any questions?” Faith has a good suggestion to say “I have time for a couple questions and then I’m going to wrap it up.” That way you end with your note and message. Side note, make sure you do wrap it up in a timely manner. How do you deliver a conclusion? The same way you do an introduction. Memorize it and deliver it with confidence and good eye-contact.

How to write a speech

- 1) **Know The Purpose:** What are you trying to accomplish with your speech? Educate, inspire, entertain, argue a point? Your goals will dictate the tone and structure, and result in dramatically different speeches.
- 2) **Know Your Audience:** Your speech should be tailored for your audience, both in terms of ideas and language. If you’re speaking at a sound healer convention, you won’t need to explain the concept of energetic blocks. And if you’re speaking to an octogenarians-only quilting circle, you probably shouldn’t drop as many F-bombs as you would with your local biker gang.
- 3) **Know The Length:** You don’t want to underwhelm or overwhelm your audience. Ten minutes may be too short for your keynote address, but it’s probably too long for your best man speech. Don’t leave things up to chance. Your writing process will be much easier if you keep your eye on your target length.
- 4) **Write, Revise, Practice, Revise, Practice...:** MLK’s “I Have a Dream” speech wasn’t written in a day. Give yourself the time you need to practice your material and work through multiple drafts. Don’t expect to nail everything on the first try.

How to deliver, speaking without a script

If you master this single concept, you will be speaking without script soon.

Don’t memorize your talk. Understand it.