

# Informative Speech

## – Speaking to Inform



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**Reference:** Lucas, S. E. (2007). *The Art of Public Speaking* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.



**Your informative speech' s aim will be to convey knowledge and understanding – not to advocate a cause.**

Consider the following:

Is the information communicated accurately?

Is the information communicated clearly?

Is the information made meaningful and interesting to the audience?

# Content

- ▶ **Speeches About Subjects**
- ▶ **Speeches About Processes**
- ▶ **Speeches About Events**
- ▶ **Speeches About Concepts**
- ▶ **Useful Tips**

# Speeches About Subjects

Objects include anything that is visible, tangible, and stable in form.

## Examples

**Grand Canyon, Seaweed...**

## Specific Purpose

To inform my audience about the geological features of the Grand Canyon.

To inform my audience about the commercial uses of seaweed.

## Possible Orders

**Chronological order, spatial order, topical order...**



## Guidelines

- ❖ Limit your speech to between two and five main points.
- ❖ Keep main points separate.
- ❖ Try to use the same pattern of wording for all main points.
- ❖ Balance the amount of time devoted to each main point.

# Speeches About Processes

A process is a systematic series of actions that leads to a specific result or product.

Speeches about processes explain how something is made, how something is done, or how something works.



## Possible approach one

Explain a process so that listeners will understand it better.

Visual aids could help.



## Possible approach two

Explain a process so listeners will be better able to perform the process themselves.

Involve the audience to try.



# Topical Order Example

## ❖ **Specific purpose**

To inform my audience of the common methods used by stage magicians to perform their tricks.

## ❖ **Central idea**

Stage magicians use two common methods to perform their tricks- mechanical devices and sleight of hand.

## ❖ **Main points**

- 1) Many magic tricks rely on mechanical devices that may require little skill by the magician.
- 2) Other magic tricks depend on the magician's skill in fooling people by sleight-of-hand manipulation.

# Speeches About Events

An event: anything that happens or is regarded as happening.

Speeches about processes explain how something is made, how something is done, or how something works.

**Examples:** mountain climbing, battle of Little Big Horn...

**Specific Purpose:** To inform my audience about the equipment used in mountain climbing.

To inform my audience about what happened at the Battle of Little Horn.

**Possible Orders:** chronological order, causal order, topical order...





# Causal Order Example

## ❖ **Specific purpose**

To inform my audience why so many lives were lost when a major tsunami hit Southeast Asia in 2004.

## ❖ **Central idea**

On Dec 26, 2004, a catastrophic tsunami hit unexpectedly and took the lives of more than 200,000 people caught near the seashore.

## ❖ **Main points**

1. There were 2 major causes for the great loss of life when the tsunami struck.

A. Many resorts and fishing villages were built directly on the beach.

B. There was no warning system for tsunamis in that part of the world.

2. The effects of these 2 situations were disastrous.

A. There was no time for people to escape to higher ground.

B. Thousands of people who were vacationing, living, or working on the beach were swept away.

# Speeches About Concepts

Concepts include beliefs, theories, ideas, principles, and the like.

## Examples

Confucianism, philosophies of education...

## Specific Purpose

To inform my audience about the basic principles of Confucianism.

To inform my audience about different philosophies of education in Europe and the United States.

**When explaining concepts, pay special attention to avoiding technical language, to defining terms clearly, and to using examples and comparisons to illustrate the concepts and make them understandable to your listeners.**



**The lines dividing speeches about objects, processes, events, and concepts are not absolute. Some subjects could fit into more than one category, depending on how you develop the speech.**

e.g. Declaration of Independence

1. it could be treated as an object - by explaining its history and its role in the American Revolution.
2. it could be treated as a concept – an idea bound up with freedom and democracy.

# Useful Tips: Things to look out for

## **1. Don't overestimate what the audience knows.**

You must lead your listeners step by step, without any shortcuts. You can't assume they will know what you mean. Rather, you must be sure to explain everything so thoroughly that they can't help but understand.

## **2. Relate the subject directly to the audience.**

There is no such thing as a fine speech that puts people to sleep. It is the speaker's job to get listeners interested- and to keep them interested. Get your audience involved with experiences and examples.

## **3. Don't be too technical.**

The important thing for a speaker to know is what can be explained to an ordinary audience and what can't. Be careful when use jargons.



### 4. **Avoid abstractions.**

A speech is not a novel. Still, too many abstractions are tedious. Ways to avoid abstractions are through **description, comparisons, contrast** and so on.

### 5. **Personalize your ideas.**

Other than facts and figures, if you really want to get your audience involved, you will weave in some stories and examples. Best examples are the ones related to the audience.

**Remember you are trying to inform your audience,  
not persuade them.**

It's not about who are you informing  
—**It's How You Inform them!**



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