

Tips for Writing a Persuasive Speech

Putting together a three-minute speech can be daunting—especially if you’ve never written one before! The key to effective communication lies in a well organized, clearly articulated, and thoroughly researched and sourced argument. The following outlines the basic format of a persuasive speech, but speeches may take alternative forms.

INTRODUCTION

There are four key components to an introduction: **the attention getting device (AGD)**, **common ground**, **thesis**, and **preview**. For the sake of this speech, you’ll want to keep your introduction around 20 seconds (give or take).

Attention Getting Device

Start your speech off with a quotation, a short narrative, a mind blowing statistic—anything to wow your audience and grab their attention. Make sure your AGD is topical, though. You don’t want to start off your speech praising Ryan Gosling’s good looks when the subject is clean city water.

Common Ground

In order to be persuasive, you need to establish common ground with your audience. They need to feel directly connected to the problem. Think about what you have in common with your audience—their values, interests, shared experiences—which can relate back to your topic.

Thesis

The thesis is simply your solution statement. Use it as a call to action for the audience. Example: “We need to find affordable and sustainable ways to produce clean water.”

Preview

This is the easiest piece of the introduction to write because, at its core, it’s the same for every speech. Give the audience a roadmap, or signposts, of the next three big points you’ll be discussing. In a persuasive speech, your signposts are typically the problems, causes, and solutions. Example: “Let’s first learn more about this pressing problem, next identify the causes of unclean water, and finally establish some solutions.”

BODY

You are now going to write the body of the speech, which consists of **problems**, **causes**, and **solutions**. The body is the meat and potatoes of your speech. For the purpose of this speech, the body should be about two minutes long. You should spend about 40 seconds per point.

Problems

This is where you’ll describe the problem you chose to discuss. First, restate the problem. Next, you’ll need to give evidence supporting your claim. Use articles, journals, and statistics to assert your problem exists, is significant, and has

harms associated with it. You could have a source for each of those areas (existence, significance, and harms) and make sure you articulate these ideas in a logical format.

Transition

Give a transition statement explaining to the audience you are now changing subjects. Example: “Now that we understand the problem, let’s take a look at the causes.”

Causes

Start off with a statement of the causes (there are usually more than one) of the problems. Don’t forget to use evidence! End this section with a statement as to why the status quo (how things are now) won’t solve the problem.

Transition

Give a transition statement explaining to the audience you are now changing subjects. Example: “Now that we understand the causes, let’s take a look at the solutions.”

Solutions

State your solution. (This should be a restatement of the thesis). Then explain in detail how your solution will work. Ask yourself, how will my solution be implemented? How will it be executed?

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is about 20 seconds long. Wrap up the speech by **summarizing the problem and solution**. Next, **restate your thesis**. Last, give a **final statement**. This is the last thing your audience will hear—so make sure it’s good!

And that’s it! You’re done. You’ve written a persuasive speech! Pretty simple, right?