



## Preparing a speech

### Rule 1: A great speech begins with a great topic

The first step in planning for speech writing is choosing a topic. There are five questions you should be asking yourself when choosing the perfect topic for your speech:

1. Am I interested in this topic?
2. Will I enjoy
3. Will I enjoy talking about it?
4. Will the audience be interested in hearing about this topic?
5. Am I passionate about the topic I have chosen?

You should be able to answer “yes” to all of these questions. Remember, your presentation is about more than just words; your audience notices *how* you say them! If you are passionate about and interested in your subject, your audience will enjoy your presentation. For examples on topics see Choosing a Topic.

### Rule 2: Preparation is key

The next step in speech writing is preparing for research. First, you should begin with a brainstorm. Write down what you know about your chosen topic and what you would like to know more about. This is a pre-emptive step in determining the objectives, or main points, of your speech. In keeping with CPF-BC & YUKON Concours d'art oratoire regulations, your speech should be between 3-5 minutes long. Remember this when you are researching because you will need to find an ample amount of information. Once you have an idea of what to write about, you will have to determine what kind of speech you will be writing before researching.

There are several types of speeches:

**Informative.** Informative speeches *explain* something. As a speaker, your aim is to help the audience understand a topic they might not know about. Examples: a teacher explaining a new concept to students; a travel guide explaining the tour.

**Persuasive.** Persuasive speeches try to *sell* an idea. As a speaker, your aim is to provide the audience with hard facts and information. However, you also have to make it personal. Think about how this topic relates to your audience, and how it would affect their lives, family, or work. Examples: the effects of smoking; the limitations and benefits of universal healthcare.

**Entertaining.** Entertaining speeches do just that; they *entertain*. As a speaker, your aim is to provide information in an enjoyable, amusing, and usually humorous way. You can make it personal by using stories and illustrations. Examples: a comedian performing on stage; an after dinner speech; an entertaining wedding speech or toast.

### **Rule 3: Research your topic thoroughly**

When researching, you should focus on the objectives of your speech. Before starting, determine the main points you would like to cover in your speech. To be on the safe side, choose at least three (3) sub-topics that you would like to discuss and that relate back to your original thesis (or main objective). Doing so will provide you with a clear outline for your research. The information in your presentation should be new and valuable to you and your audience.

As an example, if you would like to give a persuasive speech on the effects of smoking, you may decide to cover the following subtopics: (a) the history of smoking and tobacco use, (b) types of tobacco use (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff, etc), (c) the health effects of smoking, and (d) the effects of secondhand smoking. There is so much more you could research with regards to the effects of smoking, but the key is to narrow it down and for your research to support your main thesis, or argument, in the end.

Depending on the type of speech you are preparing, decide where and how you will conduct your research. Is it in the school or public library? computer lab? Or perhaps you will have to interview someone in your family, community, or elsewhere. There are dozens of avenues for research. However, your goal is to find out which will work best for you and the topic you have chosen.

### **Rule 4: The flow of your speech is important**

When it's time to start writing your speech, your ideas have to flow naturally. For this to happen you will have to structure your speech like you would an essay, with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

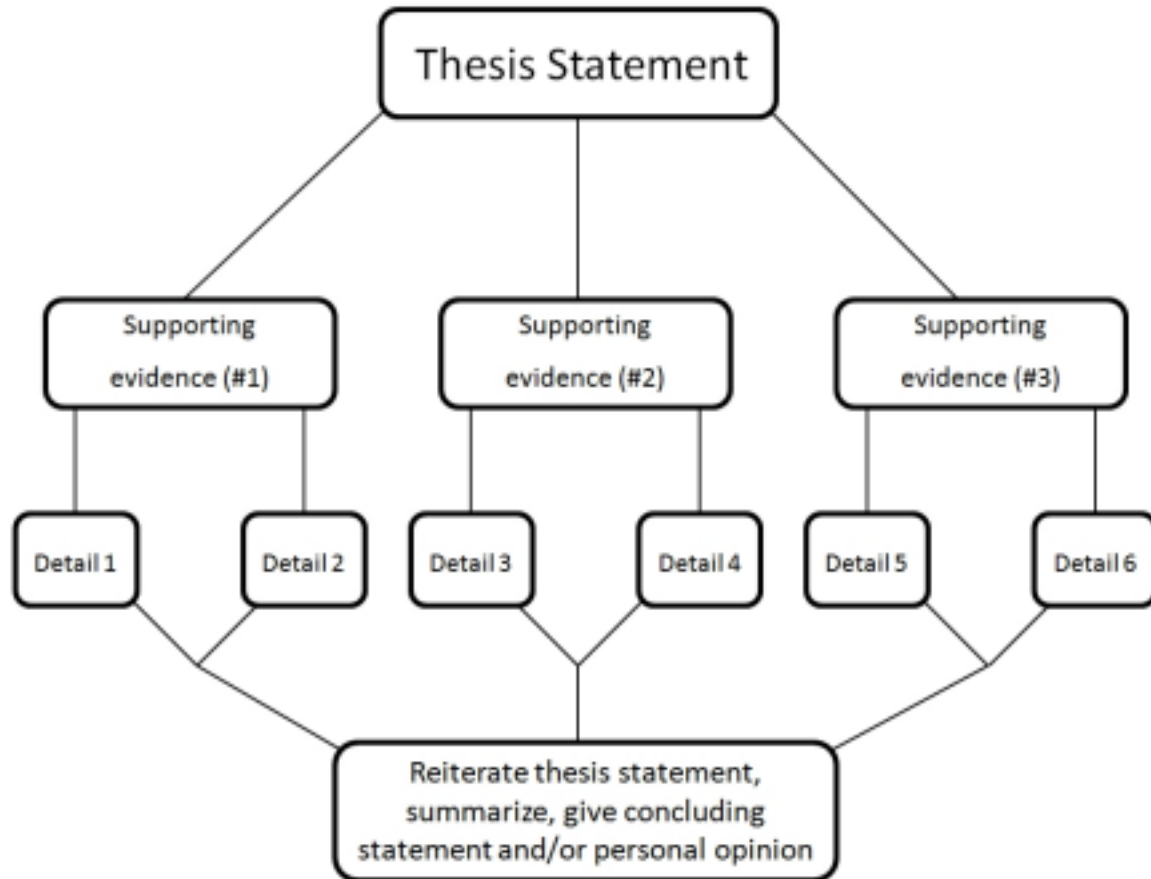
In your **introduction**, your goal is to introduce the topic of your presentation. Think of this paragraph as an upside-down triangle. Start with a broad statement or a brief overview of the topic. As you write, your sentences should become more specific, narrowing down to your thesis statement—a sentence describing the main objective of your speech.

The **body** of your speech presents information, evidence, and claims that support your thesis statement. Each paragraph should be about five (5) sentences in length, and can be broken down into the following format:

- A topic sentence;
- Presentation of evidence and information;
- Clarify information and relate back to thesis statement; and
  - A transition statement allowing for smooth progression into the next paragraph or idea.

The **conclusion** of your speech should signal the end of your presentation. You may begin this paragraph with "*In conclusion...*," or something similar. It is important to let the audience know you are wrapping up. In this paragraph, your goal is to restate your main points and to relate them back to your thesis. To give a lasting impression, challenge your audience: "*If you only take one thing from my presentation today, let it be this...*"

It helps to visualize the outline of your speech:



### Rule 5: Practice makes perfect

As a presenter, you should spend just as much time writing as you do practicing. When memorizing your presentation, give yourself plenty of time to do so. If your teacher gives you two weeks for the CPF-BC & YUKON Concours d'art oratoire project, spend half of that time memorizing and practicing. Here are some tips to make this process as painless as possible:

- Memorize your speech in parts. If you have a hard time remembering the order, create cue cards with key words to kick-start your memory (these are allowed in the CPF-BC & YUKON Concours d'art oratoire).
- Speak slowly. This allows you to get used to pronouncing any tricky words. Also, when you are nervous, you tend to speak faster. Take deep breaths, slow down, and refocus.
- Pay attention to volume. Do not speak in a monotone. Allow for appropriate volume variation.
- Show emotions appropriately. Take pauses for effect and to allow the audience to absorb the information.