

Types of Informative Speeches

What is an **informative speech**?

Informative speeches present or describe information on various topics, ranging from cooking tips to formal business training programs.

There are four categories of informative speeches:

1. **Definition Speeches** – tell the audience what something is or what something means

Suggestions:

- Start with a dictionary definition. (Ex.: “Humanism is a devotion to the humanities and literary culture.”)
- Compare something with others in its class. (Ex.: Explain how an informative speech is similar to and differs from a persuasive speech.)
- Define by using a synonym, a more common word with a similar meaning. (Ex.: Tell an audience that genre means “a category.”)

Extended definitions – longer, more detailed explanations that explain the subject in more detail and incorporate the speaker’s feelings

- Uses many strategies to make sure the audience understands what is being discussed (talk about the history of something, explain what it means to you personally, show a visual, etc.)

Writing Tips:

- Narrow your topic.
- Give more than just dictionary definitions. (Write descriptions in your own words.)
- Be specific.
- Avoid circular definitions, which use a form of the word within the definition. (Ex.: An electrician is a person who fixes the electricity.)

*** You will be giving an extended definition informative speech for speech #5.**

2. **Description Speeches** – describe a person, place, thing, or event; appeal to the senses

- Ex. details to describe the Grand Canyon (colors, elevation, sounds, etc.)

Writing Tips:

- Visualize your subject clearly.
- Declare your own geographic position (and describe elements in a logical order).
- Decide on a main impression you want to give.
- Be specific and concrete.

* Most speeches contain some definition and some description. Speeches are rarely all definition or all description.

3. **Demonstration and Process Speeches** – tell the audience how to do something or explain how something is done

- Informational process speeches – give information about how something happens or is done, but the listener is not expected to repeat the process (Ex.: photosynthesis, metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly)
- Directional process speeches – give detailed information about processes so that listeners can repeat them (Ex.: how to take the SATs, how to operate a computer program, how to put something together)

Writing Tips:

- Know your process well before you explain it.
- Be aware of your listeners; don't explain too much or too little.
- Put the steps in order according to time.
- Define new or unfamiliar terms.
- Show steps visually.
- Warn your audience of possible difficulties, dangers, or common mistakes.
- Explain the purpose of a step when necessary.
- For a demonstration, have all equipment ready and tested.

4. **Social Ritual Speeches** – speeches given on special occasions (introductions, presentations, acceptance speeches, graduation speeches, keynote speeches, speeches to entertain, public relations and sales speeches, etc.)

* **In-depth study of this type of speech will occur later in the course.**

Four Main Steps in Planning:

1. Evaluate the Speaking Situation

- Time – Find out how long your speech is going to be
- Occasion – Fit your message to the occasion; should fit with the current mood
- Audience – Learn about the members of your audience – ages, genders, occupations, levels of education, and knowledge of your topic
- Goals – What do you want to achieve by giving this speech? Goals partly depend on the audience and occasion

2. Choose a Topic

- Should be appropriate to time limit, occasion, audience, and goals
- Try brainstorming and free writing (writing without worrying about form or content) to generate ideas
- Conduct research (library or Internet) for ideas

3. Choose a Type of Speech

- Your topics help determine the type of speech you decide on
- Decide if you are trying to inform or persuade
- If the speech is generally informative, you are likely to combine definition, description, and process techniques

4. Research the Topic

- Always best to speak on a topic you are familiar with and find interesting
- May require additional research (library or Internet)
- May use personal sources, such as interviews, surveys, or your own personal experience

Handout #2

Four Parts of an Informative Speech

What does an informative speech consist of?

An informative speech consists of an introduction, body, and conclusion. Many then conclude with a question-and-answer period.

Four Parts of an Informative Speech:

1. Introduction – Five Steps:

- a. Get the audience's attention
 - Make a dramatic statement
 - Ask a question
 - Use a quotation
 - Tell a joke or anecdote (brief story connected to your topic)
 - Use description to appeal to emotions
 - Present a contrast (Ex.: contrast between now and the past)
- b. Build interest
 - Use meaningful, specific information (concrete data)
 - Keep your speech simple and well organized (Organize it around a purpose and main idea)
 - Use attention-getting techniques
 - Use catchy slogans
 - Introduce a visual aid (chart, prop, video clip, recording, etc.)
- c. Preview the topic
 - Explain any background or terms that listeners need to know before the actual speech
- d. Apply the message to the audience
 - How does this topic affect the lives of the audience? (family, friends, values, health, self-esteem, etc.)
- e. Establish your credibility
 - Let your audience know you
 - Share specific knowledge or skills with the audience relevant to the speech
 - Give the audience a reason to listen to you and believe you

2. Body – Four Steps:

- a. Organize information – certain types of organization are appropriate for certain types of speeches
 - Time Order – describe events or process steps in chronological order
 - Spatial Organization – Describe an object or geographical location in a logical sequence (top to bottom, left to right, etc.); consider what will help the audience to visualize the subject in speeches about places or objects

- Comparison and Contrast – Describe elements by explaining how they are alike and different
- Classification – Show what makes up a group and its parts
- Cause and Effect – Explain events, actions, or problems beginning with the cause and moving to the effect or vice versa

* Many speeches make use of more than one type of organization.

- b. Follow Principles of Informing – make your speech interesting, clear, and accurate, so your audience listens to you and remembers your speech
 - Fulfill a need to know
 - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs – a person must satisfy each need level before the next one can be approached (See p. 157 for further information)
 - Physical
 - Safety
 - Social
 - Ego
 - Self
 - Connect information to feelings of the audience
 - Limit your main points (Keep things simple)
 - Repeat information
 - Emphasize the theme or subject of your speech
- c. Polish the Speech
 - Use smooth transitions/connections between ideas
 - repetition of key words and use of transitional words and phrases
 - Avoid too much technical talk (Language that your audience does not understand)
 - Personalize the information (Show the audience the benefits of your words)
- d. Keep an Eye on the Audience
 - Watch and listen to your audience so you can make adjustments

3. Conclusion

Techniques for conclusions:

- Summarize your thesis and main supporting points.
- Remind the audience of the importance of the issue.
- Use an attention device mentioned earlier
- Urge your audience to take action
- Warn your audience that the speech is about to end
- Predict the future
- Use a “clincher” ending

4. Conducting a Question-and-Answer Period

- Ask audience to write questions on note cards
- Give an interesting speech to guarantee a good questioning session

- Write a list of possible questions and answers to prepare
- Don't be sarcastic
- Don't lose your temper, even if an audience member does
- Make sure you know what the question is. If question is asked out loud, have it repeated if necessary.
- Keep your answers short