

The Elements of an Effective Informative Speech

Brief: After selecting a topic from one of the four types of informative speech topics—objects, processes, events, and concepts—make sure your topic has a focus narrow enough to allow in-depth research and a simple organizational structure.

Learning Objective: Recognize the four types of informative speech topics and understand why a narrowly focused topic is important.

Key Terms:

- **Object:** Anything that is visible and tangible.
- **Process:** The manner in which something is created, made, done, or works.
- **Event:** Something that occurs at a particular time, date, and location.
- **Concept:** Related to an idea, belief, theory, attitude, and/or principle.

Four Types of Informative Speech Topics

In addition to the four types of informative speeches (definition, demonstration, explanatory, and descriptive), there are four types of informative speech topics: speeches about objects, speeches about processes, speeches about events, and speeches about concepts.

Speeches About Objects

For the purposes of this type of informative speech, anything that is visible and tangible is considered an object. If you choose to give a speech about an object, it's helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

Do I have good representations of this object to share? Make sure you have either a good physical representation of this object or a series of outstanding images.

Do I have an important purpose for sharing this object? To create a successful speech, there needs to be a bigger story behind your object—a story well worth telling.

Will my audience find a speech about this object interesting? What is it about this object that will catch my audience's attention and keep it throughout my speech?

Speeches About Processes

A process is the manner in which something is created, made, done, or works. Therefore, an informative speech about a process describes how something is made, done, or works.

Processes include anything from how the modern Electoral College operates to how an automobile is constructed on a factory line.

Speeches About Events

A speech about an event describes something that occurred, including the time, date, location, and circumstances of that occurrence. Like all informative speeches, event speeches must also serve a purpose. For example, if you choose to talk about how the Battles of Lexington and Concord came to be known as the "shot heard 'round the world," your purpose might be to show how the actions of ordinary people can change the course of history.



Minuteman Statue in Lexington, Massachusetts

Speeches About Concepts

Concepts refer to ideas, beliefs, theories, attitudes, and/or principles. When speaking about concepts, you may have to provide concrete examples in order to make abstract ideas more relatable and tangible to your audience. Whether discussing the theory of the origins of the universe or if there's any truth to the phrase "love at first sight," concept speeches translate complex ideas into manageable chunks of information for your audience.

Broad vs. Narrow Topics

You might be tempted to choose a broad informative speech topic because you can easily find lots of interesting information to share. For example, a speech on the state of our oceans could include information about wastewater issues, garbage disposal and plastic debris, sea level rise, and acidification. You could find enough information to talk for hours and hours! And, that's the problem. Having too much information to share makes your speech difficult to organize and deliver within time constraints. And there's only so much information that your audience can absorb before they experience information overload.

A narrowly focused speech topic can make it easier for the audience to absorb your speech. A narrowed focus also makes your research more manageable and increases your ability to understand that topic thoroughly before presenting it to others.

Tying Together the Elements of Your Speech

After you've selected an appropriately narrow informative speech topic and conducted thorough research about your topic, you'll need to pick out a small number of key points that you want the audience to take away from your speech.

Use your key points to develop an organizational structure to your speech, which should include an introduction, body, and conclusion, as well as transitions between these elements.

Using this familiar structure offers a guide for your audience to follow as you elaborate the key points of information. Having a structure also gives you the opportunity to introduce the key points in the introduction and revisit them in the conclusion, increasing the likelihood that the audience will walk away with the key knowledge about your topic.

From Concept to Action

Think about the things you interact with on a daily basis. Do you own something unique that means a lot to you? A souvenir from a special trip, a painting, or a family heirloom? Does your special object have a story worth telling? Can you connect it to an interesting place or a moment of historic significance? If you answer "yes" to these questions, conduct a little pre-research to see if you have the foundation for a compelling informative speech.

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