Making Speaking Notes

If the speaking occasion calls for an extemporaneous delivery, you might use notes while you rehearse to remember how you have ordered and developed your talk. Ideally, you won’t need these notes when you present because you will have learned your subject well enough to speak without them. Still, creating notes is one step in learning your topic.

Creating speaking notes is a highly personal and individual process. Still, we offer the following suggestions:

- Expect to make more than one set of speaking notes. Your notes should work for you and you will not know how well until you practice.

- We recommend notecards. Why? They are less likely to make distracting noises if your hands shake.

- Do not try to write out every word you intend to say. Extemporaneous speeches are not memorized or written out word-for-word.

- Nailing your introduction helps increase confidence. Consider including the first phrase or sentence of your attention-getter (sometimes called a “hook” by business people).

- Consider including oral source citation information. Sometimes dates, titles and author’s names can be difficult to keep straight.

- Include your main ideas and/or preview statement. This is the skeleton of your speech, so you should know them well enough to write a few key terms rather than a full sentence.

- A strong ending can leave a lasting impression, but not if you ramble off-topic. Consider including your closure statement on your notecard, so you remember how to end.