

Communication C E N T E R

Now that you're brainstormed and decided on a topic, the next stage is to consider your audience. Ideally, you have chosen a subject you are passionate about, but now consider the diverse people in your audience. They will have different assumptions and frames of reference. So no matter how personally significant your topic, consider their perspective as you construct your speech.

Consider your audience while you prepare

Use this helpful checklist from *A Speaker's Guidebook* :

If you listeners know relatively little about your topic

1. Stick to the basics and include background information.

If the topic is new to them

1. Start by showing them why the topic is relevant to them.
2. Relate the topic to issues and ideas with which they are familiar.

If their attitudes about the topic differ from yours

1. Make the points relevant to their attitudes and beliefs rather than to yours.
2. Seek a common ground.
3. Try focusing on issues that are of general social concern.

If members of the audience are negatively disposed toward your topic

1. Depending on the depth of the audience's negative attitudes toward your topic, consider modifying or changing it.
2. Give your listeners good reasons to explain why their attitudes are unfounded.
3. Give them plenty of good reasons for changing their attitudes.

O'Hair, D., Stewart, R. & Rubenstein, H. (2004). *A Speaker's Guidebook*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Keep your audience engaged as you speak

- Quiz your audience ahead of time. Email questions through Blackboard or ask your teacher for a few minutes at the end of class). Cite the answers in your speech.
- It's ok to use the second person. Although not always appropriate in writing, using "you," "your" and "yours" in a speech sounds conversational and helps keep your audience in the forefront.
- Mention the setting and occasion. References to the room, the campus, the weather, the time of day, etc. are all items that you KNOW your audience have in common.
- Tell your audience to close their eyes and "image" something. NOTE: Remember to tell them to open their eyes when you're done painting a mental picture.
- Converse with your audience or ask close-ended questions. Open-ended questions keep your audience's attention as well, but consider whether or not you have enough time to wait for answers.

Challenge yourself to try these more advanced techniques:

- Think of a way you can reference one of the previous speakers or her ideas in your speech.
- Mention relevant current events in your speech, especially ones that happened in the area where you are giving your speech.
- Find a place in your speech to pause, make eye contact, and talk to one audience member using his name. Then, resume making eye contact with everyone else in the room.