

Persuasive Speech Tips

What do we mean by persuasive speaking?

Persuasive speaking urges us to do something. Speakers lead, evoke emotions and ask for commitment. The aim is for personal action, to get people to join our union, give to COPE, or support our issues.

Methods of Persuasion

People have been trying to influence one another for a long time. Maybe one of the most articulate early speakers was the Greek Philosopher Aristotle. He thought there were basically three ways to influence people:

- **Credibility** -- "ethos" - Sometimes we believe something simply because we trust the person telling us. You want to look like you know what you're talking about.
- **Emotional appeal** -- "pathos" - Sometimes we do things because of a "gut feeling" or an appeal to our emotions, whether those of compassion or fear. Advertisers make great headway tweaking our concerns about what others might think about us.
- **Rational appeal** -- "logos" - Providing good reasons is important. Providing evidence and reasoning are a strong part of the persuasive process. This may be the hardest of the three. What's important here is the development of relevant "support material". Three types of support material commonly used include examples, statistics, and testimony.
 - **Examples** are useful in clarifying, reinforcing, or personalizing ideas. These could involve case studies or anecdotal examples; slices of life to prove the point. Ethically, you should help your audience gauge the credibility of your sources, the representativeness of examples and samples, etc. Using examples without other types of support material can come across as weak evidence.
 - **Statistics** can help. Combining them with examples can be powerful. Using too many statistics can be deadly. You should qualify the sample and translate the statistics that you use so the audience can understand fairly. Relevant visual display of statistics can be a powerful aid in making an argument.

- **Personal testimony** can also provide dramatic support material. Testimony can give emotional life to the issues you're focusing on. You should of course quote or paraphrase accurately and fairly, identify and qualify the source's credentials.

Organizing your persuasive speech

A common pattern – particularly appropriate when you're seeking a commitment to personal action, is the sequence below which includes 5 parts: Attention, Need, Satisfaction, Visualization, Action; but only three main points.

ATTENTION:

First and foremost you need to gain the attention of your audience. In order to gain favorable attention, one or more of the following are recommended (most of these are the same techniques you used in the introduction of your information speeches):

- Humorous anecdote
- Telling a dramatic story
- Posing a question (often rhetorical)
- Make a startling statement
- Relating to audience
- Using a relevant quotation

NEED:

Now that you have the interest and attention of your audience, you must next make them feel a need for change. You need to show your audience that there is a serious problem with the current situation. It is important to state the need clearly and to illustrate it with strong supporting materials.

In your need step you will make a convincing demonstration of how the need directly affects your audience; their health, happiness, security, or other interests. By the need of this step your listeners should be so concerned about the problem that they are psychologically primed to hear your solution.

SATISFACTION:

Having aroused a sense of need, you satisfy it by providing a solution to the problem. Now you present YOUR PLAN or SOLUTION and show your audience how it will work.

Make sure that you give your audience enough details of your proposal/plan so that it is clearly understood. Diagrams and charts are often useful here. You want your audience to leave the satisfaction step with a clear understanding of your plan. Your audience should now be wondering how this will work for them and what it can do for them (e.g., "This seems to be a practical solution for me, however, I would like to see /visualize it in action. How can I benefit?")

VISUALIZATION:

Now that you have your plan/solution you will intensify your audience's desire for your plan by helping them visualize your plan. You want to project your audience into the future and picture the potential benefits of your plan. Use vivid imagery to show your listeners how **they** will profit from your policy. Make them **visualize** how much better conditions will be once your plan is adopted.

The conditions you picture must be capable of attainment. Moreover, they **must be VIVID**. Let your listeners actually see themselves enjoying the advantages, or suffering the evils, you describe. Now that your audience is convinced your policy is beneficial, they should be motivated to take action **NOW**.

ACTION:

The function of the action step is to translate the desire created in the Visualization Step into overt action. Make a call for action. Tell your audience exactly what you want them to do **NOW**, and exactly how to do it. For example,; Tell them where to go today on campus to donate blood. Give them the address of the state representative that they can write to (better yet, give them stamped addressed envelopes to the representative, and maybe even a form letter they can sign). Give them all the informative they need to sign up for the CPR class offered next week at the Red Cross. You have done the leg work and you are making it easy for your audience to take **IMMEDIATE ACTION**.

You must conclude with a final stirring appeal that reinforces your audience's commitment to **ACT NOW! Beware**, however, of making the action step too long or involved. You are trying to make this easy for your audience to do **RIGHT NOW**.

Tips & tricks:

While constructing your, remember these techniques to help you win over your audience.

- **Gain attention and interest.** Try a quote? Try humor(see below)? Shock or startle? ("Before this speech is finish, 5 recent students will have lost jobs in the new depression.") Try a direct question? ("What sort of internet addict are you?") Stress a key word or symbol? (Get dialog going on the symbolic meaning of the logo?)
- **Try humor**, depending on the overall purpose of the presentation. Old editions of Readers Digest are great sources since the material is clean and people will probably have forgotten the jokes.
- **Establish your credibility early**
- **Make relevant, direct contact with audience** - why does it matter? Demonstrate audience analysis and understanding.

- **Preview main points?** (an arguments can be made that solutions shouldn't emerge until at least half way through your speech in order to avoid having your position pre-judged)
- **Create cognitive dissonance.** Your audience must feel involved in the problem before they'll be moved to accept a solution
- **Make effective transitions between ideas**
- **Demonstrate enthusiasm and/or passion**
- **Provoke thought through questions**
- **Construct a logical case** with evidence in support of what you're trying to sell
- **Close with a memorable summary;** perhaps request a specific act or action from the audience. Be declarative, maybe firm and demanding in your close.