

Choosing Appropriate Words

Consider the style, tone, and sections of your speech to determine the most appropriate words and phrases.

KEY POINTS

- Section your speech into parts arranged in a logical order, with each section having a specific focus or purpose.
- Transition between sections with phrases and words that connect your ideas.
- Avoid weasel phrases in order to keep your speech credible and authoritative.

TERM

- weasel phrases
Phrases that often precede statements and that lack substantive quality.

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Choosing Appropriate Words



Valedictorian's Speech

When choosing the appropriate words for your speech, it helps to fully understand the context of your speech, including the audience and venue.

The Style and Tone of Speaking

Consider for a few minutes exactly where, when, and how you will be giving your speech. Consider the tone and style of your speech. From there, think about how you will structure your speech, given these various contexts.

Thinking about these parameters can give you an idea of the most appropriate language to use in the wording of your speech.

Sectioning Your Speech

As you outline your argument, you will want to break your speech into sections. A speech consists, broadly, of an Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.

However, as you begin to highlight your thesis and specific supporting points and examples, you will create additional sections to your speech. This is particularly helpful if you have a long speech because sectioning makes the information easier for your audience to process.

Each section of your speech should have a specific purpose or focus. As you move from one section to the next, you will want to make sure you transition smoothly between each section.

Useful Phrases for Transitions and Sectioning Your Ideas

- Generalizing: as a general rule, as a rule, in general, generally, normally, on the whole, usually
- Explaining: in other words, that is, this means that
- Express likelihood: it is certain that, there is no doubt that, I am confident that, certainly, definitely, clearly, undoubtedly, presumably, will, is, should, it is probable that, it is likely that, probably, can, may, it is possible that, could, might, might possibly, possibly, perhaps
- Express doubt: it is doubtful that, maybe, is improbable, is unlikely, it is uncertain, impossible, cannot, can't, will not, is not
- Draw attention: it is worth noting that, it should be emphasized that, it should be highlighted that, it should be underlined that, in particular, especially, mainly, chiefly, mostly, it should be pointed out that, it should be noted that, it should be remembered that, it is worth stressing that, is vital, is crucial
- Contrasting two points: however, but, in spite of, despite, in spite of the fact that, despite the fact that, nevertheless, nonetheless, instead, conversely, on the contrary, by contrast, whereas, while, whilst, although, even though, on the one hand, on the other hand, in contrast, in comparison with, but, yet, alternatively, the former, the latter, respectively, all the same, there are two possibilities, alternatively, the one, the other, either, or, neither, nor, in addition, no only, but also, worse still, better still, equally, likewise, similarly,

correspondingly, in the same way, another possibility, in a similar vein, as well as, furthermore, moreover, also, although, again, what is more, besides, too, as well as

- Giving examples or introducing illustrations: for example, for instance, to name an example, to give an example, is well illustrated by, a case point is, such as, such, one of which, illustrates, is an example of this, is shown by, is exemplified by, is illustrated by, (something) is, means, describes, is defined as, is used, is concerned with, deals with, relates to, involves, signifies, consist of
- Stating consequences: so, therefore, as a consequence, as a result, now, consequently, because of, thus, for this reason, then, this is why, accordingly, hence, given this, with reference to, given, on this basis, is caused by, causes, due to, has the effect, affects, the reason for, because of this, if, then, results in, leads to, produces, owing to, through, as, since, because
- Summarizing: to sum up, in summary, to summarize, in brief, altogether, overall, I conclude, I therefore conclude, reached the conclusion that, it is concluded, therefore, for this reason, then, thus, in conclusion, to bring it all together
- Qualifying frequency: never, rarely, sometimes, usually, often, always, generally, on the whole, frequently, occasionally, hardly ever, seldom
- Qualifying results: under no circumstances, mainly, generally, predominantly, usually, the majority, most of, almost all, a number of, may be, some, a few, a little, fairly, very, quite, rather, almost
- Qualifying change: no, minimal, slight, small, slow, gradual, steady, marked, large, dramatic, complete, steep, sharp, rapid, sudden (rise, increase, fluctuation, decrease, decline, reduction, fall, drop, upward trend, downward trend, peak, plateau, level off)

Avoid Weasel Phrases

Weasel phrases are those that make a lot of promise but do not follow through on the delivery. These trigger phrases often precede statements that lack much substantive quality. These terms are particularly important to avoid so as not to invalidate the credibility of your argument. Here is a list of common weasel phrases:

- allegedly
- arguably
- as opposed to most
- considered by many

- contrary to many
- critics/critics say that
- it could be argued that
- it has been suggested/stated/said/noticed
- it is widely believed/generally claimed
- many people say
- many scientists argue that
- research has shown
- researchers argue that
- serious scholars say that
- social science says/believes that
- some historians argue
- the scientific community
- this is widely considered to be/regarded as

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Matching Personal Style

KEY TERM GLOSSARY

audience

A group of people within hearing; specifically a group of people listening to a performance, speech etc.; the crowd seeing a stage performance. The readership of a book or other written publication.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Anticipating Potential Objections](#)
- ["Who Cares?"](#)
- [Components of a Speech](#)

comparison

An evaluation of the similarities and differences of one or more things relative to each other.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Analogies](#)
- [Maximize Understanding](#)
- [Sample Persuasive Speech](#)

conclusion

The end, finish, close, or last part of something.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Naming Your Naysayers](#)
- [Signaling the Ending and Managing Q&A](#)
- [Analyzing Your Data](#)

context

The surroundings, circumstances, environment, background, or settings that determine, specify, or clarify the meaning of an event or other occurrence. the surroundings, circumstances, environment, background, or settings that determine, specify, or clarify the meaning of an event or other occurrence.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Theory and Practice](#)
- [Situational and Environmental Context](#)
- [Social Context and Sexual Behavior](#)

credibility

Reputation impacting one's ability to be believed or trusted. reputation impacting one's ability to be believed The objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Entertaining Objections](#)
- [Types and Elements of Credibility](#)
- [Culture-Specific Nuances of Influence and Negotiation](#)

general

Giving or consisting of only the most important aspects of something, ignoring minor details; indefinite.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [The Role of Transitions](#)
- [Research Tips: Start Early, Use a Bibliography, and Evaluate Material Critically](#)
- [Impromptu Speeches](#)

information

The category of information includes facts, figures, and concepts taken from primary and secondary texts. Things that are or can be known about a given topic; communicable knowledge of something.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [The Responding Stage](#)
- [Why Does Organization Matter?](#)
- [Gatekeeping](#)

introduction

A means of presenting one person to another. An initial section of a book or article, which introduces the subject material.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [The Beginning](#)
- [The Role of the Introduction](#)
- [Writing Your Introduction and Thesis](#)

language

A form of communication using words either spoken or gestured with the hands and structured with grammar, often with a writing system.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [The Receiving Stage](#)
- [The Origin of Language](#)
- [The Importance of Language](#)

mean

The average value. one measure of the central tendency either of a probability distribution or of the random variable characterized by that distribution For a data set, the arithmetic mean is equal to the sum of the values divided by the number of values.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Mean, Variance, and Standard Deviation of the Binomial Distribution](#)
- [The Mean Value Theorem, Rolle's Theorem, and Monotonicity](#)
- [Understanding Statistics](#)

outline

A list used to present the main points or topics of a given subject, often used as a rough draft or summary of the content of a document. A statement summarizing the important points of a text. A line marking the boundary of an object figure.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Building a Speech: Starting with an Outline](#)
- [The Rough Draft Outline](#)
- [Reasons to Outline](#)

process

A series of events to produce a result, especially as contrasted to product. in reference to capabilities, a process is how the capability is executed. An outgrowth of tissue or cell.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Ingraining Culture](#)
- [Preparing for Team Presentations](#)
- [Classifying Business Products](#)

purpose

A result that is desired; an intention. An object to be reached; a target; an aim; a goal.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [General Purpose](#)
- [Specific Purpose](#)
- [Revising Your Paper](#)

specific

Explicit or definite.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Defining an Informative Speech](#)
- [Special Occasion Speeches](#)
- [Tailor Complexity to Your Audience](#)

summarize

To give a recapitulation of the salient facts; to recapitulate or review

Appears in these related concepts:

- [The Components of a Speech: Main Points, Introduction, Conclusion, and Transitions](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [What Is the Accounting Cycle?](#)

thesis

A concise summary of the argument or main points, usually one to three sentences long. A statement supported by arguments.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Introducing the Topic, Thesis, and Main Points](#)
- [Reading Challenging Texts](#)
- [Reading Generously to Understand, Then Critically to Evaluate](#)

transition

The process of change from one form, state, style, or place to another. A word or phrase connecting one part of a discourse to another.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Transitions](#)
- [The Middle](#)
- [Using Transitions](#)

transitions

Words or phrases that allow the reader to understand how adjacent parts of a communication are connected.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Additional Notes on Preparing and Delivering Impromptu Speeches](#)
- [Types of Transitions](#)
- [Make Connections](#)

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