

Choosing Clear Words and Phrasing

Choose clear words and phrasing in your speech by fully understanding your topic through delimiting the question and defining key terms.

KEY POINTS

- How well do you know your topic? Make sure you fully understand everything that goes into your topic as you begin to craft the specific wording of your speech.
- Start by delimiting the question, that is, fully parsing out exactly what question you're answering by giving your speech. Even if you don't think there is a specific question, your speech topic exists for some purpose. What purpose does your speech fulfill?
- From there, define your key terms of your speech.

TERMS

- delimit
To mark or fix the limits of.
- baseline
A datum used as the basis for calculation or for comparison.
- dissect
To analyze an idea in detail by separating it into its parts.

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Choosing Clear Words

It's important to convey your message in the clearest ways possible to your audience.

How Well Do You Fully Understand Your Topic?

You know that you have to write a speech, and you may or may not have been given a specific topic about which to write. Easy as pie, right? Hold on there—take a step back for a moment and ask yourself: how well do you fully understand your topic? It's important to take that step back and look at your speech from a distanced perspective.

Looking at your speech from a distance allows you to dissect exactly how you can begin to tackle the specific wording of your speech. You want to make sure that your speech is easy to understand and follow, so it's imperative to choose clear words and phrasing. When you think of your speech in delimiting the question and defining key terms, you have a great starting point for how to begin selecting the clearest words and phrasing.

Delimit the Question

What question does your speech address? You might be thinking, "Wait a minute. My speech isn't even answering a question. I'm just supposed to talk

about a business plan I've made for a fake company for an assignment in my entrepreneurship class. "

Here's the thing: your speech actually *is* answering a question, that question being, "Why should you invest in my business? " (however fake that business may be).

The importance of identifying the broader question to which your speech will speak not only helps your audience understand your point, but it pinpoints exactly how you need to tailor your speech to your audience. Essentially, when you take the steps to delimit your question (your speech's purpose), you help to outline exactly how your audience can follow your line of reasoning.

When you delimit the question, first think about the purpose of your speech. This will usually point you in the direction of the broader question. From there, list step-by-step how you plan to address that question. Set the parameters for your rhetic for your audience.

Define Key Terms

Even though your speech could be about something that is otherwise common knowledge to your audience, it is helpful to also define key terms for them as you go along in your speech. Even though you may have outlined your plan of attack by delimiting the question, it also helps to explain exactly what you're talking about to your audience. When you establish your key terms by defining them for your audience, you set a baseline standard of understanding for your audience, thus eliminating any confusion.

When you delimited your question, were there any key words used in that question? Define those terms as necessary. You'll want to source your definitions appropriately by looking up those key terms from reliable sources. In doing so, you indicate to your audience that not only do you fully understand the ways in which to approach your argument, but that you understand your topic.

Do be careful: you don't want to "dumb down" your speech by defining every single key term throughout your speech. Make sure you only highlight and define those words that are necessary for establishing a foundation of your speech topic.

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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](#)

definition

A statement expressing the essential nature of something; formulation. a formalization of the notion of the limit of functions

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Summing an Infinite Series](#)
- [Infinite Limits](#)
- [Types of Informative Speeches](#)

knowledge

Familiarity or understanding of a particular skill, branch of learning, etc.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Knowledgeability of the Audience about Your Topic](#)
- [Your Areas of Expertise](#)
- [Why Does Organization Matter?](#)

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](#)

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](#)

- [Reading Generously to Understand, Then Critically to Evaluate](#)

rhetoric

The art of using language, especially public speaking, as a means to persuade.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Debate](#)
- [Producing an Emotional Appeal](#)
- [History of Public Speaking](#)

specific

Explicit or definite.

Appears in these related concepts:

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

topic

Subject; theme; a category or general area of interest.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Introducing the Topic, Thesis, and Main Points](#)
- [Developing a Question in Your Topic](#)
- [Choosing Your Topic](#)

understanding

The mental (sometimes emotional) process of comprehension, or the assimilation of knowledge, which is subjective by its nature.

Appears in these related concepts:

- [Scope Your Speech](#)
- [The Evaluating Stage](#)
- [Maximize Understanding](#)

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