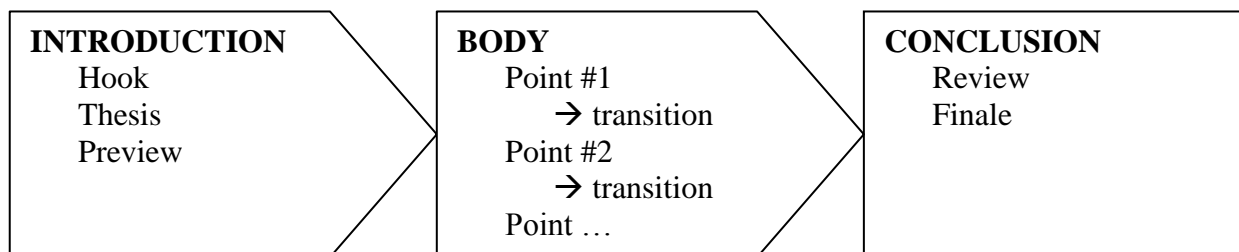


There are two reasons why it is important to carefully organize your speech: to make it *comprehensible and memorable*. Your audience should be able to both understand and retain the material that you are presenting. Furthermore, a well organized speech is easier for you to remember and effectively deliver. Organizational patterns play a critical role in how we assign meaning and how we interpret messages, and there are certain strategies in organization that can tap into your audience’s faculties for processing information. These strategies are organized into the categories of *Structure, Stream of Thought, and Stickiness*.

## Structure

Providing a speech’s framework, the structure determines the order in which information is presented. The following template provides an effective way to structure your speech, highlighting important points and optimizing audience retention.



### I. INTRODUCTION

In your introduction, your goals are to capture the audience’s attention, give them an idea of what you are going to be talking about, and set up a roadmap for how you will be addressing that topic. This is done through the use of a **hook, thesis, and preview**.

- **Hook:** *Capture the audience’s attention and interest.* For example, begin with a fascinating quote or figure, pose a rhetorical question, or offer a brief story.
- **Thesis:** A thesis is more than just a statement of your topic- it is *a clear and definitive statement about your topic*. For example, if grass is your topic, a good thesis would be “Taking care of the grass on your lawn is a year-round task.” Your thesis is the one bit of information that you absolutely want to make sure your audience keeps in mind. When you deliver your thesis, make it very clear that the audience is about to hear the most important part of your speech. Alter tone, gestures, or any other aspects of delivery to present this importance.
- **Preview:** *Give your audience a cognitive roadmap for your speech.* Tell them in advance the main points you will use to support your thesis. Let your audience know your stream of thought (explained below). By preparing your audience for the points that you will be addressing, you will come off as organized and confident, your speech will seem cohesive, and your audience will more easily retain your information.

## II. BODY

*Provide well-reasoned descriptions of your major points.*

This is the meat of your speech because it is where you state and elaborate the points that support your thesis. Support your arguments with sufficient reasoning, background information, quotes, data, etc. Focus on how you transition from point to point. The audience should be aware that you are done with point 2 and on to point 3 and you should make clear how point 2 is connected to point 3.

## III. CONCLUSION

Walk back through your speech and hammer in key points, leaving your audience with a sense of closure. *Review your speech, then end with a bang.*

- **Review:** *Go over the roadmap* that you presented in your preview to reiterate your main points and stream of thought. Let them know that you have accomplished the goal of your speech.
- **Finale:** *Leave a memorable impact on your audience.* It is often a good idea to refer to an idea, story, quote, or rhetorical question that you offered in your introduction.

The template presented above is an effective and streamlined way of presenting information and ensuring that the audience follows you from point to point. Though not the only way to give a speech, it provides a reliable way of presenting information (especially technical information).

## Stream of Thought

*Your stream of thought is how your points are connected to one another.* When organizing your speech, constantly ask yourself why you are ordering your points the way that you are. If you can answer that question, the transition between your points will come naturally.

If you are telling a story, your points are connected in chronological order. If you are talking about the layers of the atmosphere, it would make sense to start talking about the Ionosphere at the top and end with the Troposphere on the bottom (or vice versa). No matter what your topic is, *make the connection between each of your points obvious.*

Listed below are just a few basic ways that parts of a speech may be connected with one another.

- **Chronological:** arranged in the order of occurrence
- **Cause → Effect → Solution:** a problem is broken into parts.
- **Funnel:** initial broad analysis is developed into a specific argument.
- **Reverse Funnel:** specific arguments are developed into a broad analysis.
- **Spatial:** ordered by position (physical, geographical, etc.).

- **Theory vs. Practice:** the ideas behind a plan are compared with the plan's implementation.
- **Cyclical:** each element is both a cause and effect of another element.
- **Parts/characteristics of a Whole:** the description of a whole is broken into its elements.

Your stream of thought should be made evident throughout your speech, which can be done by using the following techniques.

- **Previewing and reviewing:** Describe how your main points are connected to each other in the beginning and end of your speech. See the section on structure, above, for more details.
- **Transitioning:** When moving from point to point within your speech's body, show the audience how your stream of thought is taking you from one point to the next. Your transitions should not be, "my first point was \_\_\_\_ and now my second point is \_\_\_\_." Instead of just describing your points, show how they fit with one another and into your whole speech.

## Stickiness

Successful structure and stream of thought ensure that each one of your points is explained and connected to your thesis. Those elements of organization contribute hugely to how your information is comprehended. Stickiness addresses the other goal of organization: how your material will be remembered. Below are some strategies you can use for organizing your speech in a way that will stick.

- **Repeat:** By far, the most successful strategy for delivering a memorable speech is repetition. Use and reuse the same words and phrases to explain your points. Remember that your audience cannot refer back to your thesis like they could if you were writing a paper. You must consistently mention your thesis so that your audience can remain aware of it and remember it when you are through. Notably, this is done in a speech's preview and review when following the template given above.
- **Make it catchy:** Create signposts for your main ideas. These are similar to headings in an essay and they should be no more than a few words long. If it can be done naturally, use headings that start with the same letter, rhyme with each other, or spell out a word.
- **Make it simple:** Use figurative language to connect your thesis to a simpler idea that the audience already understands. Connect each point in your speech to part of an image, quote, object, etc.

## **Conclusion**

A well-organized speech has a neat *structure*, a clear *stream of thought*, and *sticks* in the mind of the audience. The techniques under each of these categories above are quite effective for making a speech that is comprehensible and memorable. There is more than one way to effectively organize a speech, so stick with the guidelines presented above as you practice public speaking and you will come to find your own style.