

Persuasive Speech

In one survey about people's fears, respondents ranked a fear of public speaking at #1 – higher than death! However, many of you will one day have jobs that will ask you to speak in public often – in fact, in my job, I do it every day, several times a day. Believe it or not, I used to be the quietest person in the classroom. I hardly ever spoke. When the teacher called on me, my heart started pounding. Sometimes I stammered. I could feel my face turning red. Who would have thought that little girl could ever speak in front of people every day?

Persuasive speaking is very similar to persuasive writing. You will deliver a persuasive speech to your classmates on the topic of your choice. I will not assign you topics. I can help you choose one if you are really stuck. For this assignment, you will meet the following objectives:

- Demonstrate the appropriate classroom public speaking and listening skills (e.g., body language, articulation, listening to be able to identify specific examples of the speaker's coordination of talking and action) that would be necessary to influence or change someone's mind or way of thinking about a topic.
- Define the elements of persuasion.
- Recognize the elements of personal credibility.
- Develop methods to analyze other students' speeches.
- Understand outlining main ideas.
- Create a persuasive speech.

Think back to the speeches we have studied in this unit. What made them effective? What sorts of appeals, factual and emotional, did the speakers make to their audiences? Think about speeches you have seen on television – election debates and otherwise. How did the speakers “deliver” their speeches?

As you compose your speech and practice delivering it, keep in mind the following aspects of good speaking:

- **Body Language** – Make sure that you have proper posture. If your shoulders are sagging and your legs are crossed, you will not appear sincere, and people just will not accept your message.
- **Articulation** – Articulation means how your total vocal process works. There are several steps to this entire process. You need to understand the process. First, you need air from the lungs, your vocal cords in your larynx must be working, your mouth and tongue must be in sync, and you have to make sure that you have got some saliva in your mouth to keep things oiled. You should be aware of your physical makeup to be able to understand how you speak.
- **Pronunciation** – You need to pronounce each word. You must avoid slang, except to make a point, and not slur the words. You must avoid saying, “you know,” “uh,” “um,” and the like.
- **Pitch** – Pitch refers to the highs and lows of the voice. Whatever you do, you must avoid a monotone!
- **Speed** – The speed, or pace, is an important variable to control. Between 140-160 words per minute is the normal pace for a persuasive speech. Any faster and you may appear to be glib; any slower and you sound like you are lecturing. If you are not sure about your speed, tape yourself for one minute and then replay it and count the number of words you used in the minute! The human ear and brain can compile and decode over 400 spoken words

per minute, so if you are going too slow your listeners' minds are going to start to wander as their brains find other ways to keep themselves occupied.

- **Pauses** – The pause, or caesura, is a critical persuasive tool. When you want to emphasize a certain word, just pause for one second before; this highlights the word. If you really want to punch it, tell them to pause before and after the word!
- **Volume** – Volume is another good tool for a persuasive speech, but you should use it with caution. If you scream all the way through your speech, people will become accustomed to it and it will lose its effectiveness (which is what happened to poor old Howard Dean). On the other hand, a few well-timed shouts can liven up the speech! You must try to “project” or throw your voice out over the entire class – or speak to the last row.
- **Quality** – Quality of voice is gauged by the overall impact that your voice has on your listeners. Quality of voice is the net caliber of your voice, its character and attributes. You must try to keep the vocal quality high; it is what separates your voice from everyone else's.
- **Variance** – Variance of vocal elements is the most important consideration of all. One of the most persuasive speakers in modern history was Winston Churchill. One of his most remarkable qualities was his ability to vary the elements of his voice. He would start with a slow, laconic voice and then switch gears to a more rapid pace. People were light-headed after listening to him! Even if you have no desire to run for political office, you can still use the tools of variance. Try to change your pitch, volume, and speed at least once every 30 seconds, if only for just one word. Never go more than one paragraph without a vocal variance. This keeps the class locked into the speech, if for no other reason than it sounds interesting! Let your words speak for themselves; reflect your nature through your voice. If you use the word “strangle,” say it with a hint of menace in your voice. If you say the word “heave,” let the class feel the onomatopoeic force behind it. If you say the word “bulldozer,” make it sound like a titan earthmover, not like a baby with a shovel.

As you prepare your speech, you may find this website helpful:

<http://www.capital.net/~bps2/>.

Your speech should be 3-5 minutes long. You will turn in a written outline of your speech so that I can determine whether there is any evidence of drafting and preparation (see format below). Remember that a good persuasive essay was never written without a bit of research; a good persuasive speech is no different. You'll need facts to back up your opinions, so make sure you demonstrate you're right with some solid evidence – use the Internet to find statistics, studies, and other facts. You will be evaluated based on the attached rubric.

Use the following outline to plan your speech:

- I. Opening Statement of Interest
 - A. Reason(s) to Listen
 - B. Speaker Credibility
 - C. Thesis Statement
- II. Statement of Need
 - A. Illustration
 - B. Ramifications
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - C. Pointing

- III. Statement of Solution
 - A. Explanation of Solution
 - B. Theoretical Demonstration
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - C. Practical Experience
 - D. Meeting Objections
 - 1.
 - 2.
- IV. Restatement of Proposed Solution
 - A. Negative Visualization
 - B. Positive Visualization
- V. Restatement and Summary
 - A. Statement of Specific Action or Attitude Change
 - B. Statement of Personal Interest
 - C. Reason to Remember

SOURCES:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Persuasive Speech Outline Parts Explained

I. Begin with an opening statement of interest (use one or more of the following):

- A rhetorical question
- A startling statement
- A quotation
- An illustration or story
- A reference to the subject
- A reference to the occasion

Motivate audience interest in your subject by alluding to: (use one or more of the following):

- The practical value of the information for your audience
- A reason to listen
- The audience's sense of curiosity
- Establish your credibility by:
 - Alluding to any first-hand experience you may have had
 - Alluding to sources of information you have consulted

Provide orienting material by: (use one or more of the following):

- Previewing main points

- Defining any technical terms that you will be using

II. Statement of Need

There are potentially two kinds of needs (your speech uses one of these):

- **To urge a change**-point out what's wrong with present conditions
- **To demand preservation of present conditions**-point out the danger of a change

The Need Step is developed by:

- **Illustration:** Tell of one or more incidents to illustrate the need
- **Ramifications:** Employ as many additional facts, examples, and quotations as are required to make the need convincingly impressive.
- **Pointing:** Show its importance to the individuals in the audience.

III. Statement of Solution presents a solution. This step is developed by (use one or more of the following):

- **Statement of solution:** a brief statement of the attitude, belief, or action you wish the audience to adopt.
- **Explanation:** Make sure that your proposal is understood.
- **Theoretical demonstration:** show how the solution logically and adequately meets the need pointed out in the need step, point-by-point!
- **Practical experience:** actual examples showing where this proposal has worked effectively or where the belief has proven correct.
- **Meeting objections:** forestall opposition by showing how your proposal overcomes any objections which might be raised.

IV. Restatement of Proposed Solution: This step helps your audience visualize, and it must stand the test of reality. The conditions you describe must be at least realistic. The more vividly you make the situation seem, the stronger will be the reaction of the audience. There are three methods of visualizing the future. (Use one or more of the following):

- **Positive:** Describe the conditions if your solution is actually carried out. Picture the listeners in that situation actually enjoying the safety, pleasure, or pride that your proposal will produce.
- **Negative:** Describe conditions if your solution is not carried out. Picture the audience feeling the bad effects or unpleasantness that the failure to effect your solution will produce.
- **Contrast:** Combination of 1 and 2. Begin with the negative method (undesirable situation) and conclude with the positive method (desirable solution).

V. Restatement of Summary: developed by (use one or more of the following):

- Restatement of main idea and summary of main points.
- Statement of specific action or attitude change you want from the audience.
- A statement of your personal intent to take the course of action or attitude recommended.
- A concluding statement to recapture interest (a reason to remember).

To the end of your outline, you should add a list of sources you used. You need not use five, but use at least two.