

CONSTRUCTING SPEECHES

CHOOSING A TOPIC

So how do I choose a topic?

If your goal is to get others to listen to you and to do well on the presentation, you have to begin with a good topic. So, what should you consider when picking a topic?

First, and most importantly, pick a topic that interests you. It is nearly impossible to persuade, entertain, or inform an audience that they should listen to you if it is clear that you'd rather not be speaking on your topic, or they think you picked it because it was easy or that you've done it before.

Second, pick a topic that has research potential. You will learn that speeches that drastically persuade you were backed up by evidence from an outside, credible source other than the speaker. Quoting the "New York Times" is much more effective than neighbor Joe. Why should we believe you just because you think it's true or good? Obviously, it is extremely important to have your opinions be evident, but it is equally important that you back up your claim with outside support and evidence.

Third, choose a topic that needs to be heard by your audience. There are certain topics, especially in persuasive speeches, which should not be done. This is because some topics, no matter what you say, where you will be unable to change their minds. Here is a list of example topics that are very difficult to persuade:

1. abortion is bad/good
2. death penalty is bad/good
3. euthanasia is bad/good

Along these same lines there are topics that are obvious and should be done with caution. Doing a speech on why shark attacks are bad or how recycling is good, will just reiterate knowledge we already know. The audience needs to be challenged to look at things differently than they already do.

Finally, relate your topic to your audience. Presumably, if you believe what you are saying, your audience will also. Make sure when you choose your topic, your audience will care what you are saying. Although you might be concerned with Scotch Tape disposal units your audience probably doesn't.

So where can I find awesome topics?

So now you know what kinds of topics are effective, it's time now to determine where to find topics. Some interesting places to look for topics is internet magazines, personal experiences, and other forms of media. Internet magazines such as *MSN* or *Yahoo* home flash sensational types of news on your computer screen. For example, on September 23, 2002 the msn home had a link to police etiquette: "what to not say when you are pulled over." This topic is informative and could definitely be entertaining.

You could also look at your own personal experiences to choose a topic. If you are interested in rock climbing or choosing a car, these topics would definitely appeal to your audience. Again, make sure the topic you choose appeals to your audience.

Another great place to find topics is other types of media. If you viewed the informative on sniffer bees, the topic was found on the NPR radio program, *All Things Considered* in March of 2002. All types of media are trying to inform or entertain and nailing down these purposes often prove for an effective speech.

Happy hunting!