

CONSTRUCTING SPEECHES

THE TRANSITION

So what is a transition?

Most simply, a transition is the sentence(s) that connects one idea to the next. Transitions accomplish two important goals for the speaker. First, they help a listener realize that you are changing from one point to the next. They operate as road signs to help the listener follow your progression. Second, they help the audience see the relationship of the ideas to each other. A good transition will summarize the first idea and then give a preview of how that idea relates to the next point and the speech as a whole.

So what do these transition things look like?

The simplest type of transition looks like this:

“So now that we’ve examined why that little paperclip guy appears when I use ‘ain’t’ in Microsoft Word, we can now look to why he is ineffective and most importantly annoying.”

Although this transition gets the point across, transitions can also be used effectively to relay information. For example:

“Obviously, the little paper clip guy is causing many grammar caused rages and additionally, the New York Times of April 18th 2002 reads that the paper clip guy is the cause of 100% of grammar caused deaths. Therefore it is imperative that we analyze paper clip guys benefits to determine what can be done to get rid of this dangling participle preventer.”

In summary, what should you remember about transitions?

1. Transitions should be used any time you change ideas or points. At minimum, you need a transition between the introduction and the body. You also need transitions between each point of the body (e.g. if you have points A, B, and C, then you need transitions between A-B and B-C. Then you need a transition from the body (A,B, and C) to the conclusion. So, a speech with three points in the body must have at least four major transition sentences in it.
2. Transitions should be relatively short.
3. Transitions should operate as sign-posts or indicators of where you are within the speech (the first point..., the next idea....., the final item....).
4. Transitions should summarize the point you just made.
5. Transitions should show how that point relates to the next one (e.g., “Now that we know the problems that are caused by poor eating, we next need to understand the effects that are created by this disease.”