

An Overview of Informative Speaking

Brief: An effective informative speech informs the audience about a specific topic in one of four interesting and memorable ways.

Learning Objective: Differentiate between general and specific informative speech goals and identify four types of informative speeches.

Key Terms:

- **Definition Speech:** A type of informative speech that explains a concept or theory regarding a topic.
- **Demonstration Speech:** A type of informative speech intended to teach an audience how to complete a task.
- **Descriptive Speech:** A type of informative speech that creates an accurate mental picture of a specific person, place, or thing.
- **Explanatory Speech:** A type of informative speech that explains the state of a topic.
- **Informative Speech:** A speech that shares information about a topic in a way that's easy to understand and memorable.

What is an Informative Speech?

All effective speeches begin with goals, both general and specific. Before a speaker even begins to prepare, they need to ask themselves: “What do I want my audience to gain from listening to my speech?” For an informative speech, the speaker’s general goal is always to inform—or teach—the audience by offering interesting information about a topic in a way that helps the audience remember what they’ve heard.

A public speaker’s specific informative speech goal relates to the particular topic they’ve chosen. To create their specific goal, the speaker needs to consider how to best present the depth and breadth of understanding they have gathered about the topic from personal experience and research. They should consider: “What specific information do I want my audience to receive and remember about my topic?”

Receive and Remember

Effective informative speeches are both interesting to hear and interesting enough to remember. The most memorable speeches are talked about long after the speech is delivered—and, in some rare cases, even after the life of the speaker.

One way to help an audience remember the details of an informative speech is to maintain the interest of the audience. However, unlike persuasive speeches which can rely heavily on emotional appeal, informative speeches have to demonstrate why the audience should care about the information contained in the speech based on the creative presentation of the content.

The Four Types of Informative Speeches

An informative speech always delivers information to the audience. But not all informative speeches inform an audience in the same way. The four types of informative speeches are definition speeches, demonstration speeches, explanatory speeches, and descriptive speeches.

Definition Speech

A definition speech explains the meaning, theory, or philosophy of a specific topic that the audience likely does not know much about. The topics may be general, such as a sport, or highly specific, such as a particular person. The main goal of this speech is to educate the audience so that they understand the main points regarding this subject.



Demonstration Speech

A demonstration speech explains how to do something. If you have ever sat through a lecture where a teacher explained how to create a bibliography, then you have heard a demonstration speech. Like most informative speeches, a how-to speech will likely use visual examples that show the audience how to move from step to step through a particular activity.

Explanatory Speech

An explanatory speech might give a description of the state of a given topic. As an example, consider a speech that might be given at a professional conference to inform the audience about a particular part of an industry. Often, these type of speeches will include visual representations of the particular data or statistics relating to information contained in the speech.

Descriptive Speech

A descriptive speech uses vivid language and visual images to create a memorable picture in a person's mind regarding an object, person, animal, or place. An archaeologist who has discovered a new temple in South America or a paleontologist who believes they have found a new dinosaur may use a descriptive speech to inform an interested audience about their recent discoveries.

From Concept to Action

Recall a time when you easily remembered information given during a presentation, perhaps a public speech or classroom lecture. What elements of the presentation, such as vivid examples or well-constructed visual aids, helped to make the information memorable? How could you apply these elements to insure that your audience will remember your informative speech?

OER IMAGE SOURCES:

"Definition Word Dictionary Text Page Book Paper." Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/en/definition-word-dictionary-text-390785/>. Accessed November 26, 2018. [CC0]

OER TEXT SOURCES:

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"Introduction to Informative Speaking." Lumen Learning. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-communications/chapter/introduction-to-informative-speaking/>. Accessed 26 November 2018. [CC BY-SA 3.0]