

Determine Your Specific Speech Goal

Brief: A specific speech goal, which is written as one single declarative sentence, is designed to keep the speaker focused on the audience-centered intended outcome of the speech.

Learning Objective: To demonstrate how to write an effective specific speech goal.

Key Terms:

- **Specific speech goal:** A statement about a speech topic as it relates to the audience-centered intended outcome of the speech.

The Elements of a Specific Speech Goal

After you identify your general speech goal and your topic, write your specific speech goal before you further develop your speech. Your specific speech goal, which is written as one single declarative sentence, is designed to keep you focused on the audience-centered intended outcome of the speech.

General Speech Goal

Almost every speech will fit the category of one of four general speech goals: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, or to inspire. A specific speech goal picks up where the general speech goal leaves off, using that speech's general purpose as a foundation to build a more focused statement about that speech.

Audience-Centered

Your specific speech goal is all about your audience and the outcome you want them to experience. Specific speech goals are designed to reinforce your audience-centered approach throughout your speech development process. Therefore, specific speech goals begin with audience-centered language such, "After listening to my speech my audience"

The next few words of your specific speech goal will reflect your general speech goal. For example, if your general speech goal is to inform, your specific speech goal might read, "After listening to my speech my audience will understand...." Or, "After listening to my speech my audience will know how to...."

If your general speech goal is to persuade, your specific speech goal might read, "After listening to my speech my audience will be convinced that..." Or, "After listening to my speech my audience will decide to change their behavior by...."

If your general speech goal is to entertain, your specific speech goal might read, “After listening to my speech my audience will enjoy...” And if your general speech goal is to inspire, your specific speech goal might read, “After listening to my speech my audience will be motivated to....”

Desired Outcome

After you state your general purpose in an audience-centered way, your next step will be to complete the rest of the sentence with the desired outcome you want your audience to experience about your topic. For example, if your general speech goal is to inform and your topic is rock climbing, your specific speech goal might read, “After listening to my speech my audience will know more about the basic equipment, training, and safety precautions necessary before undertaking a rock climbing adventure.”



Here’s where all the audience analysis you have conducted will come into play. Consider what you learned about your audience’s prior knowledge about your topic. If you’re talking to a group of people who live a more sedentary lifestyle, most of whom would likely not have already had rock climbing experience, your specific purpose statement is probably appropriate.

But, if you’re talking to a group of athletes, some of whom may have already had rock climbing experience, you might want to change your focus a bit to reflect their prior knowledge. For example, your specific speech goal might read, “After listening to my speech my audience will know more about the latest equipment, advanced training, and innovations in safety precautions necessary before undertaking their next rock climbing adventure.”

From Concept to Action

To better understand how your specific speech goal relates to your audience, imagine that you’re giving a speech on the same topic to two very different audiences. Begin by selecting a topic you’re considering for a speech assignment. Then, consider your two audiences. For example, one audience might be a group of middle school students who likely know very little about your topic, while the other audience might be a group of adults who are experts in your topic. Next write a specific speech goal for each. What’s the same about these goals? What’s different? How do the differences in your audiences affect the way you wrote these goals?

OER IMAGE SOURCES:

“Climber Mountaineer Mountaineering Rock.” Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/climber-mountaineer-mountaineering-299018>. Accessed 15 April 2019. [CC0]