

## Choose a General Topic

**Brief:** Increase the likelihood of delivering an effective speech by choosing a speech topic that reflects or promotes sincerity, enthusiasm, confidence, and simplicity.

**Learning Objective:** Explain the importance of selecting the right topic.

**Key Terms:**

- **Simplicity:** The state or quality of being uncomplicated, unambiguous, to the point, and understandable.

### The Four Elements of a Powerful Topic

You want your speech topic to reflect or promote sincerity, enthusiasm, confidence, and simplicity (SECS). If it does, you will increase the likelihood of delivering an effective speech.

#### ***Sincerity***

A speaker must be sincere if he or she wants to communicate with any audience—whether that audience is comprised of one person or one hundred people. Sincerity means a number of things; it means being honest with your audience, it means believing in what you are saying, and it means believing what you have to say will be of interest and benefit to your audience. If you don't believe in what you're saying, this will quickly become evident to your audience. In which case, don't waste your time or theirs.

#### ***Enthusiasm***

The second element of the SECS principle is enthusiasm. You must have a personal interest in and genuine enthusiasm for your speech topic. If you find yourself wanting to talk with someone about your topic—even though it's not part of your speech assignment—that's a good sign that you're enthusiastic about your topic. Is more likely that your audience will be engaged in your speech if they sense your interest in the topic.

#### ***Confidence***

The third element of the SECS principle is confidence. You need to be convinced that what you say is true, that it is worth saying, and that it fulfills a purpose. In order to acquire this conviction, you must understand your topic. While it does not mean that you have to know everything there is to know about your subject (no one can ever claim that sort of knowledge), you should perform whatever research necessary in order to fully understand the subject for discussion.

## ***Simplicity***

The fourth element of the SECS principle is simplicity: keeping your presentation simple, logical, and straightforward. This does not mean that your topic should be simplistic. Rather, it means that your message about the topic must be uncomplicated, unambiguous, to the point, and understandable.

## **Tips for Choosing a Topic**

When you tell a story, you want your audience to be engaged. The same is true when you deliver a speech—you want to a topic that will engage your audience to you can hold their attention throughout. When you choose a topic, consider your audience. Ask yourself: What topic, or subject, will engage the audience?

Still unsure about what topic to choose? Consider the following:

- Current events— What are the current events that everyone is talking about? Why are they talking about them?
- Your hobbies and interest— Do you think your audience has an understanding of the basics of one of your hobbies or interests? What do you know that they might find interesting?
- Your work—Are there things that you have learned through your work that would be useful to people who are not familiar with your profession?

The trick is to be as relevant as you can to the audience who is listening to you.

## **From Concept to Action**

Think about your favorite subjects. Start with enthusiasm. What topic do you find yourself talking about over and over again—with friends, classmates, co-workers, or with pretty much anyone who will listen? Chances are that's a topic you care deeply about. Now, consider the rest of SECS: sincerity, confidence, and simplicity. If this topic checks off the rest of the boxes, you might have found a winner!

### **OER TEXT SOURCES:**

"Finding and Selecting a Topic." Lumen Learning. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-communications/chapter/finding-and-selecting-a-topic>. Accessed 07 April 2019. [CC BY-SA 4.0]

"Importance of Choosing a Good Topic." Lumen Learning. <https://lumen.instructure.com/courses/218897/pages/linkedtext54173>. Accessed 07 April 2019. [CC BY-SA 3.0]