

Pre-Research Your Topic for Scope and Viability

Brief: Scoping your topic through pre-research is a way to keep your speech on point and focused, improving your ability to effectively communicate essential information to the audience.

Learning Objective: Conduct pre-research to determine a topic's appropriate scope and viability.

Key Terms:

- **Pre-research:** Preliminary research to identify and review credible, relevant sources about your topic.
- **Scope:** The breadth of information about a topic and the extent to which that information is relevant to the topic and speech purpose.

Scope Your Topic

Scope refers to the breadth of information about a topic and the extent to which that information is relevant to the topic and speech purpose.

In most cases, the general topic you choose will be too broad. For example, if you choose the general speech topic “basketball,” will your speech be about the history of basketball? Will it be about specific players? Or specific rules? The first step in scoping your topic is identifying the important subtopics that form the parameters of your speech.



Pre-Research

To identify a variety of possible subtopics, pre-research your topic. When you pre-research, you conduct preliminary research to identify and review credible, relevant sources about your topic. Taking the time to pre-research your topic can prevent you from wasting a lot of time on topics that aren't viable for your speech.

You'll quickly discover if sources about your topic exist, if those topics are credible and relevant, and if your topic can easily be divided into interesting subtopics.

Use the Internet for Pre-Research

While the Internet is an easy way to familiarize yourself with a speech topic, the burden of filtering truth from fiction in your Internet searches lies solely with you as the researcher.

The ADAM Approach

ADAM is an acronym to help you remember the four most important things to consider when evaluating the quality of your materials found via the Internet: age, depth, author, and money.

Age: How recent is the data or information presented in the source? When was the website last updated? Use only the most current information you can find.

Depth: Does the material go in depth with your subject or merely cover the basics? Are the details from scholarly or academic sources? Look for scholarly or academic sources that go in depth.

Author: Who wrote the source? What are their credentials? What makes them an authoritative expert on this subject? What biases might they have? Seek out impartial, authoritative experts.

Money: Who funds the website? Is the website trying to sell you anything? Make sure you consider a website's agenda before using it as a source.

Scope for Relevancy

Taking the time to thoughtfully scope your speech has benefits for both you and your audience. By keeping your speech on point and focused, you will increase your chances of meeting your speech goal by improving your ability to effectively communicate essential information to the audience.

Ask yourself: "After listening to my speech, what information do I want my audience to know?" Use the answer to this question as a focal point for everything you include in your speech. Anything superfluous or extraneous is only going to unnecessarily broaden the scope and lead you and your audience off track. The evidence you choose should be more than tangentially related to your topic; there should be direct lines of relevance to your topic in every piece of information included in your speech.

From Concept to Action

Practice pre-researching with your general speech topic. Start with a Google search (including variations of key words) and review the results for possible subtopics. Apply the ADAM approach to determine source credibility and viability. Before you finish, run a search using Google Scholar to see if other academic sources emerge. If you stay focused, you should be

able to generate a number of subtopic ideas and get a sense of a viable scope in a short period of time.

OER IMAGE SOURCES:

"LeBron James Layup (Cleveland vs. Brooklyn 2018)." Wikimedia Commons.
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LeBron_James_Layup_\(Cleveland_vs_Brooklyn_2018\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LeBron_James_Layup_(Cleveland_vs_Brooklyn_2018).jpg). Accessed 14 April 2019. [CC BY-SA 2.0]

OER TEXT SOURCES:

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