

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is smiling and looking slightly to her right. She is wearing a grey blazer over a blue collared shirt and a blue lanyard. In the background, a world map is visible on a wall, with the words "Eastern Hemisphere" partially legible. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

# Speaking to Inform

CHAPTER 15

# Agenda for the class



**TYPES OF INFORMATIVE SPEECHES:  
ANALYSIS AND ORGANIZATION**



**GUIDELINES FOR INFORMATIVE  
SPEAKING**



**SAMPLE SPEECH WITH  
COMMENTARY**

# Informative Speech

- Designed to convey knowledge, understanding. Your aim will be to convey knowledge and understanding—not to advocate a cause.

# Informative Speech

- Your speech will be judged considering three general criteria:
- Is the information communicated accurately?
- Is the information communicated clearly?
- Is the information made meaningful and interesting to the audience?

# Informative Speeches



OBJECTS



PROCESSES



EVENTS



CONCEPTS

# Object

- As the word is used here, “**objects**” include anything that is visible, tangible, and stable in form. Objects may have moving parts or be alive; they may include places, structures, animals, even people

Here are examples of subjects for speeches about objects:

## Objects

3D printers	Joan of Arc
Great Barrier Reef	musical instruments
dreamcatchers	stock market

# Object Speech

*Specific  
Purpose:*

To inform my audience about the geographical regions of the Mississippi River.

*Central  
Idea:*

The Mississippi River is divided into three sections, each with its own unique features.



# Object Speech Main Points

- The upper Mississippi is known for its scenic parks and system of dams and locks.
- The middle Mississippi is known for its wildlife refuges and fishing opportunities.
- The lower Mississippi is known for its heavy river traffic and connection to the Gulf of Mexico.

# Process

- A **process** is a systematic series of actions that leads to a specific result or product. Speeches about processes explain how something is made, how something is done, or how something works. Your goal in this kind of speech is to have the audience learn a skill

# Process

- Here are examples of good specific purpose statements for speeches about processes:
- To inform my audience how to write an effective job resumé.
- To inform my audience how tsunamis develop.
- To inform my audience how to read Braille.

# Process Speech

- *Specific Purpose:*
  - To inform my audience of the common methods used by stage magicians to perform their tricks.
- *Central Idea:*
  - Stage magicians use two common methods to perform their tricks—mechanical devices and sleight of hand.

# Process Speech Main Points

- Many magic tricks rely on mechanical devices that may require little skill by the magician.
- Other magic tricks depend on the magician's skill in fooling people by sleight-of-hand manipulation.

# Event

Anything that happens or is regarded as happening

# Event

- the following are examples of suitable topics for informative speeches about events:

Carnival	music festivals
flash floods	seasonal affective disorder
cheerleading	civil rights movement

# Event Speech

- *Specific Purpose:*
  - To inform my audience about three aspects of Japan's Obon festival.
- *Central Idea:*
  - Japan's Obon festival is famous for its lanterns, historic dances, and graveside gatherings.



# Event Speech Main Points

- Paper lanterns are hung outside homes to guide the spirits of departed family members.
- Historic dances are performed in public areas with special music and choreography.
- Graveside gatherings are held by families to maintain the burial sites of their ancestors.

# Concept

- **Concepts** include beliefs, theories, ideas, principles, and the like. They are more abstract than objects, processes, or events.

# Concept

The following are examples of subjects for speeches about concepts:

astrology

human rights

Slow Food

original-intent  
doctrine

Confucianism

minimalism

# Concept

- When dealing with concepts, pay special attention to avoiding technical language, to defining terms clearly, and to using examples and comparisons to illustrate the concepts.

# Concept Speech

- *Specific Purpose:*
  - To inform my audience about the basic principles of nonviolent resistance.
- *Central Idea:*
  - The basic principles of nonviolent resistance stress using moral means to achieve social change, refusing to inflict violence on one's enemies, and using suffering as a social force.

# Concept Speech Main Points

- The first major principle of nonviolent resistance is that social change must be achieved by moral means.
- The second major principle of nonviolent resistance is that one should not inflict violence on one's enemies.
- The third major principle of nonviolent resistance is that suffering can be a powerful social force.

# Informative Speech

- The lines dividing speeches about objects, processes, events, and concepts are not absolute. Some subjects could fit into more than one category, depending on how you develop the speech.
- For example, a speech about the Great Pyramid of Giza would probably deal with its subject as an object, but a speech on how pyramids were built would most likely treat its subject as a process.
- The important step is to decide whether you will handle your subject as an object, a process, an event, or a concept. Once you do that, you can develop the speech accordingly.

# Informative Speaking Guidelines

- Don't overestimate what audience knows
- Relate subject to audience
- Don't be too technical
- Avoid abstractions
- Personalize ideas
- Be creative



# Don't Overestimate What the Audience Knows

- As many speakers have discovered, it is easy to overestimate the audience's stock of information. In most informative speeches, your listeners will be only vaguely knowledgeable (at best) about the details of your topic.
- You cannot *assume* they will know what you mean. Rather, you must be *sure* to explain everything so thoroughly that they cannot help but understand.
- As you work on your speech, always consider whether it will be clear to someone who is hearing about the topic for the first time.

# **Relate the Subject Directly to the Audience**

Informative speakers have one big hurdle to overcome. They must recognize that what is fascinating to them may not be fascinating to everybody. Once you have chosen a topic that could possibly be interesting to your listeners, you should take special steps to relate it to them. You should tie it in with their interests and concerns.

# Don't Be Too Technical

- What does it mean to say that an informative speech is too technical? It may mean the subject matter is too specialized for the audience. Any subject can be popularized—but only up to a point. The important thing for a speaker to know is what can be explained to an ordinary audience and what cannot.



# Avoid Abstractions

- Abstractions are **ideas that are not described in specifics**. Use description, comparison, and contrast to make your audience see what you are talking about

# Avoid Abstractions

One way to avoid abstractions is through ***description***.

# Avoid Abstractions

- Another way to escape abstractions is with **comparisons** that put your subject in concrete, familiar terms. Do you want to convey the fact that sharks very seldom attack people? You could say this:
- “According to *National Geographic*, the United States averages less than one fatal shark attack every two years. In comparison, more than 41 people die every year from lightning strikes in the coastal states alone.”

# Avoid Abstractions

Like comparison, **contrast** can put an idea into concrete terms. Suppose you want to illustrate the popularity of World Cup soccer.

You could say, “The championship game of the most recent World Cup was seen by a staggering 1 billion people.” The word “staggering” suggests that you consider 1 billion a significant number, but significant in comparison to what?

One speaker offered this contrast:

The championship match of the most recent World Cup was seen by 1 billion people. In contrast, the most recent Super Bowl was seen by 103 million people. Think about it—ten times more people watched the final game of the World Cup than watched the Super Bowl.

# Personalize Your Ideas

- Listeners want to be entertained as they are being enlightened. Nothing takes the edge off an informative speech more than an unbroken string of facts and figures. And nothing enlivens a speech more than personal illustrations. When possible, you should try to **personalize** your ideas and dramatize them in human terms.



# Be Creative

- Whether you are seeking alternatives to technical language, avoiding abstractions, personalizing ideas, or adapting to the audience's knowledge about the topic, you need to be creative in thinking about ways to achieve your objectives. A good informative speech is not an oral encyclopedia article. Like any other kind of speech, it requires a healthy dose of creativity.

# Summary

The test of a good speaker is to communicate even the most complex ideas clearly and simply. Anyone can go to a book and find a learned-sounding definition of night-vision goggles. But to say in plain English how night-vision goggles work—that takes effort and creative thinking.

# Summary

- Also, remember that readers can study a printed passage again and again until they extract its meaning, but listeners don't have that luxury. They must understand what you say in the time it takes you to say it. The more you assume they know about the topic, the greater your chances of being misunderstood

# Summary

- No matter what the subject of your informative speech, be careful not to overestimate what your audience knows about it. Explain everything so thoroughly that they can't help but understand. Avoid being too technical. Make sure your ideas and your language are fully comprehensible to someone who has no specialized knowledge about the topic.

# Reflection

- What in the lesson can you comfortably explain.
- What in the lesson is murky and you need further explanation on.