

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SPEECH OPENING

By Sherrin Ross Ingram

- Functions of an Opening -

Familiarize the audience with the purpose of your speech

Lead the audience into the subject of your speech

Help the audience remember your subject and content

- How to Develop an Attention-Grabbing Opening -

1st Write down the primary purpose of your speech and WHY this particular audience needs to hear your message. Having a solid understanding about the purpose and necessity of your speech serves as inspiration for finding specific material for your opening and makes it easier to decide what is (and what is not) appropriate for your opening. For example, if the purpose of your speech is entertain an audience of terminally ill people and the message is to make each day count, then it may not be appropriate to open with any type of discussion about life experiences associated with longevity, such as watching your grandchildren grow up.

2nd Develop a list of the significant points, recommendations or goals of the speech.

3rd Go through the following checklist of opening techniques to determine which ties in best with your significant points and, with a little creativity, has the potential to be dramatic.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Startling question or fact | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging statement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quotation | <input type="checkbox"/> Story/Anecdote |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illustration | <input type="checkbox"/> Generalization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Display or description of an object | <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joke/Humor | <input type="checkbox"/> Combination of Techniques |

4th Make certain that your opening does not contain any:

- Unrelated stories
- Inappropriate humor
- Apologetic statements
- Common questions, such as "Did you ever stop to think . . .?"
- Non-descriptive or long statements

5th Memorize the opening and practice its delivery. I know a lot of popular advice says that you should not memorize your speech because it may come across looking "too rehearsed" and not spontaneous. I don't necessarily follow that advice. I may not always memorize the body of my speech, but I always memorize my opening and closing. Practice your delivery on a variety of people and refine your approach until you consistently get the desired response.

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