



## SPEAKING TO **INFORM**

### **TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL**

P.O. Box 9052 • Mission Viejo, CA 92690 • USA

Phone: 949-858-8255 • Fax: 949-858-1207

[www.toastmasters.org/members](http://www.toastmasters.org/members)

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**WHERE LEADERS  
ARE MADE**

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# HOW TO USE THIS SERIES

Each of the advanced manuals in this series assumes you already know the basics of speech – organization, voice, gestures, etc. – but not necessarily that your skills are fully developed. Refer to your **Competent Communication** manual if you need to review some of the principles of speech.

These advanced manuals are designed around four principles:

- ▶ The projects increase in difficulty within each manual, beginning with an overview of the subject and then becoming more specialized as you progress.
- ▶ Each subject incorporates what you have learned from the preceding ones, and it is assumed you will use these techniques whether or not they are specifically referred to in that section.
- ▶ The projects supply more information than you need to complete each particular assignment. This will give you ideas for future talks.
- ▶ It is the speech preparation and delivery that teach you, not just reading the project in the manual.

## BE SURE TO

- ▶ Read each project at least twice for full understanding.
- ▶ Make notes in the margin as you read.
- ▶ Underline key passages.
- ▶ Repeat projects as necessary until you are satisfied with your mastery of a subject.
- ▶ Ask for an evaluation discussion or panel whenever you wish, especially if few of your club members have completed the *Competent Communication* manual.
- ▶ Credit up to two speeches per manual given outside a Toastmasters club if:
  - 1) your vice president education agrees in advance
  - 2) a Toastmasters evaluator is present, completes the written project evaluation, gives a verbal evaluation
  - 3) you meet all project objectives.
- ▶ Have your vice president education sign the Project Completion Record in this manual after you complete each project.
- ▶ Apply for Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold recognition when you have completed the appropriate manuals and met the other requirements listed in the back of this manual.

# INTRODUCTION

Today the average person absorbs more than 20,000 words of information daily, from sources ranging from the Internet to television to cereal boxes. As a speaker, often your task is to organize and communicate information you already have.

To do this effectively, you must be able to relate the information to your listeners, who then make mental connections and fill in their own knowledge gaps. Through your words you can ignite passion, fascinate, and stimulate your audience to learn even more.

In this manual you'll learn techniques you can use when presenting any type of informational talk. In the first project, you'll learn how to select and organize information to aid audience understanding. In the second, you'll discover how to analyze your audience, target your material to their interests, and use visual aids to enhance your message. In the third project, you'll prepare a demonstration speech to explain a process, product, or activity. The next project requires you to prepare a report on a situation, event, or problem of interest to the audience, providing enough information that the audience can make a valid conclusion or sound decision. Then you must field questions from the audience. In the last project, you research, analyze, and explain to the audience an abstract concept, theory, historical force, or social/political issue. Most of the projects require five- to seven-minute speeches. If you believe you need more time, discuss the matter with your vice president education well before the meeting to see if the club's program will accommodate a longer speech.

The assignments are challenging, but they will provide you with valuable experience in presenting speeches that inform.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Informative speeches can be educational, entertaining, and enjoyable for your audience, if you plan them carefully. Make the information relevant to your listeners, relate it to what they already know, and involve them in some manner. Keep the information organized and present it in an interesting manner. Remember to repeat the points you want listeners to remember and use visual aids to aid in retention.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Select new and useful information for presentation to the audience.
- ▶ Organize the information for easy understandability and retention.
- ▶ Present the information in a way that will help motivate the audience to learn.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

# THE SPEECH TO INFORM

Speeches to inform are the most common type of talks. Reports in business meetings, presentations before community or civic groups, and even instruction in a Toastmasters Speechcraft workshop conducted by your club are just a few examples of informative speeches.

Some people cringe at the thought of giving an informative speech. The speakers envision boring their listeners with dull, dry facts, and audiences envision themselves being bored with dull, dry facts. But with careful preparation, an informative speech can be educational, entertaining, and enjoyable for everyone.

## HOW DO ADULTS LEARN?

Before you begin constructing an informative speech, you should have a basic understanding of adult learning. Adults learn when the information provided:

- ▶ **Is relevant to them.** People learn only when they see a practical benefit to doing so. You must discover your listeners' needs and problems they want to solve, then provide information that meets these needs and solves those problems.
- ▶ **Relates to what they already know.** Adults match new information with what they already know.
- ▶ **Involves them.** Active participation increases learning. Involve listeners through group discussion or by asking questions.
- ▶ **Is clearly organized.** When listeners are confused, learning is impeded. Limit the scope of your topic and break the material into separate segments, presenting them in a logical sequence. Let the audience know how you've organized the material, too (e.g., "There are three parts to this process. First:").
- ▶ **Is presented in an interesting manner.** Keep listeners' attention by breaking up your talk with humor, drama, or startling facts. Eye contact, vocal variety, and body language also help maintain the audience's interest.
- ▶ **Is repeated.** Repetition of important points aids listeners' retention of material.
- ▶ **Involves visual aids.** Listeners remember more information when it is presented visually as well as orally.

## ORGANIZING YOUR SPEECH

How you organize your speech will depend on what kind of information you want to communicate. However, one of four general approaches will probably meet your needs.

- ▶ **Time sequence.** If you are describing a process, such as how to make a torte, you will probably want to give the sequence for mixing the ingredients.
- ▶ **Function.** Information on a product or service is often best presented in terms of what each part does. For example, a speech about the software you developed would include the various calculations which can be done and how they are accomplished.
- ▶ **Structure.** An organization would best be explained by how its various parts operate and how they interrelate.
- ▶ **Deduction from principles.** If you want to explain an idea or concept, you might begin with the general principles, such as the relation between speed and air pressure, and then show how these principles can be applied, as in an airplane or carburetor.

No matter which approach you choose, you will want to develop an opening, body, and conclusion, as in any other speech.

Your speech opening should immediately attract the audience's attention and arouse its interest. Perhaps you could open with a personal experience related to your subject or an experience which listeners' may have had. Or create a dramatic opening. For example, if your speech is about the high cost of war, you could open the talk by saying, "The money our country spent on the last war amounted to 30 billion dollars. Do you know what this country could have done with 30 billion dollars? We could have built homes for every citizen in our country and fed every single person on this entire continent for five years."

The body of your speech consists of the points you make. Don't overwhelm listeners with information. Limit to two or three the number of facts or points you want them to know. Then explain each fact or point and support it with statistics, quotations, or expert opinions. This will make the audience more confident that you know your subject.

## YOUR DELIVERY

Two factors affect the success of an informational speech. First, the audience must perceive you as knowledgeable about the subject. Next, you must deliver the talk with confidence and ease. Speakers who stand rooted to the lectern, don't maintain eye contact with the audience, or who obviously aren't familiar or comfortable with the material they are presenting will soon lose listeners' interest. Speakers who are familiar and comfortable with the material and who move around as they speak are perceived as being more knowledgeable and an authority on the subject. They also appear more confident and in control. Be familiar and comfortable with your material, and move around the speaking area as you talk, making eye contact with audience members.

## YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute informative speech. Your topic may be anything containing information of interest to you and your audience. Help the audience learn by making the talk interesting and using a simple, clear pattern of organization. Limit the number of main points or facts to two or three and support them.

**Don't overwhelm listeners with information. Limit to two or three the number of facts or points you want them to know. Then explain each fact or point and support it with statistics, quotations, or expert opinions.**

## EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE SPEECH TO INFORM**

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** The purpose of this talk is for the speaker to present an informative speech of five to seven minutes. The information should be presented in an interesting manner with clear organization. The speaker should support the facts or points with statistics, quotes, or experts' opinions. In addition to your oral evaluation, please write answers to the questions below.

- ▶ What made the speech interesting?
  
- ▶ How effectively did the speech opening capture and hold your attention?
  
- ▶ How comfortable and familiar did the speaker appear to be with his/her material?
  
- ▶ How confident and in control did the speaker appear to be?
  
- ▶ What was the organizational structure of the speech?
  
- ▶ How did the speaker encourage the audience to learn?
  
- ▶ How effectively did the speaker relate new information to the common experiences and knowledge of the audience?
  
- ▶ What could the speaker have done to make the talk more effective?
  
- ▶ What would you say is the speaker's strongest asset in informative speaking?

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Knowledge of your audience often determines whether your speech will be successful. Strive to find out as much as possible about your listeners, including their ages, occupations, economic status, education, political orientation, and hobbies. Then demonstrate your knowledge of the subject, making sure you have the right support material. Use visual aids appropriately.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Analyze your audience regarding your chosen subject.
- ▶ Focus your presentation at the audience's level of knowledge.
- ▶ Build a supporting case for each major point using information gathered through research.
- ▶ Effectively use at least one visual aid to enhance the audience's understanding.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

## RESOURCES FOR INFORMING

Did you ever listen to a lecture or briefing without having the slightest idea what the presenter was talking about? You were probably not alone. The presenter may have misjudged the audience's level of knowledge.

If you want listeners to understand and remember your talk, you must know a few facts about them and use these facts as you prepare your presentation.

### KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Strive to find out as much as possible about your listeners, including the following:

**Age range.** Will you be speaking to young people? Middle-aged? Retired? An audience of senior citizens will have lived through experiences that are vastly different from those encountered by a group of college students.

**Occupational status.** Sometimes you may be asked to speak to a group that has a particular occupation in common. If this is the case, you may have to extensively revise the talk on inner-city youth and crime that you gave to the teachers' association before you can give it to a group of war veterans. Also consider the level of language to be used. If you are speaking to fellow employees or to a group that shares your occupation, professional jargon is acceptable. But using insider's terms with an audience unfamiliar with that profession can be confusing to listeners.

**Economic status.** Economic levels also help to define an audience. If you are speaking about your company's contributions to the local arts, for example, and your audience is well-to-do your speech will probably engender good will. But if you are speaking to a group of middle-class factory workers, emphasize instead your company's efforts to cut spending, increase efficiency, and develop programs that will serve the practical needs of working people.

**Educational background.** Do most of your listeners have a college background? Are they high school students? Or will you be speaking to a group of established professionals? The educational status of your audience affects your approach, wording, and focus.

**Political orientation.** Even if the group you are speaking to isn't overtly connected to a political party or cause, the group may have a stand on some local or national issue. If your topic focuses or even touches upon a controversial issue, be aware of your audience's general attitude.

**Leisure activities.** Being aware of listeners' pastimes will help you further understand your audience's interests and needs. If your audience is more likely to frequent sporting events and amusement parks instead of art museums and the symphony, your travel speech on the fine restaurants of Paris won't be of interest to them.

Your speech should be precisely aimed: high enough to avoid boring listeners, but low enough to be understandable.

### SUPPORT YOUR POINTS

The quality of your speech is based on your knowledge of the subject and your ability to effectively communicate this knowledge to your listeners. Every point you make in the speech should be supported appropriately; otherwise, your audience will not be confident that you know your subject. Most of the time you will need to gather support material before you prepare the speech. Among the types of support material you may find are:

**The quality of your speech is based on your knowledge of the subject and your ability to effectively communicate this knowledge to your listeners.**

**Definitions.** You can avoid confusion if you define terms with which the audience may not be totally familiar. But don't quote the dictionary or trace the roots of the word. Instead, define terms in your own words and relate them directly to the context in which you are using them.

**Description.** You may want to go beyond definition and describe the characteristics of an object, action, or feeling. Descriptions should be short, vivid, and to the point.

**Explanation.** Every main point you make should be immediately followed by an explanation of the point. Restate it in other words.

**Example.** Follow the point and its explanation with an example or illustration to further reinforce and clarify it in listeners' minds.

**Facts.** Most of your support material should consist of factual information. This may include statistics, which can be powerful support for your points if used sparingly, clearly, and accurately.

**Authorities.** Not all points can be supported by facts. In these cases, you may quote recognized authorities on the subject, giving their expert opinions. Keep in mind, though, that experts disagree, and your audience knows it. Select the most prestigious authorities who are the least biased, and use their statements as only partial support of a point that is already solidly reasoned.

### VISUAL AIDS

Used properly, visual aids enhance your speech. They dramatize your point, add visual interest, and focus the audience's attention. They increase listeners' understanding and retention of material. Following are the most common types of aids:

**Flipchart.** Flipcharts are large pads of paper mounted on an easel. They are readily available, low-cost, and simple to use. You can use them to create and display outlines, diagrams, maps, and sketches. You can prepare each page beforehand, or you can write on them as you speak. They are best used for small audiences.

**Handouts.** Paper handouts are inexpensive and can be used anywhere with any size audience. Every audience member receives a handout, can look at it at his or her leisure, and take it home for later reference.

**Slides.** Slides are popular for presentations to small and large groups. However, they must be produced beforehand and are expensive. They also require a projector and screen.

**Video.** Videotape and videodisc offer speakers the ability to display moving pictures synchronized with sound, something which is not possible with flipcharts, handouts, or slides. Video presentations can be played from tape, disc, or directly from a computer's hard drive. They require special

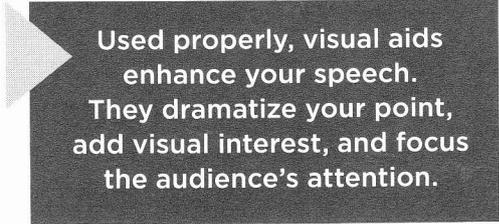
equipment, however, and can be expensive. Video can be used for small and large audiences, but may require more viewing monitors for large audiences.

**Computer-based visuals.** Special software allows you to create visuals on your personal computer and display them through the computer's keyboard. They are ideal for any size audience. However, they require monitors or video projectors for viewing, which are expensive.

Regardless of the medium you use, you want your visuals to look their best and be effective. Read more about creating and using visual aids in the Appendix of this manual.

### **YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute informative speech on a subject of your choice that is directed to the interests of your audience. Learn as much about your audience as you can. Every point should be strongly supported and explained. Use at least one visual aid to enhance understanding.



**Used properly, visual aids enhance your speech. They dramatize your point, add visual interest, and focus the audience's attention.**



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

A demonstration is the most effective way to explain a process, activity, or product. Demonstration can be done through body movement (showing a dance step or skiing technique), showing a physical object, or displaying a model. Carefully rehearse the demonstration and be sure the audience can see it. Anticipate any problems that may occur and plan how to handle each one.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Prepare a demonstration speech to clearly explain a process, product, or activity.
- ▶ Conduct the demonstration as part of a speech delivered without notes.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes

## THE DEMONSTRATION TALK

People may find it difficult to grasp ideas presented only orally or in print. If you are explaining a process, activity, or product, a demonstration is a good way to ensure the audience understands what you are trying to say. In a demonstration speech, you show through action the process, product, or activity you want the audience to know about or to learn.

A demonstration can be conducted in several ways.

**Body movement.** Your body expresses what you want your audience to learn. For example, you would use your body to demonstrate a dance step or a swim stroke.

**Physical object.** You display the actual object you are speaking about, such as a food processor.

**Model.** You display a replica of the object you are speaking about. For example, if you are talking about the human heart, you could display a plastic model of a heart.

Whichever method you choose, remember that the demonstration should supplement your talk, not be the entire presentation itself. Your oral presentation still plays a major role in ensuring the audience understands the process, activity, or product you are trying to explain to them.

### DEVELOPING YOUR TALK

Use the following outline to develop your talk:

1. Explain why the information is important to your audience. Relate the subject to the needs and desires of listeners.
2. Separate the activity into its component parts (usually by time sequence or function).
3. Explain the operation of each part and how it relates to the others in the sequence.
4. Reassemble the activity and show how it works as a whole.

For example, suppose your topic is the operation of a gasoline engine. In this case, you would probably use a model that shows the basic parts of a real engine.

After convincing the audience of the subject's relevance to them, split your presentation into an explanation of the four cycles of the engine's operation. Explain each cycle individually, in simple terms, so every listener can understand. Include a brief description of how each cycle relates to the others. Then show how they work together to make the engine run in normal operation. Be sure all of your explanation relates to the primary purpose

▶ Remember that the demonstration should supplement your talk, not be the entire presentation itself.

of the system, which is to produce power. Do not digress into peripheral questions such as how oil is filtered.

Be specific in your explanations. If you are demonstrating how to hit a golf ball, tell the audience the club you are using and how far away the pin is assumed to be.

### **DEMONSTRATION TIPS**

In most cases, display the physical object or model only when you are ready to use it. Revealing the object as you refer to it gives the object and your message greater emphasis.

Generally, pause as you first display it, then continue speaking. This gives your audience time to see the object. Avoid holding the object in front of your body because people may not be able to see it. Hold it out to the side instead. If the object is resting on a table, stand off to the side. Take care not to fuss with the object, too. The audience becomes uncomfortable when the speaker spends too much time arranging the item.

A demonstration requires practice. Rehearse your speech carefully. Memorize the line you will say just before you display your object, as well as the line you will say afterward. This ensures your object will help you make your point effectively.

If you will need a table on which to set your object, bring one or make sure one will be available. If your object requires power, confirm that a power outlet is available and bring an extension cord. Plan every move associated with your demonstration. Anticipate any problems that may occur and plan how to handle each one.

### **KEEP THEIR INTEREST**

When conducting a demonstration, it is easy to pay so much attention to the object, model, or your own movements that you neglect the audience. Maintain eye contact with listeners. Also keep their interest through vocal variety.

### **YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute talk which demonstrates a process, product, or activity of your choice. You may use your body for the demonstration (such as skiing techniques), a physical object (such as casting with a fishing pole), or a model (such as an airplane). Because your attention will be devoted to the demonstration, you should not use notes for this project.

**Memorize the line you will say just before you display your object, as well as the line you will say afterward. This ensures your object will help you make your point effectively.**



## ▶ PROJECT 4

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Fact-finding reports are used to present information your audience needs to make a good decision. Keep the report focused, explain the sources of your information, and present facts clearly and quickly. Close with recommendations for action. Often these reports are followed by a question-and-answer session, so anticipate possible questions and prepare your answers beforehand.

### OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare a report on a situation, event, or problem of interest to the audience.
- ▶ Deliver sufficient factual information in your report so the audience can make valid conclusions or a sound decision.
- ▶ Answer questions from the audience.

**Time:** Five to seven minutes for the speech, and two to three minutes for the question-and-answer period.

# A FACT-FINDING REPORT

Another type of informative speech is the report. Common in business, government, and civic organizations, the report usually provides enough information about a topic so that the group can make a decision or take some action. You may be called upon to give a report for your job. Your success depends in part on how well you organize and deliver it – especially when your boss is sitting in the audience.

A fact-finding report usually is presented to a specific audience whose identity you know in advance. Often, this group or one of its members requests the report.

Because of this, you have the advantage of knowing their interests and levels of understanding. Using this information, you can plan how much background information you must give and how technical the presentation may be.

### IDENTIFY YOUR OBJECTIVE

Those who assigned the report are relying on you to discover all the relevant facts and present thoughtful recommendations. This means your report should be a complete study of the assigned subject, so the group can reach a sound decision based on the information you present. You can ensure your presentation's success if you first determine your objective, then state it simply and concisely, in 25 words or less. Once you've identified your objective, you are ready to begin research.

As you do the research, evaluate the evidence you discover. For each piece, ask yourself:

- ▶ Does it help point toward a solution to the problem?
- ▶ Will the audience clearly understand its value?
- ▶ Is it solid evidence or merely someone's opinion?
- ▶ Will it communicate information quickly, or would another piece of evidence be more effective?

Remember to keep the focus narrow. Often, your oral report is a summary of a longer written report. The written version is where all the details should be recorded. Your oral presentation usually will be bound by strict time limits, so concentrate only on the main points of the report. Also, make the points clear. Present your ideas carefully and logically so the audience will quickly understand.

**You can ensure your presentation's success if you first determine your objective, then state it simply and concisely, in 25 words or less.**

### OUTLINING YOUR TALK

Like any other talk, a report should include an opening, body, and conclusion. But you should keep some other aspects of a report in mind:

**Opening.** Your report should begin by orienting the audience, making the reason for the report clear, and supplying the necessary background information. Follow this with an overview of the significant results, conclusions, and/or recommendations. This could be a listing of specific points or perhaps a general explanation of the direction your report will be taking.

**Body.** The main section of the report should consist first of an explanation of how you did the research – sources, methods, criteria for judgment – followed by a presentation of the significant findings. For example, if your research consisted of a survey, tell how the survey sample was selected, the questions asked, who asked them, and what cross-checking (if any) was done. Then you would detail the survey results.

**Conclusion.** You might close with recommendations for action to solve a problem or prevent a recurrence of an event. Or you might close with a brief evaluation of your study, pointing out its strengths and limitations, and leaving the recommendations to your audience.

## FIELDING QUESTIONS

Often after this type of talk you will be expected to answer questions from the audience. Audiences generally remember longest what they hear last, and they retain more when they participate in a discussion. When you encourage audience members to ask questions, you create a higher level of interest in your answers.

How you handle the question-and-answer period is just as important as the report you present. You should devote as much time preparing for the question-and-answer session as you devote to preparing the report. By understanding some key techniques, you'll be successful.

**Anticipate possible questions.** Make a list of questions you may be asked and prepare your answers beforehand. Be aware that all members of your audience may not agree with your report.

**Be sure everyone can hear the question.** Listeners become annoyed when they cannot hear the question asked. Ask the questioner to repeat the question if necessary, or repeat it yourself.

**Remain calm.** Don't become defensive or angry if someone doesn't agree with your report.

**Handle hostile questions with care.** Never debate questioners. Instead, determine areas of agreement and focus on them. Address your response to the entire audience rather than to the person asking the question. Direct your eye contact and body language in a friendly way toward someone who appears to be more supportive.

**Answer all questions in a positive manner.** Avoid repeating a negative question or statement before you give an answer. For example, someone asks, "Don't you think the price increase you are recommending is outrageous in light of our actual costs?" Answering the question with "I don't think its outrageous. . ." gives a negative feeling. A better response would be, "If I understand you correctly, the issue is the prices we charge. I am proud of our price record. Our prices reflect the research, development, and production costs we've invested in our product, and our profit actually is lower than the industry average. We strive to bring our customers a quality product at the lowest possible price."

The length of a question and answer session should be about one-third of the length of the report itself. When questions begin to repeat themselves or they come more slowly, bring the session to a close. If you are under time constraints, you may have to conclude even though some

**Audiences generally remember longest what they hear last, and they retain more when they participate in a discussion. When you encourage audience members to ask questions, you create a higher level of interest in your answers.**

listeners still have questions. In this situation, pack up your note cards or visual aids, look at your watch, and say, "I know we've covered a lot of information here. If you have any more questions, I'll be glad to answer them later, after the meeting is over (or at another time convenient for you)." Conclude with a positive statement, then leave the speaking area.

### **YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute fact-finding report on a situation, event, or problem. You may assume your audience to be any specific group you wish (advise the Toastmaster of the meeting). Your challenge is to make the report understandable and interesting. If possible, use visual aids to help convey the information quickly and clearly. After your speech, field questions from the audience for two to three minutes. Ask the Toastmaster of the meeting to tell the audience in the introduction that there will be a two- to three-minute question-and-answer session at the end of your speech.

## EVALUATION GUIDE FOR A FACT-FINDING REPORT

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to the Evaluator:** The purpose of this talk is for the speaker to deliver a fact-finding report of five to seven minutes on a situation, event, or problem. The information should be comprehensive and well-organized, as well as presented in an interesting manner. The talk should include an overview of the report, an explanation of how the data was gathered, and a thorough presentation of the relevant facts. The speaker is then to field questions from the audience. Please write answers to the questions below in addition to *your* oral evaluation.

- ▶ How well did the speaker explain the purpose of the report to the audience?
  
- ▶ Was the report organized clearly and logically?
  
- ▶ If the speaker used visual aids, did they help the audience to understand the information more easily and quickly?
  
- ▶ Was enough information given on which the audience could base a sound decision or draw valid conclusions?
  
- ▶ How prepared did the speaker appear to be for the questions that were asked?
  
- ▶ How effective was the speaker in responding in a positive manner to the questions that were asked?
  
- ▶ How well did the speaker conclude the question-and-answer period?

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Explaining a theory, principle, philosophy, or social issue can be challenging. Make sure the audience knows the general concept and how your speech relates to it. Show how your topic relates to listeners' everyday lives. Use plenty of examples, anecdotes, illustrations, and visual aids to help listeners understand and visualize your points, and avoid technical jargon.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- ▶ Research and analyze an abstract concept, theory, historical force, or social/ political issue.
- ▶ Present the ideas in a clear, interesting manner.

**Time:** Six to eight minutes

## THE ABSTRACT CONCEPT

In most cases, speeches of information will be on readily explainable subjects familiar to your audience, such as sailing or your company's progress on a project. Occasionally, however, the subject may not be as concrete. You may be asked to analyze a philosophical idea, economic or political theory, engineering principle, social issue, or historical force and make it clear and interesting for your audience. Such subjects cannot be demonstrated, yet they can have a direct impact on our lives. Consider, for example, the difference in living under a capitalist or communist system, even though you could not directly picture either one.

### SOME TYPES OF SPEECHES

- ▶ **Historical forces.** Perhaps you have an interest in history. In an abstract speech you would not talk about Napoleon's conquests, for example, but rather the effects of great conquerors on the course of world history, perhaps with Napoleon as one of several conquerors. Relate these historical forces to our lives today in order to interest your audience. Select exciting events to illustrate your general points.
- ▶ **Theories.** Even Einstein's Theory of Relativity, probably the most abstract idea ever contemplated, can be explained with great interest if related to readily understandable events. Einstein himself wrote about his concepts in terms of people walking in moving railroad cars, people carrying clocks on long trips, and other vivid imagery. Just as a talk on gravity can be built around a falling apple, any other abstract subject can be analyzed in simple terms if you just take the time to think carefully about it.
- ▶ **Social or political issues.** We live in a time of great social and political upheaval, and an analysis of these issues provides a great public service. Be sure to be objective if dealing with a controversial issue. Don't expect to solve decades-old problems in a single speech.

### CHOOSING YOUR SUBJECT

When selecting your subject, you should have at least a basic knowledge of what you will be analyzing and enough interest in it to make you enthusiastic about it. Although you will be dealing with a general concept, you should narrow it so you can adequately cover it in the time available to you. For example, if you will be talking about freedom of the press, you would want to narrow it, perhaps to how freedom of the press relates to privacy issues for citizens.

**An abstract speech can become boring if you don't maintain the audience's interest. Begin your talk by defining the topic for the audience so it will know exactly what you are talking about.**

Define your topic before you begin preparing the speech. This will help you conduct your research more efficiently. As you do your research, use a wide variety of sources to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Use the thoughts of experts to support and expand your own ideas on the subject. Collect a variety of opinions and draw your own informed conclusions from them. You may even want to quote the experts during your speech to show the range of opinion that exists on your subject.

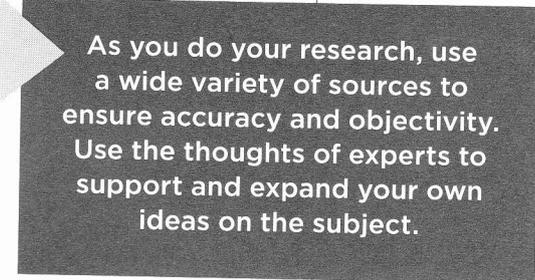
### **KEEP IT INTERESTING**

An abstract speech can become boring if you don't maintain the audience's interest. Begin your talk by defining the topic for the audience so it will know exactly what you are talking about. Explain the general concept, then how your narrowed focus fits into the larger concept. Show how the concept directly relates to listeners' everyday lives.

Fill your talk with examples, anecdotes, illustrations, and visual aids to communicate your concepts clearly. Avoid technical jargon, and remember to relate each abstract idea to a concrete example, preferably one that can be visualized.

### **YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a six- to eight-minute talk about an abstract subject such as a concept, idea, theory, historical force, or social issue. Your purpose is to clearly explain the meaning of the subject to the audience and use definitions, examples, anecdotes, illustrations, quotes from experts, and visual aids to explain concepts.



**As you do your research, use a wide variety of sources to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Use the thoughts of experts to support and expand your own ideas on the subject.**



## USING VISUAL AIDS

One of your objectives as a speaker is to help your audience remember and understand what you have told them. Visual aids can help you achieve this objective.

### CREATING YOUR VISUALS

The secret to making your visuals memorable is a good, clean design. As you create your visual, follow these tips:

- ▶ Limit the amount of material on any one visual to a single main idea. Don't fill it up with words. The visual should be a summary of what you are saying, not your whole speech.
- ▶ Use title phrases on each visual to supplement the material on it. For example, write "Spending Increases" rather than "Chart 1."
- ▶ Select a readable font. The type font you use should be clear and heavy enough that people in the last row can read it. For example, script fonts are difficult to read, while bold sans serif fonts stand out best. In general, the bolder the font, the easier it is to read.
- ▶ Use color carefully. Inappropriate choices and combinations of colors call attention to themselves and detract from the content. Certain colors also have psychological connotations. Red often implies a warning or danger. Green usually means stability and growth. Blue, a peaceful color, is a popular choice for corporate presentations. Also be sure there is a distinct contrast between the type and the background colors so the audience can easily read the text.

### DISPLAYING THE VISUAL

- ▶ Make sure the equipment is working before you begin your talk. If using projectors, make sure a spare bulb is available.
- ▶ Show the visual aid while you are talking about it. Cover it (or turn it off) when you want attention directed back to you. People cannot usually concentrate on both at the same time.
- ▶ Explain the content of the visual aid when you first show it. Point out the highlights.
- ▶ Be sure everyone in the audience can see the visual aid. Visibility to the people at the rear of the room is your guide. Make letters large, with plenty of space between lines.
- ▶ Talk to your audience, not to the visual. Maintain eye contact even when your listeners are looking at the visual. This will help you judge their understanding.
- ▶ Keep your time with the visual short.
- ▶ If you are writing on a flipchart, stand sideways as you write. Flip to a new page before going to the next point.

# PROJECT COMPLETION RECORD **SPEAKING TO INFORM**

PROJECT	SPEECH TITLE	DATE	VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION'S INITIALS
1. The Speech to Inform			
2. Resources for Informing			
3. The Demonstration Talk			
4. A Fact-Finding Report			
5. The Abstract Concept			

Save this page to verify your completion of the projects in this manual. Submit the Project Completion Record form from the appropriate manuals when applying for the Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold awards.