

► 7 – Clarify A Topic

Executive Summary:

Construct a speech that is organized in a logical manner.

Objectives:

- *To present a topic to the audience with examples, definitions, and explanations.*
- *To use clear and concise words so the audience comprehends the message.*
- *TIME: 5 to 7 minutes - or - 6 to 8 minutes.*

Clarify A Topic

Using clear and concise explanations with definitions and examples can make speeches more effective. While this may not convince the audience, it can help the audience understand your point of view.

This is a continuation of strengthening your speaking skills. The challenge is to incorporate all of the skills from previous projects in this project.

Make It Clear

It is easy to present a speech on topics such as your experiences in events which are vivid in your mind. You simply describe the situation chronologically as the events occurred.

More challenging is presenting a topic which may contain new information. You may have a solid understanding of the topic. But clarifying this topic could be challenging. It requires effort to describe the topic “clearly” and “concisely”. Vagueness is the enemy.

Avoid creating the speech “while” you are presenting the speech. “Before” presenting the speech, plan to describe the problem, then plan to sequentially provide your perspective.

It is important to explain everything clearly. The audience may not know what you know. Assumptions could cause the audience to misunderstand.

Present a speech that is logical with a well-thought-out presentation. This increases the odds that the audience will comprehend your perspective.

Speak to the Audience

In advance, imagine in your mind how the audience may react to your message. Understand how you would like them to react. Plan to present the speech in a sequence where the two images coincide.

Keep in mind that the perspective of the audience could be different than your perspective. It helps to phrase your comments in their terms.

This adds to the challenge, as everyone has had different life experiences. Everyone may have completely different perspectives from each other. Select an approach that will be understood by the largest number of people in the audience.

For complex topics, it is good to break it into separate categories. Presenting small, absorbable chunks will help the audience follow your sequence. For example, you might state, “The poor include those who don’t work, those who can’t work, and those who don’t want to work.” Then proceed with describing this sequence one at a time.

Keep the examples, definitions, and explanations simple. Using complex terminology commonly loses the audience’s attention. Their minds may drift into thinking about something else.

Even generic words such as happiness, freedom, crime, love can bring a multitude of ideas into the audience’s mind. Explain your perspective in terms the audience will understand. Your personal experiences will help solidify your perspective.

If the speech contains abstract words or concepts, clarify them immediately to put the audience at ease. It can help to rephrase those words using simple, concrete language to help the audience understand the message.

It could, also, be helpful to clarify with examples. If “courage” is used in the speech, relate it to daily life and relationships based on personal experiences.

Select a Topic

In this project, select a topic that is of interest to you and to the audience. The easiest is to select a topic that has been around for many years. Many of those in the audience may know about this topic. But they may not have heard other perspectives.

For example, the topic could be, “Setting goals can lead to a life of unhappiness.” The audience knows about “goals” and “unhappiness”. Quite likely, they have never considered this different perspective.

This increases the odds that the audience will be very interested.

Your Evaluation

Selecting a topic that may be new is the key in this speech. Using simple words and explanations is essential in helping the audience comprehend the message.

It is important to clarify your perspective and to be concise. Lengthy descriptions can lead to the audience’s minds wandering to something else.

Strive to ensure the audience understands your perspective.

Evaluation Guide for Clarify A Topic

--- Evaluate the Speech, not the Speaker!

See last page for more evaluation guidelines.

Speech Title:

Speech Evaluator:

Date:

Note to the Speech Evaluator: This speech strives to present a controversial or abstract topic in a clear and concise manner. The challenge is to explain the Speaker's perspective to help the audience comprehend the message. It is important for the Speech Evaluator to provide **many positive comments**, **one item** that could **strengthen the speech**, and **end with more positive comments!** In addition to the oral evaluation, provide answers to the questions below.

The purpose of the evaluation is to Encourage, Encourage, and Encourage!
Strive to have the Speaker look forward to giving another speech.

- How well did the speaker introduce the subject to the audience?
- How close did the speaker's presentation come to the listener's level of knowledge and experience?
- Which abstract ideas (if any) could have been made clearer?
- How well did the explanations and examples fit the subject?
- What was your overall impression of the speaker's presentation (purpose, organization, vocal variety, body language)?
- What part of the speech came across most effectively?

Handy Dandy Speech Evaluation Guidelines

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- Strive to start with **four or more positive** comments, **one constructive** comment, end with **more positive** comments. A constructive comment example, *"The speech could be strengthened by"*
- Focus on the **Speech**. Avoid: *"you could improve"*- better: *"the speech could be strengthened by"*.
- Avoid commenting on the Speaker's point of view or facts. Focus on the **presentation**.
- Use specifics. Avoid: *"opening was weak"*- better: *"starting with a question would strengthen the speech"*.
- Use a lot of **"I"** phrases **instead of "you"** phrases. Avoid: *"you did this"*- better: *"it appeared to me"*.
- Avoid judging. Avoid: *"the speech was good"*- better: *"I liked the speech"*.
- If it is difficult to identify something that could be strengthened, ask yourself the question, **"Is this the best speech I've ever heard?"** If it is not, try to determine what could make it the best.

Evaluator:

Speech Title:

Date:

C Opening: Address Audience? Get Attention?

O Lead Into Body?

N Body: Organized?

T Help Remember? Persuasive?

E Interesting? Support Material?

N Relevant? Appropriate?

T Effective? Clear? Inspirational?

Closing: Climax? Produce Results?

Tie It Together? What to Do?

D Physical Appearance: Appropriate? Posture?

E Professional? Shirt (men) with collar?

L Zoom: Hands visible? Eyes include webcam?

I Body Language: Eye Contact? Hands? Face?

V Natural? Spontaneous?

E Overuse / Underuse? Detracting / Adding?

R Deliberate? Precise? Appropriate?

Y Vocal Variety: Volume? Pitch? Rate? Quality?

Manner: Enthusiastic? Direct? Assured?

Presentation: Visuals? Humor?

L Word Use: Clear? Accurate/Correct?

A Colorful? Vivid? Appropriate?

N Precise? Simple/Complex?

G Dull/Exciting? Jargon? Slang?

U Always/Never/Everyone Knows?

A Grammar: Proper?

G Pronunciation / Enunciation?

E Vowel Sounds?
