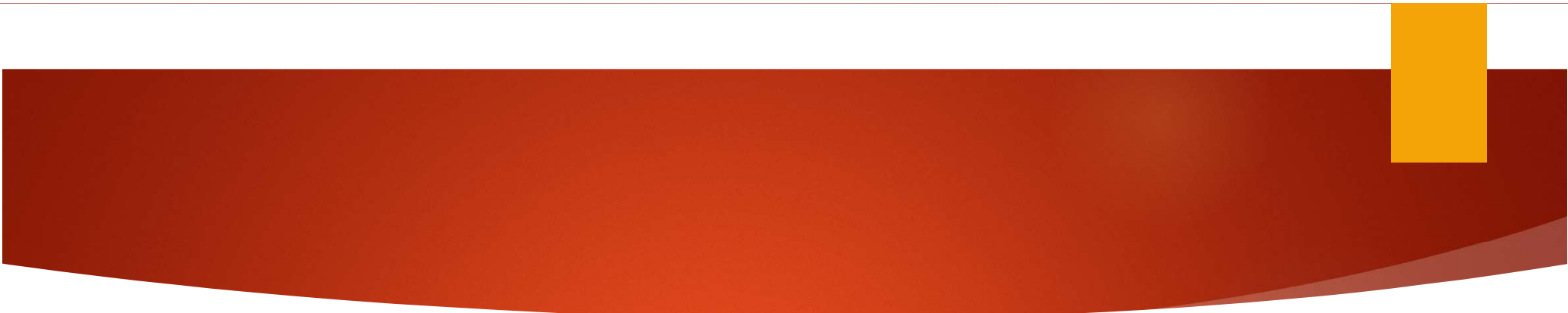


PUBLIC SPEAKING

Lecture 7:

Introducing and Concluding Your Speech

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- ▶ One of the most common complaints novice public speakers have is that they simply don't know how to start a speech. Many times speakers get ideas for how to begin their speeches as they go through the process of researching and organizing ideas.
 - ▶ You may feel the most nervous just as you begin your speech. But if you have a well-prepared and well-rehearsed introduction, you'll be able to start with confidence. Rehearse your opening sentences enough times that you can present them while maintaining direct eye contact with your listeners. Being familiar with your conclusion can give you a safe harbor to head for as you end your message. A thoughtfully planned and well-rehearsed introduction and conclusion can help you start and end your speech with poise and assurance.

Objectives

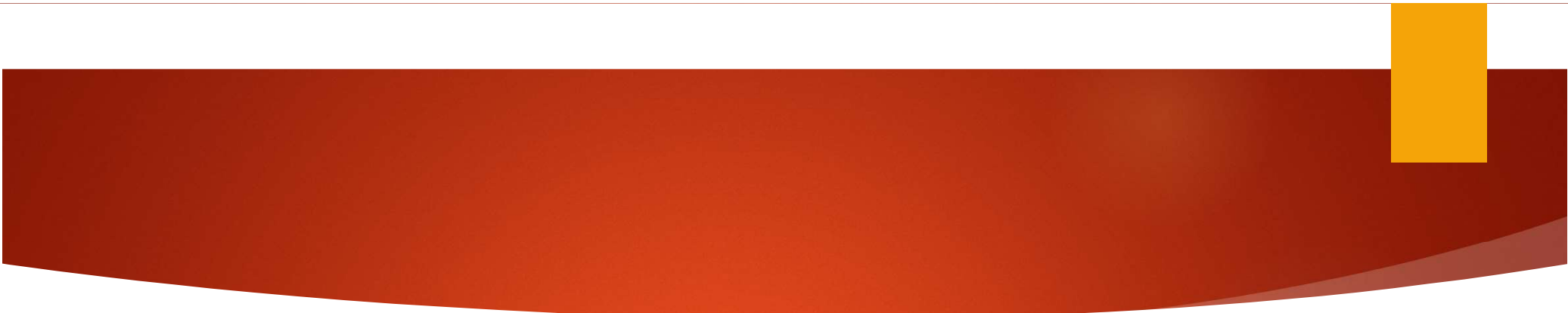
- ▶ Explain the functions of a speech introduction.
- ▶ List and discuss methods for introducing a speech.
- ▶ Explain the functions of a speech conclusion.
- ▶ List and discuss methods for concluding a speech.

PURPOSES OF INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Get the audience's attention
 - ▶ Use an illustration, a startling fact or statistic, a quotation, humor, a question, a reference to a historical or recent event, a personal reference, a reference to the occasion, or a reference to a preceding speech.
- ▶ Give the audience a reason to listen
 - ▶ Tell your listeners how the topic directly affects them.
- ▶ Introduce the subject
 - ▶ Present your central idea to your audience.
- ▶ Establish your credibility
 - ▶ Offer your credentials. Tell your listeners about your commitment to your topic.
- ▶ Preview your main ideas
 - ▶ Tell your audience what you are going to tell them.


Get the Audience's Attention

- ▶ The first major purpose of an introduction is to gain your audience's attention and make them interested in what you have to say.
- ▶ One of the biggest mistakes that novice speakers make is to assume that people will naturally listen because the speaker is speaking. While many audiences may be polite and not talk while you're speaking, actually getting them to listen to what you are saying is a completely different challenge. Let's face it—we've all tuned someone out at some point because we weren't interested in what they had to say. If you do not get the audience's attention at the outset, it will only become more difficult to do so as you continue speaking.
- ▶ We emphasize favorable attention for a good reason. It is possible to gain an audience's attention with words or presentation aids that alienate or disgust them so that they become irritated instead of interested in what you have to say.

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- ▶ One student began his speech on the importance of donating blood by appearing to savagely slash his wrists in front of his stunned audience.
 - ▶ The speaker worked at a blood bank, and he was using the bank's blood. He had placed a device under each arm that allowed him to pump out the blood as if it flowed from his wrists.
 - ▶ He certainly captured his audience's attention! But they never heard his message. The shock and disgust of seeing such a display made that impossible; he did not gain favorable attention.

Give the Audience a Reason to Listen

- ▶ Even after you have captured your listeners' attention, you have to give them some reason to want to listen to the rest of your speech. An unmotivated listener quickly tunes out. You can help establish listening motivation by showing the members of your audience how the topic affects them directly.
- ▶ In the previous meeting, we presented six criteria for determining the effectiveness of your supporting material. One of those criteria is proximity, the degree to which the information affects your listeners directly. Just as proximity is important to supporting materials, it is also important to speech introductions. "This concerns me" is a powerful reason to listen.



“[If] you’ve eaten a tomato from a fast-food restaurant, grocery store, or food services business in the last year, you’ve eaten a tomato picked by the hand of a slave. [She shows two tomatoes to audience.] Can you tell which one? Now I know I’m taking a chance here offering tomatoes to an audience at the beginning of a speech. But the difference between these two is the difference between a fair market and slavery.”

Introduce the Subject

- ▶ The most obvious purpose of an introduction is to introduce the subject of a speech. Within a few seconds after you begin your speech, the audience should have a pretty good idea of what you are going to talk about. Do not get so carried away with jokes or illustrations that you forget this basic purpose. Few things will frustrate your audience more than having to wait until halfway through your speech to figure out what you are talking about! The best way to ensure that your introduction does indeed introduce the subject of your speech is to include a statement of your central idea in the introduction.

Establish Your Credibility

- ▶ As you begin your speech, you should be mindful of your listeners' attitudes toward you. Ask yourself, "Why should they listen to me? What is my background with respect to the topic? Am I personally committed to the issues I am going to speak about?" If you can establish your credibility early in a speech, it will help motivate your audience to listen.
- ▶ One way to build credibility in the introduction is to be well prepared and to appear confident. Thorough research and good organization help give the audience confidence that you know what you are talking about. Speaking fluently while maintaining eye contact does much to convey a sense of confidence. If you seem to have confidence in yourself, your audience will have confidence in you.
- ▶ A second way to establish credibility is to tell the audience about your personal experience with your topic. Instead of thinking you are boastful, most audience members will listen to you with respect.

Preview Your Main Ideas

- ▶ A final purpose of the introduction is to preview the main ideas of your speech. An initial preview statement usually comes near the end of the introduction, included in or immediately following a statement of the central idea. This preview statement allows your listeners to anticipate the main ideas of your speech, which in turn helps ensure that they will remember those ideas after the speech.
- ▶ An initial preview statement is an organizational strategy called a signpost. Just as signs posted along a highway tell you what is coming up, a signpost in your speech tells the listeners what to expect by enumerating the ideas or points you plan to present.
- ▶ Identifying your main ideas helps organize the message and enhances listeners' learning. The introduction to your speech, then, should capture your audience's attention, give the audience a reason to listen, introduce the subject, establish your credibility, and preview your main ideas.

EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTIONS

- ▶ Illustrations or anecdotes
- ▶ Startling facts or statistics
- ▶ Quotations
- ▶ Humor
- ▶ Questions
- ▶ References to historical events
- ▶ References to recent events
- ▶ Personal references
- ▶ References to the occasion
- ▶ References to preceding speeches

Illustrations or anecdotes

- ▶ Not surprisingly, because it is the most inherently interesting type of supporting material, an illustration or anecdote can provide the basis for an effective speech introduction. In fact, if you have an especially compelling illustration that you had planned to use in the body of the speech, you might do well to use it in your introduction instead. A relevant and interesting anecdote will introduce your subject and almost invariably gain an audience's attention.
- ▶ An opening illustration may also be conveyed by a short (less than a minute for most classroom speeches), engaging video clip. If you decide to open your speech with a video clip, be sure that video projection technology is available in the room where you are speaking. Plan and practice transitioning from the video to the speech itself.

Startling Facts or Statistics

- ▶ Grabbing an audience's attention with the extent of a situation or problem invariably catches listeners' attention, motivates them to listen further, and helps them remember afterward what you had to say.
- ▶ *“Ninety-eight percent of the 2012 graduates of the Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, California, graduated with an average of \$168,800 in student debt.”*

Quotations

- ▶ Using an appropriate quotation to introduce a speech is a common practice. Often another writer or speaker has expressed an opinion on your topic that is more authoritative, comprehensive, or memorable than what you can say.
- ▶ Although a quote can effectively introduce a speech, do not fall into the lazy habit of turning to a collection of quotations every time you need an introduction. There are so many other interesting, and sometimes better, ways to introduce a speech. Quotes should be used only if they are extremely interesting, compelling, or very much to the point.

Humor

- ▶ Humor can be an effective way to catch your audience's attention in your introduction. Remember, however, to use humor appropriate to the occasion and the audience.

Questions

- ▶ A thoughtful rhetorical question can prompt your listeners' mental participation in your introduction, getting their attention and giving them a reason to listen.
- ▶ Although it does not happen frequently, an audience member may blurt out a vocal response to a question intended to be rhetorical. If you plan to open a speech with a rhetorical question, be aware of this possibility, and plan appropriate reactions.

References to Historical Events

- ▶ Every day is the anniversary of something. Perhaps you could begin a speech by drawing a relationship between a historic event that happened on this day and your speech objective.
- ▶ You could consult “This Day in History” online or download it as an app for your tablet or smartphone.
- ▶ *“On this date—Feb. 16, 1923—archeologist Howard Carter entered the burial chamber of King Tutankhamen. There he found a solid gold coffin, Tut’s intact mummy, and priceless treasures. On Feb. 16, 1959, Fidel Castro took over the Cuban government 45 days after overthrowing Fulgencio Batista. And America’s first 9-1-1 emergency phone system went live in Haleyville, Alabama, on Feb. 16, 1968. Today, I won’t be revealing priceless treasures. I promise not to overthrow anyone, or generate any 9-1-1 calls. But I do hope to reveal a few speechwriting secrets, provide a little revolutionary thinking and a sense of urgency about the speeches you ought to be giving.”*

References to Recent Events

- ▶ If your topic is timely, a reference to a recent event can be a good way to begin your speech. An opening taken from a recent news story can take the form of an illustration, a startling statistic, or even a quotation, gaining the additional advantages discussed under each of those methods of introduction.

Personal References


- ▶ A reference to yourself can take several forms. You might express appreciation or pleasure at having been asked to speak.
- ▶ Or you might share a personal experience.
- ▶ Although personal references take a variety of forms, what they do best, in all circumstances, is to establish a bond between you and your audience.

References to The Occasion

- ▶ References to the occasion are often made at weddings, birthday parties, dedication ceremonies, and other such events.
- ▶ The reference to the occasion can also be combined with other methods of introduction, such as an illustration or a rhetorical question.

References to Preceding Speeches

- ▶ If your speech is one of several being presented on the same occasion, such as in a speech class, at a symposium, or as part of a lecture series, you will usually not know until shortly before your own speech what other speakers will say.
- ▶ When this situation occurs, you must decide on the spot whether referring to one of those previous speeches will be better than using the introduction you originally prepared. Your introduction then becomes a transition from that earlier speech to yours.



“When Juli talked to us about her experiences as a lifeguard, she stressed that the job was not as glamorous as many of us imagine. Today I want to tell you about another job that appears to be more glamorous than it is—a job that I have held for two years. I am a bartender at the Rathskeller.”

RECAP: TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE INTRODUCTIONS

- ▶ Use an illustration or anecdote.
- ▶ Present startling facts or statistics.
- ▶ Share a quotation.
- ▶ Employ appropriate humor.
- ▶ Ask a rhetorical question.
- ▶ Refer to historical or recent events.
- ▶ Reveal something about yourself.
- ▶ Make note of the occasion.
- ▶ Acknowledge the speeches before yours.

PURPOSES OF CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Whereas your introduction creates an important first impression, your conclusion leaves an equally important final impression. Long after you finish speaking, your audience is likely to remember the effect, if not the content, of your closing remarks.
- ▶ Unfortunately, many speakers pay less attention to their conclusions than to any other part of their speeches. They believe that if they can get through the first 90 percent of their speech, they can think of some way to conclude it. Perhaps you have had the experience of listening to a speaker who failed to plan a conclusion. Awkward final seconds of stumbling for words may be followed by hesitant applause from an audience that is not even sure the speech is over. It is hardly the best way to leave people who came to listen to you.
- ▶ An effective conclusion will serve two purposes: It will summarize the speech and provide closure.

Summarize the Speech

- ▶ **Reemphasize the Central Idea in A Memorable Way.** The conclusions of many famous speeches rephrase the central idea in a memorable way.
- ▶ When on July 4, 1939, New York Yankees legend Lou Gehrig addressed his fans in an emotional farewell to a baseball career cut short by a diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), he concluded with the memorable line,
 - ▶ *“I may have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for”*
(Lou Gehrig)

Summarize the Speech

- ▶ **Restate The Main Ideas.** In addition to reemphasizing the central idea of the speech, the conclusion is also likely to restate the main ideas.
 - ▶ Note how John effectively summarized the main ideas of his speech on emissions tampering, casting the summary as an expression of his fears about the problem and the actions that could ease those fears:
- ▶ *“I’m frightened. Frightened that nothing I could say would encourage the 25 percent of emissions-tampering Americans to change their ways and correct the factors that cause their autos to pollute disproportionately. Frightened that the American public will not respond to a crucial issue unless the harms are both immediate and observable. Frightened that the EPA will once again prove very sympathetic to industry. Three simple steps will alleviate my fear: inspection, reduction in lead content, and, most importantly, awareness” (John)*

Provide Closure

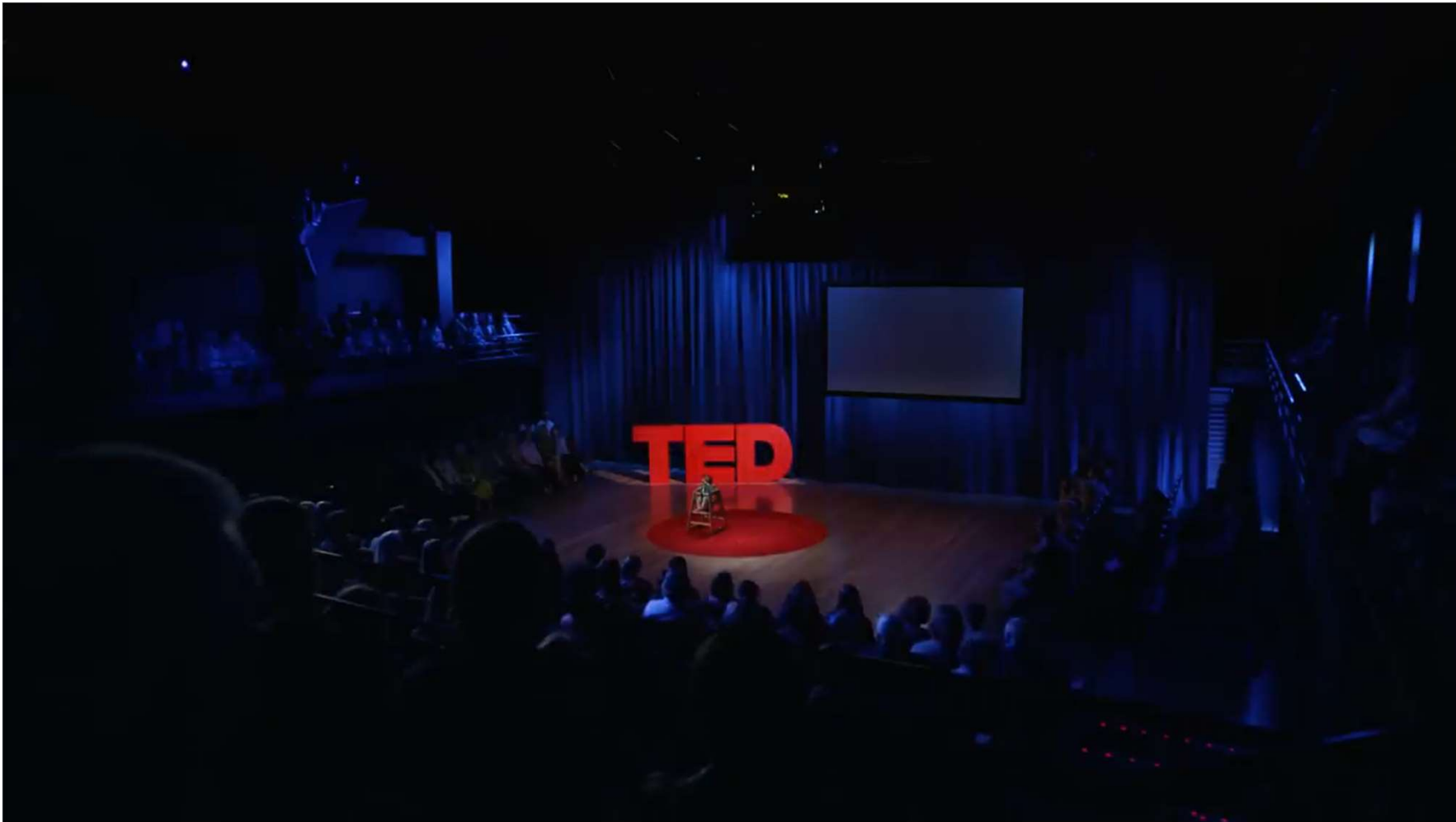
- ▶ **Use Verbal or Nonverbal Cues to Signal The End of The Speech.** You can attain closure both verbally and nonverbally. Verbal techniques include using such transitional words and phrases as “finally,” “for my last point,” and perhaps even “in conclusion.”
- ▶ **Motivate The Audience to Respond.** Another way to provide closure to your speech is to motivate your audience to respond in some way. If your speech is informative, you may want your audience to take some sort of appropriate action—write a letter, buy a product, make a telephone call, or get involved in a cause.

EFFECTIVE CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Use any of the techniques for an effective introduction.
- ▶ Refer to the introduction of your speech.
- ▶ Issue an inspirational appeal or a challenge.



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Thank you

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