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The Speech to Persuade



Specs for the Speech to Persuade

Time limit

5–6 minutes.

Speaker's notes

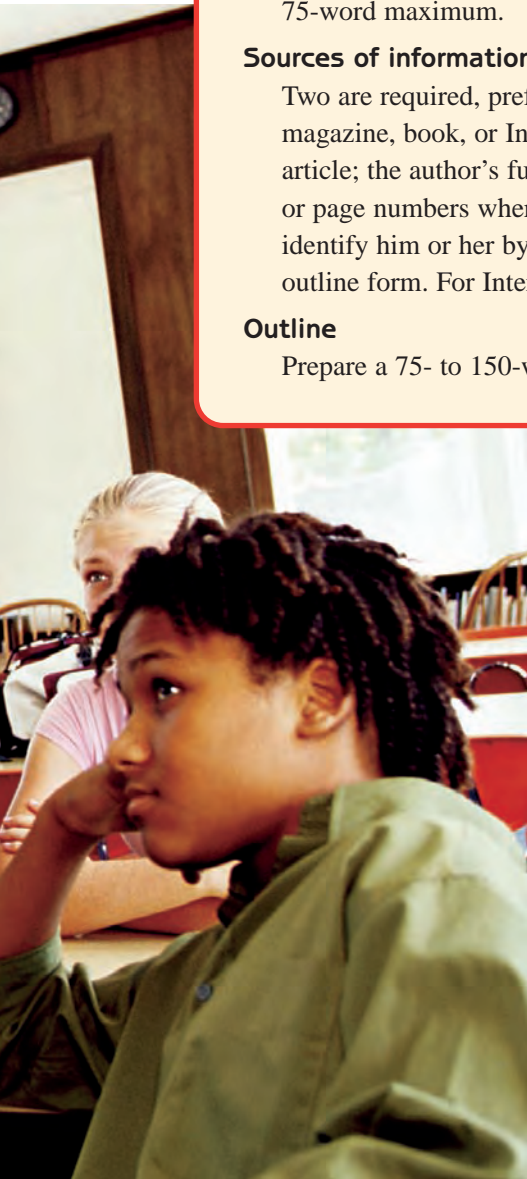
75-word maximum.

Sources of information

Two are required, preferably three. For each source list the specific magazine, book, or Internet site it was taken from; the title of the article; the author's full name; the date of publication; and the chapter or page numbers where the material was found. If a source is a person, identify him or her by title, position, and occupation. List these on the outline form. For Internet sites, give the address (URL).

Outline

Prepare a 75- to 150-word complete sentence outline.



Speak Up!

Share a situation from your own life in which you tried to persuade another person or group to take a specific action. What methods did you use to persuade your audience? Were you successful?



Purpose and Expectations of This Assignment

The techniques used to bring others around to a specific point of view are referred to collectively as the “art of persuasion.” You will have many encounters in business, political, and social life in which you are either being persuaded or you are trying to persuade someone else. Listening well and communicating your thoughts effectively will enhance your persuasive skills. For a speech to persuade, the challenge will be to build reasons and evidence into arguments that will compel listeners to agree or even act on their convictions in support of your position. This assignment will introduce you to this public speaking purpose. As you craft a persuasive speech, you will discover techniques that will improve your overall communication.

In completing this assignment, you will

- identify a debatable proposition and adopt a position on it;
- understand the use of evidence, reasoning, and emotion to convince another; and
- organize arguments for clarity and maximum impact on listeners.

Defining the Speech to Persuade

Think about the last time you asked your parents for a special type of clothing. Did you give a persuasive argument containing logic, evidence, and emotion by stating why you had to have it?

Speeches to persuade are so common that you may be unaware of them as a specific public speaking experience. In fact, you use your powers of persuasion every day without even

thinking about it. But as a persuasive public speaker you will have to use certain techniques to gain the audience’s conviction. The speech to persuade is one that causes the audience to change, adopt, modify, or continue a belief or action. You must present sufficient logic and evidence to swing the audience to your position on a debatable proposition. This usually entails asking them to take the action that you suggest. Often it is not only wise but also necessary to appeal to the audience’s emotions on such issues as fear, aging, health, wealth, love of country, self-preservation, desire for recognition, desire for adventure, loyalty, political beliefs, religion, and so on. In order to ignite the audience’s emotions, you must thoroughly analyze your listeners so that you can base your appeal on their beliefs and attitudes. You also must present your logic and evidence in such a way that it directs the audience’s thinking through channels they can readily follow.

In every debate—be it between two rival schools, within the membership of a legislative body, among friends, or in court proceedings—the speakers’ statements involve persuasion through logic, evidence, and emotion.

Choosing a Topic

Be very careful in choosing a topic for your speech to persuade. You’ll need to think carefully about the way you word your topic. Remember that you must reveal the idea or action you would like your audience to adopt. For example, let’s imagine that you decide to persuade your listeners that “All schoolbooks should be free.” Notice the word *should*. By putting that word into your topic, you show that your purpose is to persuade your audience to believe this is a sound idea that would be beneficial if it were carried out. You are not asking

them to carry out the plan by standing behind book counters and handing out free textbooks.

Your topic must be a specific proposition that offers a debatable solution to a controversial problem. Simply stating the obvious—for example, “We should all drive more carefully”—is not enough. Everyone already agrees on this point. Suggest a definite and debatable *solution*, such as: “The legislature should pass a law limiting speed on the highways to 60 miles per hour,” or “Anyone who is convicted of traffic violations should be required to attend driver’s school for two weeks.” These are proposals about which people disagree. We can readily say “yes” or “no” to them. We can debate these proposals, but we cannot debate the overall idea that “We should all drive more carefully,” because we all agree on it to begin with.

A sales talk is not appropriate for this assignment because the purpose of a sale is to make your listeners reach into their pockets, pull out money, and give it to you. A sales talk requires them to *do* something. Naturally, a certain amount of persuasion will precede the request for money, but the actual purpose of a sales talk is to get people to hand over the cash. This type of speech is discussed in Experience 28. We may conclude then that a speech to persuade is not a sales talk, as it is not primarily to motivate action; instead it is designed to change a person’s mind about something on which there is definite disagreement or controversy.

Examine your topic closely to be certain that it’s something on which you can base your speech to persuade. If you are in any doubt, consult your instructor. Here are some sample topics.

- Child abuse
- Rally for a political candidate or cause
- Juvenile crime

- Affirmative Action
- Drug education
- American values
- National debt
- Ethics in government
- Campaign finance reform
- Immigration
- TV and movie violence
- Population control
- AIDS education
- Internet controls and regulation
- Multilingual education

Preparing and Organizing

In preparing the speech to persuade, remember that your purpose is to bring people over to your way of thinking. This is obviously not an easy task; however, there are a number of methods you can use to smooth the way for an effective presentation.

To achieve a convincing effect, you need to organize your speech carefully. Following is one example of a workable structure.

1. Present a history of the problem.

Discuss the events leading up to the present time that make the topic important. Tell why it is significant for the audience to hear the discussion you are about to present. (Do not spend too much time on the history—you have other points to cover.)

2. Discuss the present-day effects of the problem.

Use examples, illustrations, facts, and statements from authorities that clearly demonstrate the situation. These are musts if you wish to be convincing.

3. **Discuss the causes of the effects you listed in point two.** Here again you must present examples, illustrations, facts, and statements from authorities to prove your points. Be sure you show how the causes are bringing about the effects you mentioned. For example, if you say that a community's air quality has gotten 30 percent worse (effect) because of emissions from a certain manufacturing company (cause), you must definitely establish this cause rather than permit your audience to believe that the air *might* be worse because of the company's toxic emissions.
4. **List possible solutions to the problem.** Discuss briefly the various alternatives that could be followed, but illustrate that they are not effective enough to solve the problem. Give evidence for your statements by using examples, illustrations, authorities' views, facts, and analogies.
5. **Give your solution to the problem.** Show why your solution is the best answer to the problem. Present your evidence and the reason for believing as you do. This must not be simply your opinion. It must be logical reasoning backed up by evidence.
6. **Show how your proposal will benefit your audience.** This is the real meat of your entire speech if you have thoroughly fulfilled each step up to this point. This is where you must convince the audience. Benefits might include more money, safer streets, longer life, more happiness, better roads, better schools, lower taxes, or cheaper cost of living. In other words, your

listeners must see clearly and vividly that your proposal will benefit them.

If the preceding speech structure doesn't work for your topic, here is another plan that works well.

1. **State your proposition** in the introduction.
2. **Present a history of the problem** that led to the proposal you are asking your audience to adopt.
3. **Show that your proposal is necessary.** Offer evidence that establishes a need for your proposal. Assure the audience that no other proposal (solution) will do.
4. **Show that your proposition is practical.** Give evidence to prove that it will do what you say it will do. In other words, show that it will solve the problem.
5. **Show that your proposition is desirable.** This means providing evidence showing that it will be beneficial rather than neutral or harmful.
6. **Conclude with a final statement in support of your proposal.**

On the other hand, if you are *opposed to* a certain proposal, you may establish your point of view by offering arguments that show any one of the following.

1. **The proposition is not needed.**
Give evidence.
2. **The proposition is not practical.**
Give evidence.
3. **The proposition is not desirable.**
Give evidence.

Of course, if you can establish all three of these points, you will be more convincing than if you prove only one.

If you fail to have the body of your speech properly organized and all of your points supported by evidence, you will have trouble persuading an audience to adopt your point of view. As with most types of public speaking, the best guarantee of success is careful preparation.

In addition to an organized speech with points supported by evidence, you must have a well-constructed introduction and a powerful conclusion. Once you have crafted these elements, rehearsal will determine whether or not you are actually prepared to present a convincing speech. Even though you possess volumes of evidence, a clear structure, and vivid language, you must still deliver the speech confidently, without excessive use of notes, if you want to be convincing to your audience. Make sure that you rehearse your speech accordingly.

You'll find source materials on the Internet and at the library. Encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, Web sites, and readers' guides all offer excellent sources. Check with your instructor and librarian for further assistance.

Presenting

Naturally, your presentation will vary according to your audience, the occasion, and the size and acoustics of the room. You would not speak to a small group of businesspeople in the same manner that you would address a large political gathering. In general, aim for a frank, enthusiastic, and energetic presentation. Use a reasonable amount of emotion; however, don't overdo it. Your bodily action should match your words in terms of vigor and intensity.

You must show that *you* are convinced of what you say. Your voice and actions should reflect a

sincere belief in your views and through inflections and modulations, carry the ring of truth and personal conviction. Make sure you speak forcefully enough to be heard by everyone in the room.

If you use notes, be thoroughly familiar with them. Do not try to hide them. Hold them high enough that when you look at them you don't have to bow your head. If you want to keep your hands free, you can place your notes on the podium. After the conclusion of your speech, remain standing for two or three seconds before you return to your seat. Check with your instructor to see if there will be time to take questions.

Evaluating

Evaluate a classmate's speech to persuade. Rate the following criteria on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being "needs much improvement" and 5 being "outstanding."

- Was the speaker warm and friendly?
- Did the speaker seem genuinely convinced of his or her proposal?
- Were the speaker's posture and body language appropriate?
- Did the speaker use examples, quotes, and other materials?
- Was the speech well structured?
- Did the speaker use credible sources to support each point in the speech?
- Were the speaker's words audible and clear?

Give an overall score to the speech. Then write down one thing that the speaker did exceptionally well and one thing that could be improved.

Talking Points

The Language of Persuasion



While every public speaking situation calls for well-chosen, appropriate language, the art of persuasion calls for a closer look at the words a speaker or writer chooses.

In trying to persuade an audience to adopt your point of view, you may use both emotional and logical appeals.

Emotional Appeals

Of course, you feel strongly about your ideas to an audience. So it is normal, even desirable to use emotion-filled words and phrases. Your audience should see your enthusiasm and passion for your subject.

Just be careful not to get carried away with over-the-top positive or negative appeals. Such language used carelessly can cause an audience backlash. If one statement seems too good or bad to be true, the audience may decide that nothing you say can be believed.

Often **loaded language** can be found in overly emotional appeals. The dictionary definition of a word is its **denotative** meaning. The strong emotional appeal suggested by a word is its **connotative** meaning. For example, the word *steed* brings to mind a great, beautiful horse, perhaps ridden by a knight or princess. On the other hand, *nag* makes us think of a broken-down, spiritless horse. Look at the examples in the chart below.

Neutral	Positive	Negative
speech	oration	harangue
large	colossal	monstrous
thin	slim	gaunt
talk	chat	prate

Illogical Fallacies

Getting emotional about your subject matter can also lead to false arguments or fallacies. No matter how much you want to persuade your audience, you must guard against these logic traps as you prepare your speech.

- 1. Overgeneralization** When we generalize, we make statements that apply to many people, things, or situations.

Generalization: Good grades are an important factor in college admission.

Overgeneralization: Only straight-A students will get into college.

- 2. Circular Reasoning** This happens when the speaker tries to prove a point by simply repeating the same idea with different words.

Students at Kennedy High School are extremely intelligent because only smart students go there.

- 3. Cause-and-Effect Fallacy** This fallacy occurs when a writer or speaker makes a cause-and-effect connection where none exists.

I tripped and fell just after I walked under a ladder. Therefore, walking under a ladder causes bad luck.

I got sick while riding on the bus. Therefore, all bus rides will make me sick.

- 4. Either/Or** This type of faulty logic happens when a speaker or writer implies that there is only one solution to a problem when, in fact, there may be several possible alternatives.

Either we raise taxes or we close the public library.

Either we have a fundraiser or there will be no senior prom.

- 5. Ad Hominem (Against the Man)** This fallacy occurs when a speaker attacks a person, rather than an action. For example, if someone writes a book with which you disagree, argue against the ideas, but don't call the author an idiot.

- 6. Bandwagon** This approach is often used in advertising. It goes something like this: Everyone else is doing (buying) it, so you should too.

Example Speech

A Whisper of AIDS

by Mary Fisher

Houston, Texas

Republican National Convention,

August 19, 1992

Thank you. Thank you. Less than three months ago at platform hearings in Salt Lake City, I asked the Republican Party to lift the shroud of silence which has been draped over the issue of HIV and AIDS. I have come tonight to bring our silence to an end. I bear a message of challenge, not self-congratulation. I want your attention, not your applause.

I would never have asked to be HIV positive, but I believe that in all things there is a purpose; and I stand before you and before the nation gladly. The reality of AIDS is brutally clear. Two hundred thousand Americans are dead or dying. A million more are infected. Worldwide, forty million, sixty million, or one hundred million infections will be counted in the coming few years. But despite science and research, White House meetings, and congressional hearings; despite good intention and bold initiatives, campaign slogans, and hopeful promises, it is—despite it all—the epidemic which is winning tonight.

In the context of an election year, I ask you, here in this great hall, or listening in the quiet of your home, to recognize that the AIDS virus is not a political creature. It does not care whether you are Democrat or Republican; it does not ask whether you are black or white, male or female, gay or straight, young or old.



Tonight I represent an AIDS community whose members have been reluctantly drafted from every segment of American society. Though I am white and a mother, I am one with a black infant struggling with tubes in a Philadelphia hospital.

Though I am female and contracted this disease in marriage and enjoy the warm support of my family, I am one with the lonely gay man sheltering a flickering candle from the cold wind of his family's rejection.

This is not a distant threat. It is a present danger. The rate of infection is increasing fastest among women and children. Largely unknown a decade ago, AIDS is the third leading killer of young adult Americans today. But it won't be third for long, because unlike other diseases, this one travels. Adolescents don't give each other cancer or heart disease because they believe they are in love, but HIV

is different; and we have helped it along. We have killed each other with our ignorance, our prejudice, and our silence.

We may take refuge in our stereotypes, but we cannot hide there long, because HIV asks only one thing of those it attacks. Are you human? And this is the right question. Are you human? Because people with HIV have not entered some alien state of being. They are human. They have not earned cruelty, and they do not deserve meanness. They don't benefit from being isolated or treated as outcasts. Each of them is exactly what God made—a person, not evil, deserving of our judgment; not victims, longing for our pity—people, ready for support and worthy of compassion.

My call to you, my Party, is to take a public stand, no less compassionate than that of the President and Mrs. Bush. They have embraced me and my family in memorable ways. In the place of judgment, they have shown affection. In difficult moments, they have raised our spirits. In the darkest hours, I have seen them reaching not only to me, but also to my parents, armed with that stunning grief and special grace that comes only to parents who have themselves leaned too long over the bedside of a dying child.

With the president's leadership, much good has been done. Much of the good has gone unheralded, and as the president has insisted, much remains to be done. But we do the president's cause no good if we praise the American family but ignore a virus that destroys it.

We must be consistent if we are to be believed. We cannot love justice and ignore prejudice, love our children and fear to teach them. Whatever our role as parent or policymaker,

we must act as eloquently as we speak—else we have no integrity. My call to the nation is a plea for awareness. If you believe you are safe, you are in danger. Because I was not a hemophiliac, I was not at risk. Because I was not gay, I was not at risk. Because I did not inject drugs, I was not at risk.

My father has devoted much of his lifetime guarding against another holocaust. He is part of the generation who heard Pastor Nemoellor come out of the Nazi death camps to say, "They came after the Jews, and I was not a Jew, so I did not protest. They came after the trade unionists, and I was not a trade unionist, so I did not protest. Then they came after the Roman Catholics, and I was not a Roman Catholic, so I did not protest. Then they came after me, and there was no one left to protest."

The lesson history teaches is this: If you believe you are safe, you are at risk. If you do not see this killer stalking your children, look again. There is not family or community, no race or religion, no place left in America that is safe. Until we genuinely embrace this message, we are a nation at risk. Tonight, HIV marches resolutely to AIDS in more than a million American homes. Littering its pathway with the bodies of young men, young women, young parents, and young children.

One of those families is mine. If it is true that HIV inevitably turns to AIDS, then my children will inevitably turn to orphans. My family has been a rock of support. My 84-year-old father, who has pursued the healing of nations, will not accept the premise that he cannot heal his daughter. My mother refuses to be broken. She still calls at midnight

continued

Example Speech cont.

to tell wonderful jokes that make me laugh. Sisters and friends, and my brother Phillip, whose birthday is today, all have helped carry me over the hardest places. I am blessed, richly and deeply blessed, to have such a family.

But not all of you have been so blessed. You are HIV positive, but dare not say it. You have lost loved ones, but you dare not whisper the word AIDS—you weep silently. You grieve alone. I have a message for you. It is not you who should feel shame. It is we, we who tolerate ignorance and practice prejudice, we who have taught you to fear. We must lift our shroud of silence, making it safe for you to reach out for compassion. It is our task to seek safety for our children, not in quiet denial, but in effective action.

Someday our children will be grown. My son Max, now four, will take the measure of his mother. My son Zachary, now two, will sort through his memories. I may not be here to hear their judgments, but I know already what I hope they are. I want my children to know that their mother was not a victim. She was a messenger. I do not want them to think, as I once did, that courage is the absence of fear. I want them to know that courage is the strength to act wisely when we are most afraid. I want them to have the

courage to step forward when called by their nation or their Party and give leadership, no matter what the personal cost. I ask no more of you than I ask of myself or of my children. To the millions of you who are grieving, who are frightened, who have suffered the ravage of AIDS firsthand—have courage, and you will find support. To the millions who are strong, I issue this plea—set aside prejudice and politics to make room for compassion and sound policy.

To my children, I make this pledge: I will not give in, Zachary, because I draw my courage from you. Your silly giggle gives me hope; your gentle prayers give me strength; and you, my child, give me the reason to say to America, ‘You are at risk.’ And I will not rest, Max, until I have done all I can to make your world safe. I will seek a place where intimacy is not the prelude to suffering. I will not hurry to leave you, my children, but when I go, I pray that you will not suffer shame on my account.”

To all within the sound of my voice, I appeal: “Learn with me the lessons of history and of grace, so my children will not be afraid to say the word AIDS when I am gone. Then, their children and yours may not need to whisper it at all.” God bless the children, and God bless us all, good night.

Example Speech

We Need a Bereavement Center

by Meghan Ortega

Dan McFeeley, writing for the *Indianapolis Business Journal*, stated, “Thousands of kids across the country are forced every year to deal with the untimely death of a father, mother, sister, or even a close friend.”

At Baker University, many students and faculty members have lost a loved one and have had nowhere to turn for comfort. A support group is very much needed to help individuals cope with loss. With the implementation of a bereavement program, faculty members and students would have such a support system.

Less than three months ago, my father unexpectedly passed away, and I am currently enrolled in a bereavement program called the Solace House. Today I am going to show you the need for a bereavement program at Baker and a proposed solution.

First of all, how many of you know the definition of *bereavement*? I have said this word many times and yet many people don’t know what it is. Bereavement is the loss of a loved one, whether it is through divorce or death.

While at college and away from your ultimate support system, your family, it is harder for students to cope with death. Having a campus support system would give students and faculty a place to turn.

You would not believe how many of us are affected by death: My father recently passed away. Another student, Nicole, also had her



father pass away a few weeks ago. Dr. Emel told us today that she has a funeral to attend after this class. And I’m sure all of you remember Bree who passed away this last fall. In some way, we are all affected by death.

I contacted Head Quarters, which is a 24-hour crisis hot line, to see where the closest bereavement center is. The closest center is 20 minutes away in Lawrence. I strongly feel the need for a facility here in Baldwin where students will have easier access.

Bereavement counseling is a positive process. It is meant to help the individual cope with death, accept it, and keep on living. It is a healing process.

If the bereavement process is not supported, the individual can become depressed. The *Solace House Quarterly* newsletter states that

continued

Example Speech cont.

when individuals don't have a source of support, they turn toward "self-destructive forms of expressing their grief, which lead to depression, antisocial behaviors, physical complications, and lack of family communication." In other words, they shut themselves off and become dysfunctional to society.

Now that I've told you how important this need is, let's look at a solution to the problem. My idea of a bereavement center here at Baker is modeled after the Solace House. Meetings would be one day every other week, and trained volunteers would help individuals in a group setting. They would not be there to tell individuals what to do or how to do it, but rather to guide and listen.

When you have lost someone, the most comforting thing is just to have a person listen to you. Volunteers at the bereavement center help you go through problems you are experiencing now and prepare you for future obstacles that you will have to face. They help you accept death and not to be angry and deny it.

Speaking with students on campus, I have found that many see the need for a bereavement program. Reghan, who was a cheerleader with Bree, stated that, "Finding support and having someone understand what you are going through always makes it easier to cope and share feelings." I believe that it is very important for the individual to feel comfortable.

You may be wondering why a bereavement program is needed when our campus already makes a counselor

available to us. I honestly would not get the same benefits from one-on-one counseling as I do from group counseling. With group sessions an individual is able to interact with others who have had the same experiences. This allows individuals to see that they are not alone.

[*Show a picture of Bree, a Baker student who passed away, and a picture of my siblings.*] In closing, I want to note that Bree used to watch my siblings over the summer. Mallory, my younger sister, was really attached to her. So not only did she lose her favorite babysitter, but a father as well [*Show picture of Dad.*] I want to share with you an excerpt from a story my younger sister wrote shortly after my father's death, entitled "My Father's Ending":

"When we were at the hospital all I was thinking was is he going to die? Will he be hooked up to machines all the rest of his life?"

