**Chapter Eight**
Introductions and Conclusions
from
*Public Speaking:  An Idea Focus*
W. Clifton Adams
© 2012

**General Education Objectives** This chapter helps you to:
1. understand the roles and purposes of introductions and conclusions.
2. appreciate the choices available when producing introductions and conclusions.
3. produce the appropriate tone, through your voice and body, when presenting introductions and conclusions.

**Specific Testable Objectives** As a result of studying this chapter you should be able to:
1. list and identify four purposes for introductions.
2. explain each introduction purpose and how it is accomplished.
3. list and define types of introductions.
4. state the essential purpose of conclusions.
5. identify four rules for conclusions.
6. explain five types of conclusions.

As stated in Chapter 7, speakers often finalize their introductions and conclusions as the last part of their preparation.  You should not intentionally start the preparation of your speech with work on your opening comments.  However, as you are collecting and arranging your supporting materials, you should remain alert for ideas that might provide the basis for your introduction and your conclusion.

This chapter provides basic ideas about transitioning into your speech, the introduction, and out of your speech, the conclusion.  With this information, your mind can help you find and develop these transitions while you're building the speech, its body.  In developing the introduction, you will benefit from knowing its purposes.

**Purposes of an introduction**

If you read many public speaking texts, you will find that the authors are in agreement about two things related to the purposes of introductions.  The most important of these is that introductions should be attention oriented.  The other point of agreement is that there are four purposes of introductions although there may seem to be disagreement on the three after "gain attention."  However, the differences in the remaining three may be primarily semantic.  Consider the following grouping:

**1. To gain attention in terms of the topic.** Everyone agrees with this factor. Of course the need to gain the attention varies with the situation. In polite societies, audiences give the speaker at least token attention. It is expected in public speaking classes that students will be courteous to each other. So, logically, in the classroom, you could minimize the introduction.

Still, we want to use the classroom as a model. We should practice in class for the most difficult situation. Certainly, anytime there is evaluation involved, we want to put our best foot forward. That means that the content of the introduction should be carefully selected to focus the attention of the listeners upon the subject. It is the best opportunity for you to demonstrate how creative you can be.

Inset 8-1

HELPFUL INFORMATION RELEVENT TO CREATIVITY

Haefele's Four Creative Stages
1. Preparation
2. Incubation
3. Insight
4. Verification

Gelb's Seven Da Vician Characteristics
1. An Insatiably curious approach to life and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning
2. A commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistakes
3. The continual refinement of the senses, especially sight as the means to enliven experience
4. A willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty.
5. The development of the balance between science and art, logic and imagination.
6. The cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness and proise.
7. A recognition of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and phenomena.

Weisberg's myths about creativity.
The myth of the unconscious
The "Aha!" myth
The Myth of Divergent Thinking
The Myth of Genius
The Myth of Scientific Discovery
The Myth of Artistic Creativity

**2.  To create an appropriate mood/to prepare the audience to listen.**  This may seem like two different purposes, but, if you consider that if the speaker creates the appropriate mood, it will indeed prepare the audience to listen.  To the extent that we wish to distinguish this purpose into two parts, it can be done by focusing on delivery versus content.  The speaker creates a mood, generally, through tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures.  These nonverbal aspects usually are all that is needed to prepare the audience for the heart of the speech.   Generally, a quality presentation of the "attention grabber" will satisfy this criterion.

However, sometimes, you may believe that some small bits of information, like a definition, may be needed to help your audience gain the most from your speech.  This information, then, you feel is needed to prepare the audience to listen.  You would then work that information into the introduction.

**3.  To establish rapport/to justify the speaker.**  In like manner, typically all that is needed to justify you as the speaker is to present yourself well to the audience.  Without a doubt, the most important component in establishing rapport is eye contact, but all aspects of your physical presentation can contribute to the audience's feeling that you want to talk with them.  Start by demonstrating a positive attitude even before it is your turn to give the speech.  When it is your turn, move smartly from your seat to the point where you want to begin your speech.  Turn and face the audience, look several people in the eye and select the friendliest person to whom to say the first sentence.  This will help to develop a rapport, help to justify you as the speaker, while having the added benefit of helping you to manage your anxiety.

On rare occasions will you need to actually say anything in the introduction in way of justifying the appropriateness of your speaking about the issues involved.  In these situations you will have some indication that the audience has reason to believe that you are inappropriately informed on the topic or that you had done something to violate their trust.  On those occasions, it becomes appropriate for you to speak directly to your qualifications before beginning a discussion of the subject matter involved.

 4.  **To justify their listening/to justify the topic.**  Your presentation should make it obvious that you believe the topic is important as you gain their attention.  Certainly, whatever you say in way of opening should pertain directly to the subject of your speech.  Your voice is probably your best tool for showing that you believe the topic is interesting and relevant.

Again, if you have reasons to believe that the topic is perceived by the listeners to be either irrelevant or, perhaps, having been overly discussed already, then you may want to provide them with a rationale for considering it with you.

Overall, then, the **content** of your introduction generally will concentrate on gaining and directing the audience's attention to the topic of your speech.  In gaining their attention, you will **deliver** the content in such a way as to create the right mood, build rapport, and encourage them to listen.

Given that the essential purpose of the introduction is to gain attention, the typing of introductions has attention as the primary criterion.  The list below is

arranged, loosely, in terms of probable effectiveness, starting with the least. Creative combination of types can also produce quality introductions.


**Types of Introductions**

1. *Reference* --  A reference is when the speaker refers to some aspect of the current speaking situation.  In generally, these are appropriate when the group meets on a regular basis and the speaker is the one the audience expects to speak.  Classes, club meeting, departmental sessions are all examples of where a reference is an acceptable type of introduction.  References can be subdivided into the aspect of the situation that is being discussed.

a. to the speaker -- Contrary to common sense, and even some traditional instruction, research suggests that it is best for the speaker not to start by discussing something about his or her person.  It isn't unusual, still, to hear a speaker start by saying, "I hope that you'll bear with me, I have something of a head cold."  Instead, it would be best to let the audience members draw that conclusion on their own; sympathy is more likely to follow when they do.  If you need to discuss personal issues in order to meet the secondary functions of an introduction, it's best to focus the audience's attention on the topic first.  Placing personal issues in context of the topic makes their consideration more relevant.

b.  to the topic --  Announcing the topic, while common and appropriate in routine situations, is a weak form of gaining attention; thus, it is best to be avoided when the speaker is being officially evaluated, e.g. speech classes.  If you start with, "Today I want to talk about a topic of extreme importance," most speech teachers would say that you didn't have an introduction.  The idea is to gain attention in a way as to tell the audience the topic, as illustrated in examples below.

c. to the occasion  --  Special occasions often justify the speaker starting with a salute to factors that make the occasion noteworthy.  "Fifty years is a long time for a family-operated company to stay in business," would be an appropriate introduction for opening a banquet to celebrate the company's anniversary.  It would be a better introduction if it continued, "Sixty years is rear for a company.  That's why we can all be proud to celebrate 70 years of continual operations!"

d. to the audience --  Opening remarks that reflect on the audience are sometimes justified.  "You served your country when called to war.  You served you country on your return.  You are a credit to our country, our county, your family and yourselves.  I'm honored to be here to help you celebrate the dedication of this veteran's home."  When sincerely presented and relevant to the topic, a compliment to the audience can work well to accomplish all the purposes of an introduction.  On rare occasion would this type be appropriate in the classroom or other situations where direct evaluation of the speaker was involved.

2. *Joke/humor* --  When done well, beginning with something that brings a smile or laughter to the audience is an excellent type of introduction.  It is listed second here for two reasons.  One is that too often the joke is unrelated to the

topic and may even produce an inappropriate mood for the speech.  Serious topics seldom lend themselves to a humorous beginning.  Further, jokes typically belittle something; thus, they sometimes make light of something of importance to a segment of the audience.  The second is most people overestimate their ability to tell a joke; in brief, it isn't done well.  As in the punch line of an old joke, "Not everyone can tell a joke."  When you feel that it is appropriate to start with a joke, you'll probably want to cue the audience that it is a joke.  A smile or a little laugh are common cue; even a sentence like, "A funny thing happened to me last night," can help orient the audience and thus set the right mood.

       3*. Short story* -- Where time permits, a narrative that builds and resolves suspense is an excellent form of introduction.  Unfortunately, most speaking situations do not permit enough time for a story.  Remember, generally, all you want to do with the content of your introduction is to focus the audience's attention on your subject.  If the story is going to take more than ten percent of the total time allotted, it would not make an appropriate introduction (see option #7 below).

       4*. Rhetorical question* -- A question is like a ringing telephone:  It demands an answer.  Questions gain attention whether the listeners know the answer or not.  If they know the answer, they'll listen to check on the correctness of the speaker's answer; if they don't know the answer, they will listen to learn the answer.  Questions are also easy to formulate, easy to construct.  Rhetorical questions are then the ideal type of introduction.  They are easy to use, efficient and effective.  They provide a convenient "safety valve:" If you're rushed and don't have a better introduction, you can always start with a rhetorical question and know that you can accomplish your purpose.  There in, obviously, explains why the rhetorical question is not considered the best type of introduction:  Since they are so easy, they tend to be overused and under rated by speech teachers.

       Note that the type of introduction is a <u>*rhetoric* question</u>.  You should not want a vocal response from your audience.  Your intent is to gain attention for your speech, not to start and lead a discussion.

       5*. Shocking statement* -- Relevant statements that are significantly surprising, and yet not offensive to the audience work well to get them thinking about the topic.  Often these statements contain statistics; giving a subcategory of *shocking statistics*.  These types are most effective when applied to the audience, as in, "The probability is that either you or one of the two people setting next to you is a binge drinker, which really becomes important when you recognize that all three of you are likely to be involved in an automobile accident involving a drunk driver, whether you drink or not; and, one of the three of you is likely to be involved in non-consensual sex, involving alcohol, before you graduate."  With this start, the speaker could then, if so desired, establish a personal link to the topic, "I became concerned with this serious issue when a student at my high school was killed by a drunk driver."  This statement might help to justify the speaker.  The speaker would then be ready to transition into the body of the speech with a preview.

6.  *Quotation* -- A well selected statement from a <u>famous</u> <u>person</u> <u>or</u> <u>an</u> <u>authority</u> can work very well for an introduction.  You'll want to look for wording that is particularly appealing based on its originality, aesthetic value, shocking nature or familiarity.  Typically, you will want to start with the quote itself and then give the citation to the source.  "'And what of Marriage, master? And he answered saying:  'Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  And stand together yet not too near together; for the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.'"  This quote is likely to have impact even if the listeners have never heard of its source, Kahlil Gibran.  However, with weaker quotes giving the source first can be more effective:  "As Shakespeare said, 'Hasty marriages seldom proveth well.'"  Again, once the speaker has directed attention to the topic, she may transition into the body of the speech with a preview:  "I have divided my consideration of marriage…."  Of course, she may wish to justify her speaking on the topic before moving into the speech proper:  "With about half of all marriages ending in divorce, I wanted to learn what the experts have to say.  I have divided my consideration (1) views of poets, (2) views of social scientists, and (3) views from couples with long, successful marriages."

7.  *Setting a scene* – A verbal description of a situation.  Here you will want to be descriptive so that the audience can see some situation.  The setting may be either very positive, such as a beach front where the audience might want to escape or very negative like a battle field.  Often the speaker will begin with, "Imagine yourself leaving for a vacation (or something similar)."  This has the effect of placing the audience directly in the situation.  Obviously, often you will want the listeners to see the situation, and to put themselves in it.  This is particularly true where it is circumstances you want the audience to avoid, like: "The police turned on her siren.  She knew she had another drunk driver ahead of her…."   As in this case, the picture that you paint may establish the beginning of a drama.  This option provides the advantage of a story without consuming too much time.  Then, the drama may develop in the form of examples as you are making the points of your speech.

8.  *Auditory/visual device* – With a "device," you create something for the audience to see as well as hear that calls attention to your topic.   A scene may be enacted, or in this electronic age, a short clip from a DVD or a CD may be played.  If the device is audio only, such as a song, it may be played while you are walking to the front and facing the audience.  With this type introduction, you do need to highlight in words the link between what they hear and/or saw and the topic: "In this brief scene from a popular soap opera, you saw how married couples can misunderstand each other.  While overacted, these types of problems do occur in reality."  From there a transition into the content of the speech is in order.   As with all the types of intros, the best devices show creativity.

Inset 8-2

SELF-INSTRUCTION BLOCK ON INTRODUCTIONS

Q.  Which of the following (A or B) reflects the more appropriate
    thinking as related to an introduction for a speech:
      A.                                    B.
          1.  History of problem         Quotation
          2.  Current status             Why important
    A:  B

Q.   Which of the following is NOT a Purpose of an introduction
          1.  to gain attention          3.  to illustrate an idea
          2.  to build rapport           4.  to justify topic
    A:  3

Q:  Which of the following is NOT a type of introduction
          1.  quotation                  3.  show of hands
          2.  rhetorical question    4.  joke
    Remember the purposes.  Which one demands that you already
    have their attention?
    A:  3

## CONCLUSIONS

As introductions serve primarily to get you into the speech, conclusions serve as a transition out of the speech.  Conclusions frame the speech for you and the audience.  In this way, they reflect the completion of a social contract that you had with the audience to be prepared and to complete what you started. Indeed, the only essential purpose of a conclusion can be simply stated as "to let the audience know *that you know* that you are finished."  The three words are emphasized because they are often omitted when students think of what they want their conclusion to accomplish.  Considering the key purpose leads us to the first rule of conclusions.

**Rules of Conclusions**

1.  *Make it obvious* -- If the conclusion is to serve its purpose, you need to make sure the audience recognizes that you are concluding.  Certainly, the best way to do this is with a keyword-type transition such as "In conclusion,"  "In

ending this speech," "Let me leave you with...." Such phrases are useful in speaking, unlike writing, because the audience can not see the end. Although they know that you should be about finished, they may not be sure you have the same knowledge. Obviously, you will want your voice and manner to also reflect its being a conclusion with a note of finality.

2. *Keep it simple* -- The speech is over; your goal is to have a mutual understanding with the listeners that it is over. As a general rule you want to be efficient in accomplishing this goal. Don't draw it out; don't repeat yourself; and don't say anything that makes it seem that you don't know how to stop.

3. *Present no new information* -- Remember you have signaled the audience that you have finished. Many of them are turning their attention to the next item on their agendas. This is not a good time to be providing them with new information. If you forgot something, rest assured that you'll have other opportunities to provide that information. For communicators, there is always another day.

4. *Have no false conclusion* -- To have a false conclusion is to continue speaking once you have told the audience that you are ending. So, unlike introductions, you generally do not want to combine types of conclusions. You certainly don't want to give but one conclusion before smartly and quietly walking to your seat.

**Types of Conclusions**
Since there is less we want to accomplish in the conclusion and the need for creativity is much less, we need less types.

1. *Summary* -- Here you simply restate the main points of your speech. Knowledge of abstraction is important because you are recapping your speech in abstract form. You simply say, for example, "In this speech I have told you (1) the extend of drunk driving, (2) its consequences and (3) options for you to consider," and walk to your seat.

2. *Key idea* – In this type, you may present either a general idea or some specific from your speech that you think is important. The transition "let me leave you with ..." often starts a key-idea conclusion. The idea that the speaker then presents may well be the thesis of the speech, but is more likely to be one of the main points, and could even be a more detailed-oriented idea. If I were to conclude this chapter with a key idea is would likely be, "Remember that introductions and conclusions are transitions."

3. *Quotation* -- In concluding with the words of another person, you want to select a statement that reinforces some idea you have expressed in the speech. It is, then, a key-idea type conclusion as express by someone who has said it in a noteworthy way. The speech on marriage might be concluded with the following quote, "Let me leave you with these words of Faith Moon, 'Yes, let your marriage be as one reflected by the cypress and the oak, separate and strong. Yet, let your leaves unite to provide shade for good Mother Earth who nourishes us all'."

4.  *Return to scene* – By ending with taking the audience to the beginning vision can provide a sense of unity to the speech.   It can also provide an opportunity to end a story, thus giving a sense of finality to the narrative.

5.  *Challenge* -- You may want to appeal to the audience (a last time) to do something that has been indicated in the speech itself.  This challenge yields the subtype, *call to action*.  A challenge has the nature of a final thought but serves to finalize the audience's involvement with the topic.  The appeal can be as simple as, "By reading more on this topic you can quickly have a commanding knowledge of it," for an informative speech to a conclusion of strong emotional character to end a persuasive speech.

Inset 8-3

SELF-INSTRUCTION BLOCK ON CONCLUSIONS
Q:  Which option (A. or B) better reflects the nature of a
        conclusion for a speech?
      A. What I really wanted to say          B. Summary
 A:  B
Q:  Which of the following is NOT a rule of conclusions?
        1.  present your best idea
        2.  keep it short
        3.  do not introduce new ideas
        4.  make it obvious
 A:  1
 Q:  Which of the following is NOT a type of conclusion?
      1.  summary     2. challenge      3.  thesis     4.  quotation
 A:  3
 Q:  If you present the thesis in the conclusion, what type
        conclusion would it be?
 A:  Key idea

**Summary**

        In this chapter, we have considered purposes and types of introductions. Since, in the beginning classroom stress is placed on creativity in the introductions, I reviewed eight different types and encouraged you to freely combine those to focus your audience's attention on your topic.  Then I highlighted the essential purpose of a conclusion as a communication device to assure the audience that you know that you have accomplished your purpose.  I listed rules to help you to communicate with your audience in an efficient way. Finally, I developed five of the types of conclusions.  Through this chapter, I stressed that introductions and conclusions serve as packaging for the speech proper.  They serve to attract attention and to leave the audience with a good feeling about the preparation and presentation of the speech.

**Key Sources**

.      Adams, W. C.  (2006). *Sunspots.*  Overland Park, KS:  Leathers. Also on this website

Devito J. A. (1996).  *Brainstorms:  How to think more creatively about commmunication* .  New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Gelb, M. J. (1998).  *How to think like Leonardo de Vinci:  Seven steps to genius every Day.*  New York:  Dell Publishing.

Gibran, K. (1923).  *The prophet.*  New York:  Alfred A. Knopf.

Haefele,  J. W. (1962).  *Creativity and innovation.*  New York:  Reinhold Publishing Corp.

Weisberg, R. W.  (1986). *Creativity:  Genius and other myths.*  New York:  W.H. Freeman and Co.