

Chapter Nine Outlining

from
Public Speaking: An Idea Focus
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General Educational Objectives: This chapter helps you to:

1. keep the focus on ideas when outlining your talk.
2. understand criteria for outlining and know which apply to speech.
3. produce an overview for examining the speech's organization.
4. find the best way for you to prepare your speaking notes.

Specific Testable Objectives As a result of studying this chapter you should be able to:

1. list, define and identify when the relevant criteria for outlines are met.
2. produce overviews that reflect an idea focus.
3. produce streamlined speaking notes.

Outlines structure ideas! An outline isn't a summary or an abstract; an outline does not even become your notes when you give the speech. An outline is an ordered layout of the ideas to be developed in the speech. The ordering is based on an understanding of the levels of abstraction. The main points are on a higher level and sub-points are shown in the substructure. The outline, then, shows at a glimpse the idea structure of your speech. Therein is the power of an outline: It is idea-focused. By having this overview in your mind's eye, you will have a schema to guide you as you present your speech. This schema will help you remain focused on your purpose for standing before the audience: i.e., to discuss these ideas with the audience. The notes you take to the front of the room will help you to develop these ideas in the minds of the audience.

If you follow the steps in organizing a speech presented in Chapter 7, you have an outline sufficient for giving a speech after step four. At that point you may also have your ideas expressed in declarative sentences and arranged appropriately if you need for someone to preview your plans for the speech.

In this chapter, you will learn a way of presenting this outline along with identifications of the supporting material, introduction, and conclusion in a "speech overview." The speech overview is designed so that others can help you in your preparation for the speech. If you are in a class, in all likelihood, your teacher will also provide you with a set of guidelines for submitting this work for constructive feedback. These guidelines will no doubt cover requirements relevant to printing, the number and format for references and other submission items.

It is essential to your long-term growth as a speaker that you NOT develop a habit of writing out details. However, for class-room instruction, there are good reasons to provide more than the minimum detail to the teacher.

In considering the speech overview, it's good to know the rule of outlines that you can apply to test your work.

Criteria for Outlines

1. SEQUENCE -- At each level of the outline (i.e. main point and sub-points), the ideas should follow a logical order.

You fulfill this requirement by following one of the patterns in Chapter 7. By conforming to this rule, the ordering will help guide you, as well as the audience, as you present your ideas. As long as the order of the main points is consistent, the pattern for each sub-point may vary; for example, your main points may be problem-solution, and yet, the structure when discussing "problem" may be chronological and the sub-points within "solution" can be in order of importance. Of course, you will ensure your audience is aware of the variation with strong previews; but, strong preview are advisable in most cases.

2. SIMPLICITY -- Each point (including sub-points) should have one idea.

By following this rule you maintain focus at each step of the speech. A quick way to check for simplicity is to examine your thinking for linking conjunctions such as "and," "or," or "but." If you have these words, you have more than one idea in the point. This rule should not be confused with the KISS principle (Keep It Short and Simple). Depending on the level of abstraction of the idea, the idea itself may be very complex and/or involved. You must however be able to state it and think of it clearly as one idea. For an easy example, "Both redbirds and bluebirds live in our state," contains two ideas. The audience may expect you to talk first about redbirds and then bluebirds, but probably would be uncertain as to how you planned to proceed. More importantly, both they and you would have two thoughts to maintain at the same time. Holding two ideas in your awareness is easy enough in normal conditions, but speaking isn't a normal condition. In contrast, the more abstract idea, "Colorful birds live in our state," because it is unified, is easier to process, mentally. With this broader idea, you could then move to two sub-ideas, or support the broader ideas with a variety of supporting material, which could include two or more species of colorful birds as examples. Another simple example that might help you in dealing with more realistic topics: "Our state bird is the bluebird but redbirds are more plentiful" expresses two ideas. Restated as "Our state bird isn't the most plentiful specie," the idea, while actually more abstract, is easier to manage and permits flexibility in the discussion with the audience.

3. COORDINATION -- At each level of the outline, points should be on the same level of abstraction.

The discussion of abstraction in Chapter 2 becomes most relevant in applying this rule. Your main points should be conceptually parallel to each other; your sub-points all should be on the same level of abstraction. Parallelism in the language expressing the idea helps accomplish this role. It is beneficial to write each main point using the same basic sentence structure. Then, do the same thing at any existing sub-point level.

For example, on the topic of drug abuse where the pattern is chronological, if the first point is "Preteens are now using illegal drugs," by starting the other points with the age group, you are most likely to produce parallelism in both language and concept as in this first set.

Parallelism in both conception (coordinated) and language:

- I. Preteens are now using illegal drugs.
- II. Teens continue to abuse drugs.
- III. Adults set bad examples in the use of drugs.

Parallelism in language does not guarantee coordination, nor does coordination require parallel sentence construction. In the next example, you'll see parallel construction where the third point is too encumbering to be coordinated.

Parallelism in sentence construction, but uncoordinated:

- I. Preteens are now using illegal drugs.
- II. Teens continue to abuse drug.
- III. Parents do many things to harm their children.

Parallelism in conception (coordinated) but unparallel in construction:

- I. Preteens are now using illegal drugs.
- II. Drug abuse continues among teenagers.
- III. Adults use drugs illegally.

In this third set, the second statement isn't expressed in parallel form, but the outline conforms to the rule of coordination. There may be reasons within the context of the speech for varying the wording in this way. Indeed, the wording of any of these points, most likely, will vary considerably as the ideas are discussed in previews and summaries. Still, at this stage of preparation, it's best to maintain parallel wording unless it's unnecessarily wordy to do so.

By changing the example slightly, we can see where a strict demand on parallel wording would be inappropriate.

Parallelism in conception (coordinated) but unparallel in construction:

- I. Before I was hooked on meth, my life was normal.
- II. Meth addiction almost destroyed my life.
- III. Since I have been free of meth, my life has a new focus.

The second point isn't parallel in language to the other two. However, the ideas are approximately equal in abstraction. Strict adherence to parallel construction would demand that II be stated, "When I was addicted to meth, my life was almost destroyed." Coordination only requires parallelism in ideas.

Inset 9-1

SELF INSTRUCTION BLOCK: COORDINATION AND PATTERNS

Q: Are the points coordinated in the following chronological pattern?

1. "My Three Sons" presented good moral lessons.
2. "Highway to Heaven" encouraged clean living.
3. "Seventh Heaven" is a modern version of such shows.

A: Yes. "Moral lessons" and "clean living," are two different ways of saying fairly much the same thing. Item three words it yet another way. Indeed, item 3 helps to assure us that the speaker is discussing the same type of elements in all three points.

Q: If the following three points were made in a history lesson, would they be coordinated? If not, which point lacks coordination?

1. Russia has won most of its wars.
2. Germany lost all of its wars.
3. The U.S. was the greatest power.

A: No, it is not coordinated. Item 3 is too broad.

Q: Given the same example, if item 3 were "The U.S. was the greatest military power," would the points then be (a) clearly coordinated, (b) better but still probably not coordinated, (c) definitely uncoordinated.

A: Option b. Military power involves more than winning wars. A country may defeat a militarily lesser power and neither be powers. Also, a powerful country may elect to withdraw from a war for reasons other than military. It could well be that, in c, the person speaks only about the U.S.'s involvement in wars and elects to word the point, "The U.S. was militarily the greatest power" as opposed to the complex "The U.S. won some wars and lost some wars." Certainly, the former avoids a complex point. Still, "The U.S. withdrew from some wars for political reasons," would be a better wording.

Consider the following three points for the next two questions

1. Before the war, the U.S. maintained neutrality toward Germany.
2. The U.S. helped to defeat Germany.
3. After the war, Americans helped to restore Germany's businesses.

Q: What is the pattern? A: Chronological

Q: Are the points coordinated?

A: No. Item 2 is fine; "During the war," is not needed. However, 1 and 2 deal with relationships between the two countries; 3 speaks to individual efforts. Idea 3 could be, "After the war, the U.S. helped to protect Germany's interests."

Think before answering the following question: What pattern is reflected?

Q: Are the following ideas coordinated?

1. Welfare programs are too wasteful.
2. The central government is too large.
3. Local government should be given more power.

A: Yes. The ideas correspond to an effect-cause-solution pattern

4. Subordination – Sub-points should be subsumed within the higher-level ideas.

This rule requires that sub-ideas be clear divisions of the main idea. Sub-points develop the main point. As such, sub-points need to be more specific representation of the idea. There are many ways to break this rule. Following are examples showing two of these and one showing correct subordination.

Error type 1: A sub-point isn't more specific:

- I. Nature can be destructive.
 - A. Forest fires destroy resources.
 - B. Nature does not provide warnings.
 - C. Flooding destroys wide areas.

The idea at B is parallel with the main point; as such it violates the subordination rule. Of course, it also violates the coordination rule since it isn't on the same level as the other two sub-points.

Error type 2: Sub-points aren't relevant:

- I. Nature can be destructive.
 - A. Forest fires purge nonproductive growth.
 - B. Flooding builds deltas.
 - C. Freezing helps to control insects.

The ideas in "Error type 2" are parallel to each other and all are subsets of nature's force. It's just that none speak to destruction! None are subordinate to the main idea. When grouped together it seems unlikely that anyone would make this mistake. However, in a context where two of the points are relevant, it is an easy mistake to make. Also, slight wording differences can reflect major difference in thought. If C said, "Freezing kills insects," it would most likely reflect a subordinate idea since some amounts of insects are essential

Correctly subordinated points:

- I. Nature can be destructive.
 - A. Forest fires destroy homes.
 - B. Storms destroy resources.
 - C. Flooding destroys wide areas.

Finally, in the context of a subordinated point, as "Forest fires destroy homes," it is likely that a speaker could mention some exceptions like, "Forest fires purge nonproductive growth," and still be subordinated as long as the exception wasn't developed into a separate point.

5. Division -- If a point is divided, it must have at least two sub-points.

Perhaps a good way to remember this rule is that if you divide anything, say a pie, you end up with at least two parts. However, the analogy should not be applied too literally. Just because you have more than one part doesn't mean that you have to share them all with your audience. Since you can never say everything there is to say about anything, you shouldn't feel compelled to give all the divisions. You may stop serving with only one piece of your figurative pie; a taste may be all they need to get the favor.

Indeed, the logic of the division rule is that you should not divide unless you need to. If you must divide the idea for the audience to clearly understand the idea, then you develop as many subsections as are needed to gain that understanding. Unless you have to divide, it's better to discuss the idea at the more abstract level. At the more abstract level, you maintain the efficiency of only needing to deal with the one idea and the flexibility of being able to support the idea with a variety of supporting material drawn from across the breath of the idea.

6. Codification -- An appropriate system should be used to indicate the status of each idea.

The code system involves both the placement of the ideas and the symbols. This redundancy is useful because it allows you and your tutor to quickly and clearly see the relative placement of ideas in the hierarchy and sequence of presentation.

An appropriate system has been standardized over the years to such a degree that many individuals refuse to accept a substitute. So, it's best to conform in what you submit to others for analysis. As we will discuss in the last section of this chapter, you may find that an alternatives to this system may work better for you in preparing notes for the speech, but it's good to used standard notation with others.

The standard system involves indentions to show more specific ideas. Such that the more general ideas are flush to the left margin and the first level of sub-ideas are six spaces from the margin, and so on. The standard code pattern requires Roman numeral (I, II, III) for main points and capital letter (A, B, and C) for the first level of sub-points. Since I only recommend the use of a two tiered arrangement in preparing speeches (at least until they are lecture length), I will not advance this discussion further. Many other individuals, easy to find on the web, provide this information as you wish for your general knowledge.

Suggestions for an Idea-focused speech overview

To the basic outline with its key ideas presented in complete sentence, I suggest that you add the **type** of introduction, the **types** of supporting materials, and the **type** of conclusion you are planning to use.

I stress **type** because with a focus on ideas, you don't want to put these parts of your speech into the written form. Seeing sentences on paper tends to make people want to remember the exact words. Keeping them as ideas permits

you more freedom. As you practice presenting your speech you will find that you will say it somewhat differently each time. That is desirable.

By having the types on your speech overview, your teacher, tutor or assistant will have an indication that you have thought about these issues and will have a basis for providing feedback without stifling your creativity.

In Figure 9-1, I provide the basic form of this speech overview. As with many forms, the lines indicate where you will supply information. Below the line is the information to be supplied. Of course, you will model the form on separate paper since sufficient room is not provided. You will also note that there is no space for to provide a title. Speeches generally don't have titles. They are only given titles for promotional purposes, or when they stop being speeches and become printed manuscripts.

Figure 9-1
Form for Speech Overview

(no title please, but do give your name if presented to an instructor)

INTRODUCTION:

type

I. _____
first major point in a declarative sentence

A. _____
subpoint, if appropriate, in declarative sentence

TYPES OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

TYPES OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

B. _____
subpoint, if appropriate, in declarative sentence

_____ TYPES OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

_____ TYPES OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

II. _____
second major point in a declarative sentence

A. _____
subpoint in declarative sentence, if appropriate

_____ TYPES OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

ETC.

CONCLUSION:

Type

Figure 9-2 shows an example of a “submission overview” where only main points are used. Figure 9-3 expands this example to include sub-points.

Figure 9-2
An Example of a Basic Speech Overview

INTRODUCTION: Quotation

- I. "My Three Sons" presented good moral values.
 - quotation
 - examples
 - explanation
 - II. "Leave It To Beaver" encouraged clean living.
 - explanation
 - visual aid
 - III. "Seventh Heaven" is a recent version of such shows.
 - statistics
 - explanation
- CONCLUSION: Summary
-

Figure 9-3
An Example of a Speech Overview Containing Subpoints

INTRODUCTION: Set a Scene

- I. Las Vegas has fun things to do besides gambling.
 - A. The shows have world-class talent.
 - examples
 - quotation
 - B. The museums are interesting.
 - visual aid
 - explanation
 - ii. Day trips from Vegas are fun.
 - A. Hoover Dam is impressive.
 - Statistics
 - Visual aid
 - B. Lake Mead is enjoyable.
 - Story
- CONCLUSION: Return to scene
-

Suggestions for Speaking Notes

For the speeches you give in a speech course, your instructor may encourage you to use note cards. While it is possible to wrinkle note cards, they provide more support than paper. You can hold a card in one hand without it being an undue distraction for the audience. Indeed, the notes say that you have made preparations.

Note cards are small enough to discourage your writing too much. Admittedly, with computer generation, it is possible, by using reduced font size, to write too much even on a small card. Thus, you should follow the spirit of this suggestion. You may even want to use larger or bold type (and vary it) to make it easy to process the cues provided by your notes at a glimpse.

An analogy to a shopping list may help. If you have more than seven items to purchase, you are likely to find a list helpful. However, you don't want a lengthy discussion of each item. You just want a word or so to remind you of the idea. Your mind will take it from there. It's the same with the speech notes!

Your teacher may limit your notes to one side of one note card. The size of the note card is optional remembering the spirit of the limitation. In addition, you could have an extra card for quotes. Since quotes are important for the words used by the important person, the audience will recognize why you are reading to them. Having quotes on a separate card allows you to make the reading of the quote obvious and thus special.

With the two note cards, you will have sufficient guidance for short classroom speeches. By working with limited notes in the course, you will learn to manage your notes when your job and civic duties require you to give long talks. The time constraints of a course require that you learn the process within a miniature prototype.

As with the shopping list, you want your notes to have words that remind you of what you're going to say. You don't want sentences or even starts of sentences that you think you might use. These cuing techniques are apt to lock you into a situation where the focus is too much on words, prompting you to freeze, not remembering the next part of the string. It is better to keep an idea focus and permit your mind to generate words as needed. You have been generating words to express ideas since you were two, three at the most. Have faith in that habit and cultivate it in front of your classmates when all that is at stake is a grade.

Figure 9-4 shows how the speech from Figure 9-2 could be translated to a note card reflecting standard outline indentation. However, you should feel free to experiment in your rehearsal with different layouts. Many excellent speakers find that reverse indentation is helpful. Figure 9-5 formats the Las Vegas speech (Figure 9-3) using reverse indentation. Both of these formats vary the font. Again, you should seek what works for you to include color and highlighting.

Figure 9-2
An Example of a Basic Speech Overview

BREATH11 MAKE EYE CONTACT! Read!
PREVIEW
MY THREE SONS
Read
The right decision
Everyone joins in
LEAVE IT TO BEAVER
Brother's love
Show tape — RELAX a little
SEVENTH HEAVEN
67% Christians 98% Others
No one is perfect
PAUSE Summarize

Figure 9-3
An Example of a Speech Overview Containing Subpoints

BREATH11 MAKE EYE CONTACT Imagine
Las Vegas
Shows
Prince Kenny Chesney Celine Dion
quotation
museums .
visual aid
explanation
/ Day trips
Hoover Dam
221 miles / 6.6 Million / 4.5 thousand
Play DVD
Lake Meade
Our day there
PUT THEM ON THE PLANE

When the time comes (or returns) when you're asked to give long speeches, you might consider the use of a legal pad. The back paperboard of the pad provides stability. The pads are then easy to handle and move as you do. They also come in a variety of sizes. Again, you probably want to think in terms of using one side of one sheet. Quotes, or perhaps other key information, can be on a second page. However, you will want that page to be detached from the pad so that you can slide it from under to the top and back without the distraction of flipping the page.

Summary

In this chapter, we have considered outlining including six rules for outlines. Then I made suggestions for a "speech overview" that you might show to others to generate suggestions. Finally, we discussed the notes that you might actually use in the speech both in the classroom and in longer speeches.