Persuasive Speaking

Unlike an informative speech, persuasive speeches are designed to do exactly that, persuade. Speakers can use more pointed language and should try to use the persuasive speech to change their audience’s point of view or encourage the audience to take a particular action. A key term to remember when giving a persuasive speech is advocate. As a persuasive speaker, you are an advocate for the topic you chose.

It is important to point out to the audience a clear goal which effectively delivers a message. There should be a mental dialogue between the audience and the speaker. The audience will respond in their mind to the speaker throughout the speech. It is important for the speaker to anticipate the questions and critiques that the audience may have.

The target audience is who the speaker most wants to persuade. While focusing on a target audience, it is important to remember the rest of the audience.

Types of Persuasive Speeches

Questions of Fact – a question about the truth or falsity of an assertion, typically organized by topic, the speaker is limited to persuading the audience to accept a particular view of the facts. Example: To persuade my audience that William Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him.

Questions of Value – a question about the worth, rightness, or morality of an idea or action, these questions demand value judgments; the speaker must justify the claim. These speeches do not call for the listener to do anything, they do not argue directly for or against a particular course of action. Example: To persuade my audience that capital punishment is morally and legally wrong.

Questions of Policy – a question about whether a specific course of action should or should not be taken, the goal can be to gain passive agreement or to motivate immediate action. A listener who takes action after a speech is more likely to remain committed to the speaker’s position. Example: To persuade my audience that the federal government should require seat belts on all school buses in the United States.
Three basic issues when discussing a question of policy:

- **Need** – is there a serious problem or need that requires a change from the current policy? The speaker must prove that a change from the current policy is needed.

- **Plan** – if there is a problem with the current policy, the speaker must have a plan to solve the problem.

- **Practicality** – the speaker’s plan must solve the problem, it must not create new and more serious problems.

The speaker must be able to show that the solution is workable.

Four useful patterns for policy speeches:

- **Problem-Solution Order** – the first main point deals with the existence of a problem, and the second main point presents a solution to the problem.

- **Problem-Cause-Solution Order** – the first main point identifies a problem, the second main point analyzes the causes of the problem, and the third main point presents a solution to the problem.

- **Comparative Advantages Order** – each main point explains why a speaker’s solution to a problem is preferable to other proposed solutions.

- **Monroe’s Motivated Sequence** – seeks immediate action. Five steps of the motivated sequence: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action.

Persuasive speeches can be organized in several ways. What is important to remember is that you have strong supporting material. Research is important, and a key to convincing the audience.

Always ensure that your goals are ethical, and that you use ethical methods to persuade your audience.