

Speech Qualities Expanded: Part 1

A. Informative Material

1. Specific material
 - Gives weight and authority to talk (and you)
 - Shows evidence of research and knowledge of the subject
 - Makes a lasting impression, memorable
 - Accomplish by asking/answering six basic questions
 - Who, What, When, Where, Why, How
 - Sensitive to the level of the audience
2. Informative to audience
 - Material must suit the audience – what might inform one audience might not inform another.
 - In preparation ask:
 - What do I want to accomplish in this talk?
 - How much does the group already know?
 - How much foundation must be laid?
 - How would I say it differently to a different audience?
3. Accuracy of statement
 - Should not willfully misrepresent any information whether it is your own or when using published information.
 - Careful preparation will help you avoid accidental misrepresentations
4. Material of practical value or applicable
 - In science, any new information is valuable. BUT, it is clear that some information is more valuable than other information; hence Nobel Prizes, NSF grants, etc.
 - Some questions to ask about your information:
 - Any new basic principles?
 - Could the information be used in decision making?
 - Can it be adapted for other applications, especially new methods?
5. Additional clarifying material

B. Clear, Understandable – i.e. how you say what you have to say

1. Simply stated, economy of words
 - Does not necessarily mean simple language, or that every word and phrase must be planned
 - Compact and simple in expression of thought
 - Individual points are clearly organized, stated, and separated
 - The relationship among various points is clearly stated
 - If the subject is complicated in your mind the presentation will be complex

2. Unfamiliar or technical terms explained
Again, the amount of explanation depends on the level of the audience and the “newness” of the information
3. Appropriate amount of material for allotted time
 - If a talk contains too much material for the allotted time, understanding is dulled or lost completely even if you finish on time.
 - No more material than can be CLEARLY presented in the allotted time
 - No more material than can be reasonably ABSORBED by a given audience in the allotted time
 - Again, the amount of material will depend on the audience

C. Effective Introductions

1. Introduction rouses interest
 - Should show the value of the information to be presented
 - Involve audience by or through:
 - Series of questions to be answered, hypotheses to be tested
 - A problem to be solved, maybe with new methods
 - Heretofore unknown area (conceptual, geographic, methodological, etc) to be illuminated
 - May need to address prejudices with controversial topics
 - Although what you say is of primary importance, how you say things in the introduction is more important than in any other part of a talk, i.e. delivery
 - Ordinarily, short, simple statements have the most immediate impact
 - May be the last thing you prepare, and can be written out carefully and memorized as a way to start a presentation with confidence
2. Introduction appropriate to theme or topic
 - Leads effectively into the subject of the talk
 - Introduction should identify the theme or topic
 - Do not sacrifice the theme or the integrity of the talk as a unified whole for the sake of a good story or joke
3. Introduction of proper length
 - No specific length either relatively or absolutely
 - Depends on:
 - Time allotted
 - Purpose of the talk
 - Audience, etc
 - If it is too lengthy and rambling, the audience can become restless and loose interest (turn off) before you get to the good stuff
 - Should adequately prepare audience for presentation, no more no less