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## Book Chapter: Public Address

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## **CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC ADDRESS**

### **Mark Dorrrough and Kevin Jones**

#### **Public Address**

When most people hear about speech competition it is public address which first comes to mind. Public address (PA) refers to a group of events which all involve prewritten memorized speeches. These events require the speaker to stand up in front of an audience and deliver a speech that is between eight and ten minutes long. The purpose of these events is to mimic the classic form of public address that is still used today by politicians, activists, and many other groups. Since many times these speeches are delivered from a raised platform in a public arena, public address events are also referred to as platform events.<sup>1</sup>

In competitive intercollegiate forensics there are four events that are often referred to as public address events. These events are Persuasion, Informative, After Dinner Speaking (ADS), and Communication Analysis (CA). Each event has a ten-minute time limit and is expected to be at least eight minutes in length.<sup>2</sup> Future chapters on each event will go into more detail about the specific nature of PA events.

#### **Speech Structure**

There are multiple ways to structure PA's in academic speech competition, but the most commonly accepted structure is as follows: introduction, main body, and conclusion. This format makes the speech easy to follow and allows adequate preview and review of the content of the speech.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the introduction is to present the topic of the speech and preview what you will be speaking about. Since PA's are usually eight to ten minutes long, the introduction of a PA needs to be between one and two minutes long. Public Address speeches start with an attention getter, followed by a qualifier, then the topic/thesis, and finally end with a preview of the main points of the speech.

#### **Attention Getter**

The attention getter in any speech must link to the topic of the speech. While the attention getter can technically be anything, usually the best attention getters are stories, which relate to the topic in some way.<sup>4</sup> In the following example an informative speech on bacteriophage therapy uses a story from the movie Alien.

#### **SAMPLE ATTENTION GETTER:**

In the movie Alien a creature from outer space reproduces by injecting an alien larva into a human. The larva would then grow within the human and burst out when developed, killing it's host in the process.

## **Qualifier**

The qualifier is a clause that explains the importance of the topic. The qualifier should briefly answer why the topic is currently important. This is usually done by forming a connection with the audience, and explaining how far reaching the topic is. Also some topics will need a clause about why the topic is of current importance.

### **SAMPLE QUALIFIER:**

Today, a similar thing is happening, but the creatures don't come from outer space, they come from inner space, and instead of preying on humans they prey on the bacteria that make us sick. A cure that Dr. Elizabeth Kutter, states on her web page in 1997 was first conceived in 1917.

## **Thesis**

The thesis statements appropriate for each type of PA vary greatly. The thesis of an informative speech simply identifies the topic of the speech. On the other hand, the thesis of a persuasion will mention the problem and that it needs to be solved. The different idiosyncrasies of each PA event will be covered in future chapters. The one thing all thesis statements have in common in PA speeches is that they identify the topic that will be discussed in the speech.<sup>5</sup>

### **SAMPLE THESIS:**

This strange creature is the bacteriophage, and it is used to cure disease through a treatment known as phage therapy.

## **Preview of Main Points**

The final part of an introduction is the preview of main points. It is in this section that the three main points, which make up the body of the speech, will be briefly mentioned. The length of this preview is usually one long sentence or three short sentences. Previews often include puns and other humorous devices. Specifically, ADS previews can differ greatly from traditional previews.<sup>6</sup>

### **SAMPLE PREVIEW:**

To understand why this octogenarian idea's time has finally come we must first diagnose just what phage therapy is; second, place phage therapy and antibiotics under the microscope to see how they compare; and finally, prescribe uses for phage therapy in the future.

When all of the sample parts of the introduction are put together, a complete introduction to the speech appears as follows:

#### SAMPLE INTRODUCTION:

In the movie *Alien* a creature from outer space reproduces by injecting an alien larva into a human. The larva would then grow within the human and burst out when developed, killing it's host in the process. Today, a similar thing is happening, but the creatures don't come from outer space, they come from inner space, and instead of preying on humans they prey on the bacteria that make us sick. This strange creature is the bacteriophage, and it is used to cure disease through a treatment known as phage therapy.

A cure that Dr. Elizabeth Kutter, states on her web page in 1997 was first conceived in 1917. To understand why this octogenarian idea's time has finally come we must first diagnose just what phage therapy is, second place phage therapy and antibiotics under the microscope to see how they compare, and finally prescribe uses for phage therapy in the future.

Notice how the thesis statement is imbedded in the qualifier. The order of the introduction presented in this chapter is generally how introductions of PA's are presented; however, this order can be slightly altered to help the fluency of the speech.

### **The Body of the Speech**

There is no one way to organize all PA's because the four different PA events each have their own structural issues. Yet, there are some aspects of structure that are present in most Public Address events. As general rule, the body consists of three main points. Each point must support the thesis and is usually separated into two or three sub-points. Each sub-point is a different idea within the main point. Between each of the main points there should be a transition sentence that lets the audience know that you are moving onto a new main point.

Before diving into a main point you should provide an internal preview. This internal preview is simply one sentence that explains the two or three sub-points that you will be talking about in the main point of the speech.<sup>7</sup> It is often during this sentence that the speaker will walk from one speaking position to another in the room to visually support the transition from the introduction to the body of the speech.

### **Main points**

Public Address speeches often cover complex subject matter. These complex ideas are often hard for a person unfamiliar with the topic to grasp in a ten-minute speech. Illustrations can often be used to help explain complex ideas. These illustrations can take many forms including metaphors, similes, visual aids, narrative stories, and analogies. The attention getter used above is an example of an illustrative analogy in a platform speech. Since most forensic judges have little knowledge of exactly how

viruses kill cells the quick example of the alien in the movie Aliens help judges get an idea of what is taking place at the cellular level.

When writing a public address speech you must be very careful about how you use statistics and figures. Too many statistics can become boring to the audience as well as mind numbing. The more statistics you state, the less impact and more forgettable each individual statistic becomes. For this reason, you should make sure your speech is not bogged down by statistics and make sure the statistics you use are important and hard hitting. A statistic that states how many phages are in one drop of sewer water is not very pertinent to the speech being presented. On the other hand, a statistic that states how many infections currently cannot be treated with antibiotics is important information to share with your audience. Furthermore, statistics that explain how many people die per year from untreatable bacteria infections are good statistics to include because these statistics highlight the urgency of the speech topic. There is no set of statistics that is always needed for every PA speech. Each topic and event type will demand different statistics but remember to use the statistics that have the most impact.

Often times each main point of a speech will be further divided into sub-points. This is done to further organize a speech so it is easy to follow. Each main point of a speech should have two or three sub-points. The exact number depends on the topic and the event. A few times a main point will have no sub-points, but this is uncommon. Just as the main points of a speech are previewed during the introduction of a speech the sub-points are previewed during the beginning of a main point. This preview should be short and to the point.

Each type of speech has its own structure, but they all use three main points. Each event's individual chapter will cover structure in more depth. However, as a general rule, the main points of persuasive speeches and after dinner speeches consist of problems, causes, and solutions. The main points of informative speeches are usually history, current applications, and future applications. Communication Analysis usually consists of main points as follows: model, application of the model, and implications. It is important to note, however, that these traditional organizational patterns are not the only effective patterns that can be used. The best structure for any speech is always the structure that accommodates the topic you have chosen. Recently, an extremely successful informative speech about laser paint deviated from traditional structure. The speech changed the middle main point to a comparison between regular lasers and laser paint. This break from traditional structure was done to help construct a cohesive statement about what laser paint was and why it was so special. Always choose the structure that compliments your topic best, even if it isn't traditional.

Many people consider platform speeches dull and tedious, with the exception of ADS, and to a certain extent these people are right. Unfortunately hearing six nine-minute speeches on some new item that cures cancer can be very monotonous and repetitive.<sup>8</sup> But platform speeches do not have to be that way as long as the writer injects humor into their speech. Humor is a great way to grab the audiences' attention in the middle of the speech. It also makes your speech enjoyable to listen too. Try to have at

least two humorous sections in the body of your speech. While adding humor keep in mind that except with ADS, humor is not supposed to dominate the speech. While making the audience chuckle in delight is good, if they are laughing all the time they are likely to miss some of what you are saying and the judge will likely mark you down for being entered in the wrong event.

#### SAMPLE MAIN POINT:

To fully understand phage therapy we must uncover just what it is and then examine its history. The 1998 Information Please Encyclopedia describes bacteriophages, or phages for short, as viruses that infect bacteria. Like all viruses the phage is composed of a crystalline protein shell which protects a string of DNA. Phages are extremely small, roughly 1/40<sup>th</sup> the size of a normal bacteria. Phages look much like a lunar lander, with a large base which houses the DNA, a small neck used to inject the DNA, and landing legs which grab onto the bacteria. Dr. Heaphy of the Leicester University in Britain, says in his online spring 1999 Microbiology II class notes that unlike most viruses which enter a cell and then inject the DNA strand into the nucleus, phages inject the DNA strand directly into the bacteria cell. Once the DNA is inside the cell, it replaces part of the bacteria's DNA and uses the cell to produce 1000's of phages. After 10 to 30 minutes of rapid reproduction the cell can't hold all the viruses and, much like John Hurt in Alien, it bursts releasing the viruses. Felix D'Herelle reported in his 1922 book entitled The Bacteriophage that he first discovered the microbe when he added sewer water to a bacteria laden solution. The milky solution soon turned clear as the bacteria were killed. Unfortunately for D'Herelle technology was not at a sufficiently advanced point to adequately study the microscopic phage. Phage therapy produces only limited and unpredictable success, and once penicillin and its fellow antibiotics were developed in the 1940's phage therapy was completely dropped as a solution to infection in the western world. But as The Nature of Things reported on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1998 phage therapy did survive in the Soviet Union province of Georgia. During the cold war researchers developed ointments and pills using phages with much success, though the standards for research were considerably below the acceptable levels of western medical research. After the cold war ended the Tiflis Institute, where the research was going on, received severe cutbacks. At the same time the west was rediscovering phage therapy. Currently two US companies are working on producing FDA approved phage therapy products

#### Transitions

After each main point it is necessary to transfer into your next point. In public address this is often done with one sentence that lets the audience know that the current main point is done and you are starting another. Transitions are great places to interject humor and wit. This can often be accomplished by tying your attention getter into the

transition. Make sure that you use different wording in each transition. Also, walk from one point in the room to another to further symbolize that you are transitioning.

**SAMPLE TRANSITION:**

Now that we have revealed just what phage therapy is, a close comparison to the other enemy of bacteria, antibiotics, is in order.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion of a platform speech is the place to review your main points. It is also in the conclusion where you restate your thesis and Reapply the attention getter.

**Review the Main Points**

Once the topic has been restated you should review your main points. This is the section where you have the greatest flexibility. If you are running short on time then just restate your main points the same way you did in your introduction. If you have time to fill, then go into more detail giving a brief explanation of each point and how they each support your position on the topic. This part of the conclusion can take anywhere from seven seconds to thirty seconds depending on how much time you have left. This should be done while walking slowly to the location in the room where you began your speech. This visually enforces the idea that you are transferring from your body to your conclusion, and illustrates the idea of coming full circle back to where you began.

**SAMPLE REVIEW:**

Today we diagnosed what phage therapy is, placed phage therapy and antibiotics under the microscope to see how they compare; and finally, prescribed uses for phage therapy in the future.

**Restate the Thesis**

The next step in the conclusion of a speech is to restate your thesis.

**SAMPLE THESIS RESTATED:**

Bacteriophages are healing multiple diseases through the use of phage therapy.

**Closing**

The final section of your conclusion should be to return to the attention getter. While you can simply reiterate the story that you gave in the introduction the best conclusions take a new twist on the attention getter. This is usually accomplished by applying the attention getter to the audience at large, or by leaving only covering through the climax of the attention getter and then finishing the story started in the attention getter

#### SAMPLE CLOSING:

Phage therapy may not be quite as exciting as the movie *Alien*, where a creature from outer space reproduces by injecting an alien larva into a human that burst out when it was fully developed, killing it's host in the process. However, phage therapy is saving lives and helping all of us in that process.

### **Conducting Research**

A competitive public address speech must be supported by extensive research. You cannot expect to read one magazine article and write a competitive speech. You will need to plan on spending some time in the library or on-line before you even begin to write your speech.

### **Types of Sources**

When researching a platform speech it is very important to obtain the highest quality sources available. Research should always come from credible and timely sources. The most credible sources to include in your speech are trade publications.<sup>9</sup> Trade publications are any publications that are directly associated with the topic area your speech is on as well as interviews with experts in the field. These publications are considered to have the highest credibility because they are written by experts in the field of study. Trade publications can be medical journals or regular specialized magazines.<sup>10</sup> For example, if your speech is on some new medical procedure then the *Journal of the American Medical Association* would be considered a trade publication. On the other hand a *Communication Analysis* about a new theme park would not include *The Journal of the American Medical Association* as a trade publication. In general, if you feel a professional in the field your speech is on would read and/or publish the source you have found, then it is probably a trade publication.

After trade publications, you should look towards, what can best be described as, high quality sources. These are sources from a variety of materials, including periodicals, newspapers, broadcast media, and government documents, which are generally considered to be highly credible.<sup>11</sup> The highest quality newspapers include the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *London Times*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. High quality periodicals include *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *The Advocate*, and *The Economist*. Also, certain broadcast media is considered to be high quality, such as *National Public Radio*, the *BCC*, and *CNN*. These are by no means an exhausted list of quality high credibility sources, but they give you a good frame of reference on what type of publications are considered of high credibility by the forensics community. Also any federal government documents are considered to have a high level of credibility.<sup>12</sup>

The final level of sources you should use in your speech are sources considered to be of low quality and little reliability. These sources include smaller press newspapers such as the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, and *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, mass-market



magazines such as Time and Newsweek, news wires such as the Associated Press and Reuters, and USA Today. These sources should only be used if the information contained in them cannot be found anywhere else.

You might have noticed that web sites and books are not mentioned in the above paragraphs. This is because both of these sources should be avoided. Web sites should be avoided for three main reasons. First, web sites can be awkward to cite in your speech. Most URLs are long and disrupt the flow of the speech. Web sites also do not display a last updated date which is needed to cite the web site in a speech. Second, web sites often lack credibility. While highly credible institutions may maintain some web sites, there are many web sites that are maintained by some kid from her/his family's basement. It is not always easy to tell which web sites are which. Third, many credible web sites, such as latimes.com, have a print version of what is contained on the web site. If you have to use a web site try to stick to web sites that end in .gov or .edu. These web sites are from governments and educational institutions so they are generally considered to have credibility.

Books should be avoided as well, but for an entirely different reason than web sites. Books are often too old to be used in a competitive forensics speech.<sup>13</sup> Generally public address speeches should include sources only from the current and previous calendar year.<sup>14</sup> Most books take almost a year after being written to be put into press. Furthermore since books are not constantly updated, and libraries do not order new books on similar subjects every year it can be hard to find books which are from the current and previous year.

Since public address speeches should only have sources from the current and last calendar year, it might be necessary, later in the forensics season, to research an already written speech again in order to update sources. Furthermore, there should always be some sources from the current year that the speech is being delivered from. This means you should begin to update sources for your speeches in January.

### **Number of Sources**

There are no official rules on the number of sources that should be included in a public address speech but it is expected for speakers to have several. Many judges will write down the sources in a speech or keep count of how many sources are cited by making hash marks on the side of the ballot. If the judge feels there were not enough sources in the speech they will mark the competitor down. Generally it is expected for public address speeches to have eight-fifteen sources. Anything more than fifteen sources stands a good chance of weighing the speech down with citations which can disrupt the flow of the speech. Eight is the minimum expected because each sub-point in the speech should have at least one source, preferably two, to back up the information in the sub point. Since most main points will have two to three sub points, speeches will need a minimum of eight sources to be competitive.

You also need to be careful about repeating sources. Generally it is expected that each one of the eight-fifteen sources will be a new source not previously used in the speech. Repeating a source for a different point is okay once or twice in a speech but no more than that. Repeated sources give the impression that you have not spent much time researching the topic and have relied almost exclusively on one or two sources for your information.

### Citing Sources

Using sources in your speech is a key way to add credibility to your speech.<sup>15</sup> Anytime a factual claim is made in your speech it should be accompanied by a source for that information. Sources should be cited as well, when analysis and opinions you read about are used in your speech.

When you cite references in your speech you should do so before the information from that source is presented. By citing the source first you will add credibility to what you are about to say. Furthermore, you want the audience to know the fact in your speech is from a credible reference before you say it, otherwise the judge might not mentally key into the fact as one from a credible source. Also, citing before the information usually flows better while speaking. It sounds better to say "according to the American Gastrological Society on July 23, 2002 over 25,000 people die from liver scaring every year" than to say "25,000 people die every year from scared liver tissue as stated by the American Gastrological Society on July 23, 2002."

Web sites should be cited by the title of the web site, not by the URL. URLs disrupt the flow of the speech. The date that the web site was last updated or copyrighted should be stated as well. If you cannot find a last updated or copyright date you can give a last accessed date, but this is not looked favorably upon by the forensics community.

A few examples of source citation in speech are as follows:

"But as The Nature of Things reported on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1998 phage therapy did survive in the Soviet Union providence of Georgia"

"As the November 12, 2000 San Francisco Gate points out, Nieto had recognized that traditional protest was not getting her anywhere"

"When the store does decide to remove their dented cans from the shelf as Mike Stuart head receiver for Albertson's Store 6183 in California told me in a personal interview conducted on March 30, 2001 they get a tax write off if they donate the cans to discount grocery stores."

"The World Health Organization's web site last updated on March 20, 2001 explains how Lead can enter into the contents of cans when they are dented"

## Unwritten Rules

As with any event, there are several important rules and norms that are not officially recognized, but are followed by the community.

1. Students are expected to have public address speeches memorized. If notes are used it is usually grounds for being dropped down to at least a rank of fourth in the round.
2. When notes are used, it is not acceptable to read from a paper manuscript. Instead the speech should be on note cards.
3. Speech topics should be about new and exciting concepts and speaker should avoid any topic that has been used in previous years.

## Conclusion

You are now ready to move on and choose an event from the category of public address that sounds interesting to you. Remember each one of the four public address events has its own distinctive rules and procedures so read all the chapters about the specific public address events before definitively choosing which event to do. Good luck with your public address speech and remember to have fun.

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<sup>1</sup> James H. Byrns, Speak For Yourself: An Introduction to Public Speaking (New York: Random House, 1981) 203.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Osborn, and Suzanne Osborn, Public Speaking (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988) 145-175.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolph F. Verderber, The Challenge of Effective Speaking 10<sup>th</sup> ed., (Belmont: Wadsworth 1997) 87-95.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin W. Dean, "Time Well Spent: Preparation for Impromptu Speaking." Journal of the American Forensic Association, 23.4 (1987): 210-219.

<sup>5</sup> Verderber 200-205.

<sup>6</sup> Patricia Kearney, and Timothy G. Plax, Public Speaking in a Diverse Society 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1999) 150-156.

<sup>7</sup> Byrns 191.

<sup>8</sup> Verderber 123.

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<sup>9</sup> Byrns 80-85.

<sup>10</sup> Verderber 56-77.

<sup>11</sup> Osborn 252.

<sup>12</sup> Verderber 55.

<sup>13</sup> Kearney, and Plax, 89.

<sup>14</sup> Byrns 226-235.

<sup>15</sup> Osborn 315-334.