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## Book Chapter: Persuasive Speaking

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## **CHAPTER 4: PERSUASIVE SPEAKING**

### **Kevin Jones**

#### **Understanding the Event**

The American Forensics Association provides the following “official” definition of persuasive speaking:

An original speech by the student designed to inspire, reinforce, or change the beliefs, attitudes, values or actions of the audience. Audio-visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Multiple sources should be used and cited in the presentation of the speech. Speech should be memorized but minimal notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.<sup>1</sup>

For the beginning speaker, this definition provides a good start from which you can build your speech. In addition to the formal definition it will be helpful to keep in mind that another goal of your speech is to generate and/or alter belief and/or action. You want to do more than just present or confront a problem. You want to provide a practical solution that audience members can apply to their lives or act upon within a short period of time. A good persuasive speech makes numerous well-supported and well-documented arguments that are cogent and well developed. In order to provide a solid speech, you will need to write your speech making argumentative claims. You want to do more than just present information or provide concerns. However, while you need to be aggressive in speech writing style you will need to find a good balance. Speaker’s that are too intense or too argumentative can offend and lose their audiences. Work for several highs and lows in your arguments. For example, after making an argument, you can illustrate the argument or provide a brief example of what the argument represents that supports the point but is informative and strengthens your point rather than make it more intense.

Once the problem has been established and the cause of the problem identified, viable and practical solutions to that problem need to be provided by the speaker. You want to do more than just inform the audience about a problem or arouse them. For every argument you presented in the first part of your speech, you will need to provide a solution. Strong speeches always provide solutions that the audience can be involved with in some capacity. If your problem is sweatshops in China and your solution is for China to pass a law prohibiting sweatshops, then there is very little that an audience of college students can do about getting a law passed in China. However, if you provide a list of name brand products that use sweatshops in China that the audience can boycott or not purchase, that is a more practical solution. As the audience members leave the tournament, they can go shopping the very next day and enact your solution. The audience members can also inform their friends and family members about the problem and encourage them to practice the same solution step.

Visual aids (VAs) are not required in persuasive speaking but are often used if appropriate. You will always want to avoid having token visual aids that do nothing to help advance the speech. Your topic and the content of the speech will dictate if a VA is needed. Do not worry about visual aids until after the speech is written. The final speech will dictate what visual aids, if any, will need to be prepared.

### **Getting Started**

Before you begin preparing a Persuasive speech, you must read Chapter 2 of this book regarding Public Address or Platform events. Chapter 2 provides extremely important background information and material regarding the purpose, function and development of Public Address events. If you have not read Chapter 2 yet, read it now and then return to this chapter. If you have already read Chapter 2, then you are ready to proceed. As always, since different regions of the country have different preferences for persuasive speech topics and speech structure, always check with our coach to see how those preferences might differ from what is presented in this chapter.

### **Topic Selection**

Selecting a good persuasive topic can often prove challenging. Many topics that are very persuasive in nature are often overdone or fail to contain a practical and viable solution. You may need to plan on taking a great deal of time to find the right topic for you. You will not want just any topic. You need a topic that you can really care about and deliver with some element of passion. If you do not communicate that you really care about the issue, then how can you expect your audience to care?

A good persuasive topic is one that is relevant, timely, practical, and possesses a solution that can be addressed in a ten-minute time limit. You may find several excellent topics but they might require far more time than you have to truly address them fully and accurately. Also, many topics can be very persuasive in nature but do not make good competition speech topics. Broad topics such as a balanced budget, the federal deficit, capital punishment, or abortion should generally be avoided. If the United States Supreme Court cannot resolve the abortion issue in thirty years, then chances are pretty good that you are not going to be able to in less than ten-minutes!

A good persuasive topic will answer the question “what’s the news?” What makes this topic relevant and timely? Why is this topic so important for the audience to hear? How does it affect everyone in the room? How are people harmed by this topic? How wide spread is this problem? There is an old debate cliché that states, “nobody dies, nobody cries!” Not every topic has to cause death and destruction but there needs to be a clearly identifiable harm that you can connect to the topic and to the audience. Also, the harm needs to be significant. The harm needs to affect enough people to justify taking the corrective measures provided in the speech. For example, you may find in your research that a bolt on an Olympic bobsled broke once and one person was paralyzed from an ensuing accident. Your proposed solution is for Olympic teams to spend millions of dollars redesigning the flaw and building all new equipment. While the

paralyzed person is a tragic event, one accident in the history of Olympic bobsledding hardly justifies radically changing the entire process. You would be hard pressed to convince a judge that your speech was significant and relevant.

Your topic also needs to be practical and relevant to the audience in the room. The people to whom you are speaking need to be able to feel the effects of the problem and be able to physically do something about it themselves. The action can be to change an attitude or perception or it may be to actually go out and take some sort of action such as donating money or boycotting a product. For example, you may discover in your research that there is a terrible problem in Germany regarding how milk is sold to schoolchildren. You can identify a clear problem, a cause for the problem and even provide a practical solution. But the only real harm you provide is that some schoolchildren do not get milk every day with their lunch and those that do get it have to pay extra for it. Your solution is for the German government to subsidize the whole program.

This would not be a good competitive speech because many judges would view the problem as not relevant to the audience in the room, there is no real harm taking place, and the audience is really incapable of doing anything about it. However, if you were to take the same topic and discover that a large number of children are dying in Germany because of a calcium deficiency and that the United States has a program in place to get milk to the children but the government needs money or volunteers to help, then you could make the speech more competitive. The dying children argument establishes harm because it is hard to ignore a problem when you can directly link it to death. The U.S. program links the topic to the audience in the room by bringing the issue onto our turf. And the solution is one that everyone in the room is capable of helping with whether it is to send some money or volunteer some time.

When selecting a persuasive speech topic remember the following guidelines: 1) A good persuasive speech topic needs to clearly establish harm for the audience in the room; 2) The harm must be practical, relevant, and significant to the audience; 3) The effects of the harm should be felt by the members of the audience; 4) A specific cause or causes can be identified as creating the established harm; and 5) The solution should be something practical that the audience members can directly engage in, whether mental or physical.

### **Resources/Research**

So where does a beginning speaker find a topic like this? You have to be creative, patient, and persevere. On rare occasions, some students are able to stumble across a great topic with little effort. But for the majority of students, it will take some legwork. There are several places to look but the same resources you can use for informative speaking are excellent resources for persuasive speaking as well. Look through periodicals such as Science, Discover, Psychology Today, Scientific American, or Health. Newsletters such as The University of Berkeley Wellness Letter, Health News, or Nutrition Action provide excellent ideas for current, relevant issues of concern.

The health sections of major newspapers such as the Los Angeles Times or the New York Times often run stories on state-of-the-art research. The “Life” section of USA Today regularly provides stories of interest and significance regarding health, science, and research around the world. On-line sources such as CNN or MSNBC provide up-to-date stories on events around the world as well as many other Internet outlets.

Once you find a topic do a database search on it in your schools library. If you cannot find any other information on the topic other than the one original small paragraph in a magazine, then you will probably need to keep looking and find another topic. A good, current, relevant topic should easily produce 3-4 other articles or pieces of information on it with little trouble. You will need 3-4 articles to get started on the speech. However, to write the speech you will need a minimum of around six-ten different source citations for Novice competition and a minimum of eight-fifteen source citations for Open competition. These are just the number of sources you will need to cite when presenting the speech. The actual number of sources you may have to find, research, and read may be quite higher. You need to become an expert on the topic and that will require a great deal of background reading.

It is also helpful to keep in mind that you need to draw upon topic appropriate resources for your arguments. For example, if you are doing a speech on the need of the public to be able to check on the credentials of doctors who have lost their medical license in other states or have had numerous malpractice lawsuits, then a good, competitive speech will use sources that are specific to the medical field. Specific sources will help develop your credibility as a speaker as well as build the credibility of your topic. Periodicals such as Good Housekeeping or Redbook are excellent magazines when looking for information on caring for your home or new recipes. Periodically these magazines may carry special articles on topics that the editors’ feel would be of interest to their readers. If Good Housekeeping were to run an article on doctors and license checks it would be a good idea to read the article for background information but you would probably not want to cite Good Housekeeping as a source when speaking. You can build greater credibility by finding the author of the piece and discovering where he or she obtained their information. Often times, these types of stories are purchased by Good Housekeeping from freelance writers. Try to contact the author of the piece and find out where they found the majority of their research. If you explain that you are a student doing a speech on the topic, they are generally more than willing to help. Try to find source citations from periodicals that specialize in the topic area you are speaking about. Citing a periodical such as The Journal of the American Medical Association would be much more credible on the topic of doctors and license checks than Good Housekeeping.

Another good resource for information is contacting an expert or a specialist in an area that you find cited in your research. Most experts are very willing to talk about their research. On numerous occasions I have had students call doctors, researchers, or university professors who are the leading experts in a particular field. Seldom have I had a student denied at least a brief conversation. Often the conversations are long and detailed and can include follow up calls. Also, you can usually track down a specialist

via e-mail quickly and easily. I have rarely had a student not receive a response when requesting information via e-mail. These experts can be cited in the speech as “Recently, in a personal interview with Dr. Smith, Head of Cardiology at Johns Hopkins University on October 14, 2001, Dr. Smith told me . . .”

While doing your research remember to watch for material that would make a good attention getter, a qualifier, a closing statement, and examples, illustrations, and stories in the body of the speech. If you take your time with your research writing the speech will be easy. Do not take any shortcuts! Set aside the time and do your research right!!!

### **Writing the Speech**

Once you believe you have found a good topic clear it with your coaching staff. You always want to avoid duplicating a popular topic. Once you have cleared your topic begin your research. The key to a persuasive speech is that the speech needs to be designed to make an argument. The topic and thesis statement should make a clear claim, an argument that you spend the rest of the speech supporting and defending. Try to gather as much information as you can on the topic that is as current as possible. You will want to draw upon credible sources that are generally one to two years old. Anything over three to five years old will be considered out of date. As you gather your research and read through it, your first priority is to watch for the *types* of arguments that this topic will lend itself to. You will also want to watch for examples, illustrations, and other forms material that will either make arguments or support the arguments you are making in the speech.

There are two common formats that a persuasive speech generally follows: Problem-Solution or Problem-Cause-Solution. A problem-solution format has just two main parts to the body of the speech: the problem and the solution. This format is used for a speech topic that does not have a definite cause or the cause is closely linked to the problem and does not justify a separate point. In the problem section of the speech you will need to establish several important aspects of the speech. You will need to show that a problem exists and that there is a problem. You will need to identify the harms of the problem such as how extensive is it, how bad is it, etc. You will also need to establish the effects of the harm such as who is hurt, who dies, how many people are affected, etc. If possible it is always useful to show the cost of the problem to the audience. How does this problem trickle down to the people sitting in the room either physically or financially? Also, if possible, in the problem section of the speech you need to show what is causing the problem and why does the problem persist.

Once you establish the problem, you can move on to the second part of the speech—the solution. The solution should address problem issues as if a present solution to the problem exists. You will need to show how the present solution is not working or is ineffective. Then, you will want to propose *your* solution and identify how the new solution will work. Often, it is appropriate to have several solutions at different levels. A stronger speech might show solutions at the federal level, the local level and on a

personal level. However, not all topics can follow this format so do not force or create solutions at these levels just to have them. If a current solution exists and you argue that it is ineffective or not working, you will have to explain how your solution is better and tell the audience why your solution will work when the status quo (current system) will not. It is also effective to show how the proposed solution will work and identify the benefits of the new solution. By the time the solution stage of your speech is done, you should have specifically addressed the problems you identified in the problem stage of your speech. Simply stated—you have to solve the problems you identify.

If your topic has a clear cause to the problem then you might select a Problem-Cause-Solution format. In this format you would follow the same guideline provided above for the problem stage. You will need to establish that a problem exists, show the harms of the problem, and then the effects of the problem. Once the problem has been developed, you would add a second point specifically addressing the cause of that problem. In the cause point you will need to identify what is causing the problem. Explain the direct link between the topic and the harms established in point one. If the problem persists, you will need to identify why it is allowed to continue. This might include arguing that there are no current restrictions or laws about this issue. Or, you may note that current laws are ineffective or unable to be enforced. Your goal in this second point is to clearly identify the specific causes of the specific harms/problems you presented in your first point.

Once you have presented the cause of the problem, you will need to present a third and final point to the body of your speech—the solution. The guidelines for the solution in the Problem-Cause-Solution format are the same as the Problem-Solution format discussed above. Remember to present the solution, identify how and why it will work, provide as many solutions on as many levels as possible (federal, local, and/or personal), and identify how the solution(s) address the problem(s) and cause(s) you identified in the first two main points of the speech.

### **Writing the Introduction**

You will recall from Chapter 2 that the introduction to the speech should capture the attention of the audience, draw them into the topic and make them want to listen to the speech. The introduction to a persuasive speech needs to do all of those areas PLUS set up the argument(s) for your speech. Once you introduce your topic and present your thesis statement, you should establish an argument that you spend the rest of your speech developing, supporting, and defending. This is accomplished through the use of an attention-getting device, a qualifier, presenting the thesis statement, and previewing the main points of the speech. The following sections of this chapter will demonstrate how to write a persuasive speech using the topic of “Questionable Doctors.”

### **Attention Getter**

An attention getter should be designed to grab the attention of the audience and slowly reveal the speech topic. Never begin your speech with “Today I want to talk

about...” This does little to grab the attention of the audience. Begin with a story, a quotation, or a hypothetical situation that is directly related to the topic. Once you have grabbed the audience’s attention, you should reveal the speech topic. The sample attention getter below begins with a story of a person who had been directly hurt by the speech topic. By telling a story of a person who was killed by a questionable doctor, the audience is drawn into the topic immediately with empathy for the victim. Once the audience is caught up in the story the speaker introduces the topic (but does not provide the thesis statement yet—that comes later).

**SAMPLE ATTENTION GETTER:**

When Tillis James Churchill agreed to have his stomach stapled, a routine procedure to help him lose weight, he trusted his doctor’s claim that he had never lost a patient. When Churchill died of an infection from the surgery a few weeks later, his family began to question their trust in his doctor. After they filed a lawsuit against the Florida doctor, they discovered that not only had he paid out over one million dollars in the previous 13 years, but ten of his patients had died as well. Churchill’s son, T.J., commented that had they known about the doctor’s questionable history, they would have “steered clear” of the physician.

**Qualifier**

The purpose of the qualifier is to provide a brief explanation of the significance of the speech topic. It is generally a good idea to cite an expert or provide some sort of source citation in the qualifier. This not only builds your credibility as a speaker but also adds enormous credibility to your topic. The qualifier addresses the questions roaming around in the judge’s mind of “why should I listen to this speech? What is so important about this topic?” By addressing these questions early in the introduction you have a much better chance of winning over the judge and wining the round. In the sample qualifier below, the author shows how big the problem is (20,000 exist) then cites a credible source (Los Angeles Times) to show how the problem can hit closer to home than the audience realizes. The relevance and significance of the topic is clearly established.

**SAMPLE QUALIFIER:**

Unfortunately, the Churchill’s case is not an isolated one. His doctor is just one of the more than 20,000 questionable if not incompetent doctors across the United States, who, despite multiple malpractice claims and disciplinary actions, are allowed to continue to practice medicine. What makes the situation worse is that most patients will never know if their doctor has been the subject of disciplinary actions or malpractice suits.

According to the Los Angeles Times of August 14, 2000, from 1990 through 1999, in California alone, there were 2,670 disciplinary actions taken against 2,309 physicians. Since the possibility of

encountering one of these questionable doctors is increasing, it is imperative that we take a few minutes to examine this situation.

### **Thesis Statement**

The thesis statement is a single, declarative statement that tells the audience exactly what the speech is going to be about. The thesis statement is a single idea and does not try to present too much information. The thesis statement usually includes some sort of reference to the current moment, i.e. “Today...”

#### **SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENT:**

So today, I would like to take a few minutes and explain to you the dangers and perils surrounding questionable doctors.

### **Preview of Main Points**

Before beginning the speech, the speaker needs to provide an overview of what the main points of the speech are going to be. In addition to enhancing audience retention, a preview allows the judge to write down your main points, which allows her or him to follow along while you are speaking. The main points previewed need to parallel the same main points in the body of the speech. The following sample preview for the “Questionable Doctor” speech will preview a Problem-Cause-Solution format.

#### **SAMPLE PREVIEW OF MAIN POINTS:**

In order to reveal the dangers of incompetent doctors, we will first examine what the problem with questionable doctors is. Second, we will move on to explore some of the causes that allow them to remain in the system. And finally, we will look at some practical solutions on federal, state, and personal levels.

Once combined, the above samples create the following complete speech introduction.

#### **SAMPLE SPEECH INTRODUCTION:**

When Tillis James Churchill agreed to have his stomach stapled, a routine procedure to help him lose weight, he trusted his doctor’s claim that he had never lost a patient. When Churchill died of an infection from the surgery a few weeks later, his family began to question their trust in his doctor. After they filed a lawsuit against the Florida doctor, they discovered that not only had he paid out over one million dollars in the previous 13 years, but ten of his patients had dies as well. Churchill’s son, T.J., commented that had they known about the doctor’s questionable history, they would have “steered clear” of the physician.

Unfortunately, the Churchill’s case is not an isolated one. His doctor is just one of the more than 20,000 questionable if not incompetent doctors across the United States, who, despite multiple malpractice claims

and disciplinary actions, are allowed to continue to practice medicine. What makes the situation worse is that most patients will never know if their doctor has been the subject of disciplinary actions or malpractice suits.

According to the Los Angeles Times of August 14, 2000, from 1990 through 1999, in California alone, there were 2,670 disciplinary actions taken against 2,309 physicians. Since the possibility of encountering one of these questionable doctors is increasing, it is imperative that we take a few minutes to examine this situation.

So today, I would like to take a few minutes and explain to you the dangers and perils surrounding questionable doctors. In order to reveal the dangers of incompetent doctors, we will first examine what the problem with questionable doctors is. Second, we will move on to explore some of the causes that allow them to remain in the system. And finally, we will look at some practical solutions on the federal, state and personal levels.

This introduction has presented the topic to the audience and in so doing, made an argument regarding the severity of the problem by noting how a person has lost their life because of the topic.

### **Writing the Body**

The body of your speech is extremely important because the bulk of your argumentation and logical appeals appear in the body of your speech. As previously mentioned, the body of your speech will include three main points: problems, causes, and solutions. However, between these main points you need transitions.

### **Transitions**

Good, solid transitions are essential in a public address speech. Remember from the material on transitions in Chapter 2 that transitions serve as a roadmap for the audience by helping to guide them through the speech. You will want to include transition statements when beginning the body of the speech and between each main point. Also, if you use several sub points within a main point, you may wish to use transitions between the sub points as well. Our sample speech uses the following transition from the introduction to the first main point (the problem) in the body of the speech.

#### **SAMPLE TRANSITION FROM INTRODUCTION TO FIRST POINT**

(Problem):

Let's first take look at the problem itself.

#### **SAMPLE TRANSITION FROM FIRST POINT TO SECOND POINT**

(Cause):

While the harmful effects of the presence of questionable doctors in the system is readily apparent, the reasons incompetent doctors can continue to practice medicine requires a somewhat closer investigation.

SAMPLE TRANSITION FROM SECOND POINT TO THIRD POINT  
(Solution):

With a clear understanding of the problems posed by the presence of questionable doctors in the system, and the reasons why they are allowed to continue to practice medicine, we need to turn out attention to some solutions that may be taken on the federal, state, and personal levels.

### **Internal Transitions**

Within a main point, an internal transition may help guide the audience through specific areas of the speech. For example, in the sample speech the problem is divided into three separate areas. The speaker guides the audience through the three areas by using simple internal transition statements such as:

SAMPLE INTERNAL PREVIEW BETWEEN PROBLEM #1 AND #2:

In addition to the lack of discipline, there is currently no standard by which information and disciplinary actions are recognized or upheld from one state to another.

SAMPLE INTERNAL PREVIEW BETWEEN PROBLEM #2 AND #3:

Third and finally, many Americans today are simply unaware of their doctor's disciplinary history.

### **Source Citations**

Whenever you make an argument, a factual claim, or provide a statistic you need to support the claim with a source citation. As you recall from reading the information on source citations in Chapter 2, source citations are used to add credibility to your speech and support your arguments making them harder to refute. Remember to always place the reference before the information to better set up the argument and make it easier for the judge to write down.

SAMPLE SOURCE CITATION:

The Los Angeles Times of August 14, 2000 documents the case of a Virginia physician who inseminated a woman with semen from a known HIV-positive man.

### **Formats**

Remember from the previous section in this chapter "Writing the Speech," that the best persuasive speeches are organized as either a Problem-Solution format or a Problem-Cause-Solution format. The sample speech we are using for this chapter is a

Problem-Cause-Solution format. In the problem section, you want to clearly establish that the problem exists, that there are specific harms you can directly tie to the problem, and that the harms are significant and harmful on as many levels as possible. The sample speech has identified three specific areas where the problem exists. By exploring the three areas, the problem is identified and the harms are explained. Also, remember to use examples and real life illustrations whenever possible. Showing how a person was directly affected by the problem makes it easier for the audience to connect the problem to a tangible face.

#### SAMPLE PROBLEM SECTION:

The problems of questionable doctors in the system are threefold. There is a lack of discipline, a lack of state-to-state cooperation, and a lack of public awareness as to how bad the situation really is. First, even doctors with a history of complaints against them often go undisciplined by state medical boards. Last year a non-profit organization known as Public Citizen released a study of these doctors entitled, 20,125 Questionable Doctors. The study lists doctors who have been disciplined, often for multiple offenses but are allowed to practice medicine.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune of September 1, 2000 gives a face to this problem in the case of Dr. Frederick Reed, Jr. South Carolina's state medical board disciplined Dr. Reed by fining him a mere three thousand dollars for using an amputated human foot in a crab trap. Despite this action, Dr. Reed is still licensed to practice medicine.

In addition to the lack of discipline, there is currently no standard by which information and disciplinary actions are recognized or upheld from one state to another. A doctor disciplined in one state can often simply move to another state and continue to practice medicine without fear of repercussions. The Los Angeles Times of August 14, 2000 documents the case of a Virginia physician who inseminated a woman with semen from a known HIV-positive man. When the woman contracted the virus, the doctor received a reprimand from the state board. He later moved to North Carolina, where he continues to practice medicine without any suspension or oversight by the North Carolina Board. Under the current system, doctors can simply move from one state to another without having to face consequences from another state board.

Third and finally, many Americans today are simply unaware of their doctor's disciplinary history. As Congressman Thomas Bailey of Virginia stated, "the American public has more comparative information about the used cars we purchase and the snack foods we eat, than the doctors in whose care we entrust our health." Even when doctors have a history of disciplinary actions, their records are often restricted from public view. The most complete source of information on doctor's histories is usually the 10-year-old National Practitioner Data Base, a

source that is unavailable to the public. Patients can usually access a partial history of their doctor's disciplinary record by checking with their state's medical board. However, the amount of information available varies from state to state.

When addressing the cause, remember to link the identified causes directly to the problems you established in the previous problem section of the speech. The causes also need to show a link to the harms and harmful effects attributed to problem. The sample speech identifies three specific causes that warrant attention and all three are linked to the problem.

#### SAMPLE CAUSE SECTION:

The problems with questionable doctors in the system stem from three key causes, a failure of state boards to obtain crucial information on their doctors, a system which allows each state to make its own rules, and lobbying on behalf of doctors themselves to keep the public uninformed.

First, the lack of discipline within the system is due in part to the information which state boards do not receive. The USA Today of October 11, 2000 notes that only 15 states require hospitals to report serious mistakes, and only twelve of those states require hospitals to report unexpected deaths. However, there is a trend in hospitals to evade reporting requirements in an attempt to shield hospitals and doctors from legal scrutiny and unwanted publicity. Many of these questionable doctors are allowed to remain in they system simply because their mistakes are not being reported to the state medical boards. Even when the state board is aware of these problems, they seldom take action. In fact 66% of doctors cited for incompetence, negligence, and substandard care are allowed to continue practicing.

The second major source of these problems lies with the state medical boards themselves. The very agencies which are supposed to protect the patients often create obstacles to the patients accessing much needed information. The mission statement of the Medical Board of California is "to protect consumers though proper licensing of physicians and surgeons." This protection of consumers, however, often does not involve allowing consumers to have easy access to the disciplinary records of doctors over the past twelve months. The State Medical Board of Arizona gave the reason for one doctor's disciplinary action as simply a failure to follow board requirements. The disciplinary history gives no indication whether these requirements dealt with quality care problems or simply an administrative requirement of the board.

Third and finally, the ten-year-old National Practitioner Database was created to be the most complete source of information on doctors in the country. This information is unavailable to the public and is only

available to hospitals, insurers, and a very small number of people who are authorized to check a doctor's qualifications. Since the NPDB is such a comprehensive source of information, many consumer groups have tried to make the information contained in the NPDB available to the public, but such efforts have been blocked by organizations representing the doctors themselves. In fact, as the Columbus Dispatch of October 16, 2000 reports, Congress has kept access to the NPDB closed, due in large part to the intensive lobbying by the American Medical Association. Additionally, Public Citizen notes on their web page that the American Medical Association passed a resolution at their 1993 AMA convention calling for the dissolution of the NPDB. The AMA seems intent on keeping the physicians listed in the NPDB safe from public scrutiny.

The solution section of your speech needs to provide specific solutions to the problem that the members of the audience can realistically engage in. Merely arguing that laws need to be enacted or people's biased attitudes need to change is not enough. Enacting legislation may be a very real solution for the problem, as it is for the sample speech, but you also need to provide the audience with something they can personally do to solve the problem. This will help to make the issue real and encourage the audience to get involved. If a solution seems out of reach or impossible for the audience members to engage in, then you risk losing your audience and ultimately the judge's ballot! Your solutions also need to be directly linked to the problem and the cause. You need to show how you are solving the harms you identified earlier in the speech. If the judge cannot see how your solutions fix all the problems and causes you addressed in the speech then you will most likely not win the round. The sample speech provides three possible solutions on three different levels—federal, state, and personal.

#### SAMPLE SOLUTION SECTION:

First, on the federal level, the National Practitioner Data Bank must be opened to the public. Currently, the House of Representatives is considering legalization to open the databank. House Resolution 5122, the "Patient-Protection Act of 2000" would open the NPDB to the public. Congress needs to pass this important legislation to provide the public access to the disciplinary histories of their doctors.

Second, on the state level, state medical boards need to develop more accurate reporting procedures for problem doctors and convey that information to the public. The New York Times of October 7, 2000 reports that New York provides a system which allows the public to examine risk-adjusted death rates for hospitals and doctors and mandates that they post notices informing patients how to access their statistics. Systems such as this for reporting and providing public access to important statistics need to be modeled in other states.

Finally, on the personal level, we need to educate ourselves about doctors. While we may not have access to the National Practitioner Data

Bank right now, there are several methods open to consumers to access their doctor's disciplinary histories. Some state medical boards do provide limited access to groups which research and list such disciplinary information. Healthgrades.com for example, provides access to information about health care providers, hospitals, and physicians. Their website gives health care report cards, which include patient satisfaction surveys and some disciplinary records, which can be accessed by entering a specialty, state, and zip code. We must make use of the resources available to us if we are to protect ourselves.

### **The Conclusion**

The conclusion aspect of persuasive speech is designed to quickly wrap up the speech, tie everything together, and usually includes a final plea or call to action of some sort. Avoid providing important information or compelling arguments in the conclusion. All significant information or arguments belong in the body of the speech. The conclusion is designed to bring the speech to a close and provide a solid ending so you can finish on firm ground. If appropriate, many speakers include a final brief call to action or plea to the audience to get involved or to address the problem. You will remember from Chapter 2 that there are three distinct parts to the conclusion: summary or restatement of the thesis, review of the main points, and a closing statement/thought. It is in the closing statement/thought that the final plea or call to action would be placed.

### **Summary/Review of Thesis**

Upon completing the body of your speech you need to move into the conclusion section of the speech. Using a transition statement that includes a review of your thesis statement generally does this. Your goal is to briefly remind the audience of what the speech topic was. You do not need to engage in a lengthy explanation. Generally, a one-sentence statement will suffice. You should speak in the past tense since the speech is over and can modify the thesis slightly to adapt to the information you have presented in the speech. However, remember to keep the thesis review brief and simple.

#### **SAMPLE SUMMARY/REVIEW THESIS:**

Today, we have spent just a few minutes examining the very real problem of questionable doctors who are allowed to continue to practice medicine while their patients remain unaware of their disciplinary histories.

### **Review of Main Points**

At this point in the speech your goal is to provide a brief review of the main concepts in the body of the speech. Whereas the preview of the main points in the introduction gave the audience a sense of direction as to where the speech was headed, the review of main points is designed to quickly remind the audience of what they just heard. It also serves to aid in the retention of information. The review of main points

should mirror the preview since both address the main points of the speech. However, the review does not have to present the exact same wording. Since you have provided the audience with a great deal of information regarding your topic in the body of the speech, the review can reflect the information presented. Often due to time constraints of competition, the review may be reduced to serving merely a functional form rather than providing any lengthy dialogue.

#### SAMPLE REVIEW OF MAIN POINTS:

We have taken a look at the root of the problem within the system, the causes fostering the problems, and finally seen some practical steps that must be taken to correct this problem.

### Closing

Your speech is not complete until you have provided a solid closing statement or comment that leaves the audience with a desire to act on what you have challenged them with. You can relate back to the attention getter and tie it in or you can make a brief comment. It is also at this point of the conclusion that you might want to include a final plea or call for your audience to take action on your topic. Whatever you chose, the closing should only be a sentence or two and should not consume a great deal of time. Remember, in tournament competition your time is limited and you want to avoid going overtime. Often a speech rapidly approaches the ten-minute mark. The closing statement should be quick and brief yet appropriate and get the job done.

#### SAMPLE CLOSING STATEMENT:

While the solutions at the federal and state level are helpful, they won't solve the problem alone. We must take action to protect ourselves. Go to [Healthgrades.com](http://Healthgrades.com), be pro-active and find out the history of any medical official you trust your life with. Hopefully, by informing ourselves and taking action to protect ourselves from questionable doctors, we can avoid falling victim to a needless death like that of Tillis Churchill.

### Sample Persuasive Speech

The following manuscript is a sample persuasive speech complete with all of the required components of structure and organization. All of the sample components presented in this chapter have been combined to create this manuscript. Use this manuscript as a guideline when preparing your own persuasive speech. As always, check with your coach for regional nuances or preferences for persuasive speaking.

### Questionable Doctors

When Tillis James Churchill agreed to have his stomach stapled, a routine procedure to help him lose weight, he trusted his doctor's claim that he had never lost a patient. When Churchill died of an infection from the surgery a few weeks later, his family began to question their trust in

his doctor. After they filed a lawsuit against the Florida doctor, they discovered that not only had he paid out over one million dollars in the previous 13 years, but ten of his patients had died as well. Churchill's son, T.J., commented that had they known about the doctor's questionable history, they would have "steered clear" of the physician.

Unfortunately, the Churchill's case is not an isolated one. His doctor is just one of the more than 20,000 questionable if not incompetent doctors across the United States, who, despite multiple malpractice claims and disciplinary actions, are allowed to continue to practice medicine. What makes the situation worse is that most patients will never know if their doctor has been the subject of disciplinary actions or malpractice suits.

According to the Los Angeles Times of August 14, 2000, from 1990 through 1999, in California alone, there were 2,670 disciplinary actions taken against 2,309 physicians. Since the possibility of encountering one of these questionable doctors is increasing, it is imperative that we take a few minutes to examine this situation.

In order to reveal the dangers of incompetent doctors, we will first examine what the problem with questionable doctors is. Second, we will move on to explore some of the causes that allow them to remain in the system. And finally, we will look at some practical solutions on the federal, state and personal levels. Let's first take a look at the problem itself.

The problems of questionable doctors in the system are threefold. There is a lack of discipline, a lack of state-to-state cooperation, and a lack of public awareness as to how bad the situation really is. First, even doctors with a history of complaints against them often go undisciplined by state medical boards. Last year a non-profit organization known as Public Citizen released a study of these doctors entitled, 20,125 Questionable Doctors. The study lists doctors who have been disciplined, often for multiple offenses but are allowed to practice medicine.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune of September 1, 2000 gives a face to this problem in the case of Dr. Frederick Reed, Jr. South Carolina's state medical board disciplined Dr. Reed by fining him a mere three thousand dollars for using an amputated human foot in a crab trap. Despite this action, Dr. Reed is still licensed to practice medicine.

In addition to the lack of discipline, there is currently no standard by which information and disciplinary actions are recognized or upheld from one state to another. A doctor disciplined in one state can often simply move to another state and continue to practice medicine without

fear of repercussions. The Los Angeles Times of August 14, 2000 documents the case of a Virginia physician who inseminated a woman with semen from a known HIV-positive man. When the woman contracted the virus, the doctor received a reprimand from the state board. He later moved to North Carolina, where he continues to practice medicine without any suspension or oversight by the North Carolina Board. Under the current system, doctors can simply move from one state to another without having to face consequences from another state board.

Third and finally, many Americans today are simply unaware of their doctor's disciplinary history. As Congressman Thomas Bailey of Virginia stated, "the American public has more comparative information about the used cars we purchase and the snack foods we eat, than the doctors in whose care we entrust our health." Even when doctors have a history of disciplinary actions, their records are often restricted from public view. The most complete source of information on doctor's histories is the 10-year-old National Practitioner Data Base, a source that is unavailable to the public. Patients can usually access a partial history of their doctor's disciplinary record by checking with their state's medical board. However, the amount of information available varies from state to state. While the harmful effects of the presence of questionable doctors in the system is readily apparent, the reasons incompetent doctors can continue to practice medicine requires a somewhat closer investigation.

The problems with questionable doctors in the system stems from three key causes, a failure of state boards to obtain crucial information on their doctors, a system which allows each state to make its own rules, and lobbying on behalf of doctors themselves to keep the public uninformed.

First, the lack of discipline within the system is due in part to the information which state boards do not receive. USA Today of October 11, 2000 notes that only 15 states require hospitals to report serious mistakes, and only twelve of those states require hospitals to report unexpected deaths. However, there is a trend in hospitals to evade reporting requirements in an attempt to shield hospitals and doctors from legal scrutiny and unwanted publicity. Many of these questionable doctors are allowed to remain in they system simply because their mistakes are not being reported to the state medical boards. Even when the state board is aware of these problems, they seldom take action. In fact 66% of doctors cited for incompetence, negligence, and substandard care are allowed to continue practicing.

The second major source of these problems lies with state medical boards. The very agencies which are supposed to protect the patients often create obstacles to the patients accessing much needed information. The mission statement of the Medical Board of California is "to protect

consumers though proper licensing of physicians and surgeons.” This protection of consumers, however, often does not involve allowing consumers to have easy access to the disciplinary records for the past twelve months. The State Medical Board of Arizona gave the reason for one doctor’s disciplinary action as simply a failure to follow board requirements. The disciplinary history gives no indication whether these requirements dealt with quality care problems or simply an administrative requirement of the board.

Third and finally, the ten-year-old National Practitioner Database was created to be the most complete source of information on doctors in the country. This information is unavailable to the public and is only available to hospitals, insurers, and a very small number of people who are authorized to check a doctor’s qualifications. Since the NPDB is such a comprehensive source of information, many consumer groups have tried to make the information contained in the NPDB available to the public, but such efforts have been blocked by organizations representing the doctors themselves. In fact, as the Columbus Dispatch of October 16, 2000 reports, Congress has kept access to the NPDB closed, due in large part to the intensive lobbying by the American Medical Association. Additionally, Public Citizen notes on their web page that the American Medical Association passed a resolution at their 1993 AMA convention calling for the dissolution of the NPDB. The AMA seems intent on keeping the physicians listed in the NPDB safe from public scrutiny.

With a clear understanding of the problems posed by the presence of questionable doctors in the system, and the reasons why they are allowed to continue to practice medicine, we need to turn our attention to some solutions that may be taken on the federal, state, and personal levels.

First, on the federal level, the National Practitioner Data Bank must be opened to the public. Currently, the House of Representatives is considering legislation to open the databank. House Resolution 5122, the “Patient-Protection Act of 2000” would open the NPDB to the public. Congress needs to pass this important legislation to provide the public access to the disciplinary histories of their doctors.

Second, on the state level, state medical boards need to develop more accurate reporting procedures for problem doctors and convey that information to the public. The New York Times of October 7, 2000 reports that New York provides a system which allows the public to examine risk-adjusted death rates for hospitals and doctors and mandates that they post notices informing patients how to access their statistics. Systems such as this for reporting and providing public access to important statistics need to be modeled in other states.

Finally, on the personal level, we need to educate ourselves about doctors. While we may not have access to the National Practitioner Data Bank right now, there are several methods open to consumers to access their doctor's disciplinary histories. Some state medical boards do provide limited access to groups which research and list such disciplinary information. [Healthgrades.com](http://Healthgrades.com) for example, provides access to information about health care providers, hospitals, and physicians. Their website gives health care report cards, which include patient satisfaction surveys and some disciplinary records, which can be accessed by entering a specialty, state, and zip code. We must make use of the resources available to us if we are to protect ourselves.

Today, we have spent just a few minutes examining the very real problem of questionable doctors who are allowed to continue to practice medicine while their patients remain unaware of their disciplinary histories. We have taken a look at the root of the problem within the system, the causes fostering the problems, and finally seen some practical steps that must be taken to correct this problem. While the solutions at the federal and state level are helpful, they won't solve the problem alone. We must take action to protect ourselves. Go to [Healthgrades.com](http://Healthgrades.com), be pro-active and find out the history of any medical official you trust your life with. Hopefully, by informing ourselves and taking action to protect ourselves from questionable doctors, we can avoid falling victim to a needless death like that of Tillis Churchill.

### **Practice Tips**

There is no one set way that you should practice. However, you should always practice with intensity and dedication. Practice is the only way one can ensure good performances and ultimately, you are in control of your own practice schedule so you must be disciplined enough to stick to it. The following guidelines will provide you with structure that will keep your practice time efficient and useful.

### **Memorizing**

One of the greatest challenges facing the beginning speech competitor is memorizing the written speech. Even though the official definition of persuasive speaking states "minimal notes are permitted," chances are your rank in the competition round will be lowered for using notes. Novices are granted a little more dispensation on this issue than Open speakers, especially early in the year. However, by mid-season, most judges expect competitors to be *memorized*, *conversational*, and *relaxed*. Sometimes a difficult combination!

Everyone has her or his own tricks for memorizing something. Try to use what works for you in other situations. How do you prepare for an exam? Some students read the script over and over. Others re-write the text over and over. One trick is to read a

line, say it over and over until it is memorized, then read the next line and say the previous line with the new line until the new line is memorized. Do the next line the same way, then the next line, and the next line, etc. This format is repeated until the entire manuscript is memorized.

Learning the text should not be that difficult. If you have researched the information, written the speech, and edited the speech, you should be very familiar with the material. Besides, your goal is not to simply recite a memorized speech. Your goal should be to communicate ideas. Technically, you should never give the exact same speech twice. You should be able to modify or adapt a few words here and there and not lose any of the impact of the speech. If you memorize the script to the point that you become too dependent upon saying the speech exactly the way it was written, you can cause yourself enormous stress and grief. If you blank on a word, you will find yourself standing there searching for that one exact word. But, if you are communicating *ideas*, when you stumble on a word you can quickly replace it and keep moving with the speech.

Practice your speech as much as you need to in order to get comfortable with it. Whenever possible find an audience. Use family members, significant others, roommates, fellow team members or anyone you can talk into sitting and listening to you! There is no substitute for learning how to deliver your speech while receiving audience feedback. Often audiences may react to material you never expected them to. They may laugh at something you never thought was funny but it is! Learning these types of reactions before getting into a competition round can be invaluable!

Once you have learned your speech be careful not to over practice. You can become stale and too memorized. This tends to happen more toward the end of the season after you have delivered your speech several times

### **Presenting the Speech**

Chapter 16 of this book provides insight into delivering your platform speech so we will not go into too much detail here. However, you will need to keep in mind that persuasive speaking judges are sitting and listening to speaker after speaker of terrible and rampant problems harming and often killing people. Your delivery should be firm and appropriate for the topic, but you do not want to be overly serious and somber. When a judge sits and listens to heavy speech after heavy speech, you might be able to gain their attention and fair better in the round by having a little more “up” delivery. This does not mean to be un-natural in your delivery, but work to maintain a positive, upbeat conversational tone that will hold the judges attention yet remain appropriate for the topic.

While not required, some persuasive speeches incorporate the use of visual aids into the presentation. Visual aids in a persuasive speech tend to be the exception and not the norm, but it is appropriate on a rare occasion. Often, the type of material covered in a persuasive speech can be enhanced and have added impact if illustrated or presented in

visual form. Check with your coach and see if your speech might benefit from visual aids. Review the material on using visual aids in Chapter 16 of this book for a complete overview of how to use visual aids in your speech.

### **Conclusion**

You are now ready to begin preparing your persuasive speech. Be prepared to spend some time looking for a topic. It may take you several weeks to find the right one for you, but it will be worth it in the long run. Commit to doing some serious research. Explore various periodicals and only use credible sources. Find as many source citations as you can. Remember, the more, the better in your speech. Make sure your solution section has some very real and practical solutions that the audience can engage almost immediately. Memorize your speech and work on a professional, confident, and energetic delivery and you will be all ready to go. Have fun and enjoy your speech writing experience!

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<sup>1</sup> Southern Utah University Forensics Event Descriptions, 8 June 2000, Dept. of SpeechCommunication, 29 Jul. 2003 <<http://www.suu.edu/hss/comm/forensics/event.html#ies>>.