

Speech Introductions and Conclusions: Some “Does” and “Don’ts”

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Introductions: Should secure audience attention and interest, orient listeners to the plan and content of the speech, and set expectations.

- Do** Get the audience’s *attention* with a story, quotation, personal experience, etc. Identify the topic and indicate why it is *relevant, important, or interesting*. Establish your *credibility* through words or behavior. Provide *context, background, and definitions* listeners might need. State your *purpose, thesis, or research question*. Preview the body of your speech. Make a *transition* to the first point in the body of the speech.
- Don’t** Start with “um” or “okay.” Apologize for weaknesses in your content, preparation, or speaking ability. Complain about food, accommodations, equipment, facilities, or other speakers. Use “humor” that might disparage, offend, or alienate your listeners. Use cheap tricks to get attention. Go on about how hard it was to choose a topic.

Conclusions: Should reinforce the message and give the speech unity and closure.

- Do** Summarize the main points of your speech. Restate your purpose or thesis. Create closure, a sense of finality. In persuasive speeches, make a final call for commitment or action.
- Don’t** Open new areas of discussion or argument. Change position or viewpoint. Resort to feeble closing phrases like “and that’s all I have to say.” Say “thank you” just because the audience doesn’t seem to realize that your speech is over.