

Introduction

A greeting

People need to know who you are, so be sure to introduce yourself and, if applicable, thank the organization, the event organizers, and whoever introduced and summoned you to the stage.

Example:

“Good evening, my name is Jesse Vargas and I’ve had the honor of working as an outreach coordinator for Transcend Behind Bars for over three years now. Thank you, Andrea for that charming introduction and for organizing this dinner for all of us.”

An attention-getter

Start with a joke, story, or interesting fact to get and hold the attention of the audience. Keep in mind the types of people that are in the audience (their ages, their temperament, and what they care about).

Example:

“So, the first 30 minutes of my speech we’re going to sit and meditate until the ice melts in our waters... just kidding.”

The topic and why it’s important

Transition to focus on the topic of your speech, why it’s relevant to them, and why it’s worth their time to listen. If your speech is argumentative, mention what could happen if the problem isn’t addressed. For informative speeches, focus on the subject’s relevance to them or people they care about.

Examples:

Argumentative speech

“By a show of hands, how many people know someone or know someone who knows someone struggling with addiction and incarceration? Well, I’m here to tell you that there’s a better way to help people overcome and not get trapped in the system.”

Informative speech

“Have any of you ever felt like your mind was racing a million miles an hour? Felt like you were on the verge of a panic attack? Transcendental meditation can help slow down your thoughts, and get to the root of what’s creating that reaction in your nervous system.”

The thesis of your speech

An argumentative thesis should present the overarching idea you're proving given the information and evidence you've collected. An informative speech's thesis simply summarizes the kind of information you'll be presenting.

Example:

Argumentative speech

"Including meditation in the prison system is an effective way to combat addiction during and after incarceration, turning repeat offenders into healthy contributors to society."

Informative speech

"The brain is the most powerful tool we have, and I'll be showing you an array of case studies, clinical trials, and anecdotes that prove how consciously controlling the breath can turn your brain into more efficient and happy machine."

Your credentials

After making your main point, tell the audience why you're the one presenting it. This can be how the subject matter personally affected you or how you've devoted time and effort into learning about the topic.

Examples:

Personal affectation

"I used to be part of the system, in and out several times, my addiction growing stronger and stronger. Until ten years ago, when I was introduced to the meditative practice and the art of self compassion."

Educational credentials

"Since the age of 22, I've devoted my life to studying neuroscience and the art of meditation, getting a Master's in Compassionate Psychology and eventually a PhD. in Neuroscience."

A preview of your main points

State your main points of your speech to give your audience an idea of what to expect. For argumentative speeches, start with the strongest point if that feels natural to you. For informative speeches, you can present them in chronological order or in order of importance.

Examples:

Argumentative speech

“First and foremost, I’ll discuss how and why the prison system is flawed particularly when it comes to the high rate of addiction. Then I’ll provide evidence of how meditation is one of the strongest tools of long-term recovery. And lastly, I’ll be presenting a working example of how we can easily implement these programs into state prisons.”

Informative speech

“I’ll be discussing what exactly transcendental meditation is, the areas of the brain that it most heavily impacts, and how it can be used to treat mental disorders, improve your relationships, and relieve painful physical conditions affecting the nervous system.”

Body

Present your first point

Make a smooth transition from your introduction to your first main point. And after you state your first point, back it up with subpoints (statistical evidence, relevant quotes, and commentary). Including bullet points and sub-points for each supporting piece will make it easier to reference during your speech.

Example:

“I. Addiction impacts everyone, and studies have shown that half of the people in the prison system suffer from addiction.

- Only one-tenth of those people have access to recovery programs while incarcerated, and those programs are gravely inadequate.
- Over half of released prisoners return to prison within 3 years.
- “Prison is a second-by-second assault on the soul, a day-to-day degradation of the self...” - Mumia Abu-Jamal
 - How do we expect the imprisoned to behave as good citizens, when the system itself is adding to the pool of pre-established trauma?”

Transitioning between points

Use the content of your first point as a bridge to your second point. List your points in order of importance in case you start running low on time and have to skip over some of the lesser points. Feel free to share poignant personal anecdotes along with supporting evidence.

Example:

“II. Now that we know how the system affects the mental health of the people inside, let’s discuss the proven benefits that meditation can provide to mold people into healthy, happy, free people.

- Meditation allows the mind to relax and relieve pain from deep-seated trauma.

- Studies have shown that this practice decreases stress, anxiety, depression, and aggression.
- At first, I thought it was bogus. I thought: I already know how to breathe so why should I need to learn how to do it any differently? Then one day I was in the yard and felt a panic attack coming on, so I figured I'd give this focused breathing thing a try. That day, while observing my breathe and all the activity in my mind, I saw my purpose. And here I am, actively living that purpose today....

III. Now comes the question of how? Well, now I'm going to give you some examples of prisons that are implementing this treatment plan and having amazing results..."

Conclusion

Make a smooth transition

Signal to your audience that your speech is coming to a close. This can be a simple statement (like "In conclusion,") or you can loop back and reference something from your introduction.

Example:

"In conclusion, now's the time to fix what isn't working."

Summarize your main points

Reiterate the main points of your speech. Those are the most important, so it's important to repeat them so they really stick!

Example:

"As I've shown, prisons are failing at dealing with addiction (and in some cases, making it worse), and meditation has shown to provide relief and help people maintain sobriety in and out of prison."

Restate your thesis

Your thesis is the heart of your speech, so it's important to repeat it so they remember it long after you've finished.

Example:

"Now's the time to implement this meditation program into the prison system to decrease suffering, heal our fellow citizens, and give them a chance to contribute to society in meaningful ways."

End with something memorable

Leave your audience thinking about your speech and, if applicable, what they can do to help address the issue(s) you presented.

Example:

“For all of you who raised your hands, all of you whose loved ones have been affected by addiction and incarceration, I hope what I’ve shared with you today has inspired hope that there is a way out for them.”

Thank the audience and organizers

Thank your audience for listening shows that you respect their time and attention. And be sure to recognize and thank anyone who helped organize or run the event.

Example:

“Thank you for your lending me your ears and being such an attentive audience. Thank you, Andrea, for working hard to plan and put on this wonderful event. And a big thank you to Transcend Behind Bars for saving my life and helping me save the lives of others.”

Allow for questions (if applicable)

If the organizer has allowed time for questions and answers, let your audience know exactly how much time you’ve been allotted.

Example:

“Now, for the next 10 minutes, I’ll try to answer any questions you might have about what I’ve presented today.”