

That's your speech for one of the next Toastmasters meetings!

choose a topic you like – prepare a presentation following the speech objectives – tell the Toastmasters of the Day what you need (equipment, introduction) – present it within the time frame

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Explaining a theory, principle, philosophy, or social issue can be challenging. Make sure the audience knows the general concept and how your speech relates to it. Show how your topic relates to listeners' everyday lives. Use plenty of examples, anecdotes, illustrations, and visual aids to help listeners understand and visualize your points, and avoid technical jargon.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Research and analyze an abstract concept, theory, historical force, or social/ political issue.
- ▶ Present the ideas in a clear, interesting manner.

Time: Six to eight minutes

THE ABSTRACT CONCEPT

In most cases, speeches of information will be on readily explainable subjects familiar to your audience, such as sailing or your company's progress on a project. Occasionally, however, the subject may not be as concrete. You may be asked to analyze a philosophical idea, economic or political theory, engineering principle, social issue, or historical force and make it clear and interesting for your audience. Such subjects cannot be demonstrated, yet they can have a direct impact on our lives. Consider, for example, the difference in living under a capitalist or communist system, even though you could not directly picture either one.

SOME TYPES OF SPEECHES

- ▶ **Historical forces.** Perhaps you have an interest in history. In an abstract speech you would not talk about Napoleon's conquests, for example, but rather the effects of great conquerors on the course of world history, perhaps with Napoleon as one of several conquerors. Relate these historical forces to our lives today in order to interest your audience. Select exciting events to illustrate your general points.
- ▶ **Theories.** Even Einstein's Theory of Relativity, probably the most abstract idea ever contemplated, can be explained with great interest if related to readily understandable events. Einstein himself wrote about his concepts in terms of people walking in moving railroad cars, people carrying clocks on long trips, and other vivid imagery. Just as a talk on gravity can be built around a falling apple, any other abstract subject can be analyzed in simple terms if you just take the time to think carefully about it.
- ▶ **Social or political issues.** We live in a time of great social and political upheaval, and an analysis of these issues provides a great public service. Be sure to be objective if dealing with a controversial issue. Don't expect to solve decades-old problems in a single speech.

CHOOSING YOUR SUBJECT

When selecting your subject, you should have at least a basic knowledge of what you will be analyzing and enough interest in it to make you enthusiastic about it. Although you will be dealing with a general concept, you should narrow it so you can adequately cover it in the time available to you. For example, if you will be talking about freedom of the press, you would want to narrow it, perhaps to how freedom of the press relates to privacy issues for citizens.

An abstract speech can become boring if you don't maintain the audience's interest. Begin your talk by defining the topic for the audience so it will know exactly what you are talking about.

Define your topic before you begin preparing the speech. This will help you conduct your research more efficiently. As you do your research, use a wide variety of sources to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Use the thoughts of experts to support and expand your own ideas on the subject. Collect a variety of opinions and draw your own informed conclusions from them. You may even want to quote the experts during your speech to show the range of opinion that exists on your subject.

KEEP IT INTERESTING

An abstract speech can become boring if you don't maintain the audience's interest. Begin your talk by defining the topic for the audience so it will know exactly what you are talking about. Explain the general concept, then how your narrowed focus fits into the larger concept. Show how the concept directly relates to listeners' everyday lives.

Fill your talk with examples, anecdotes, illustrations, and visual aids to communicate your concepts clearly. Avoid technical jargon, and remember to relate each abstract idea to a concrete example, preferably one that can be visualized.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a six- to eight-minute talk about an abstract subject such as a concept, idea, theory, historical force, or social issue. Your purpose is to clearly explain the meaning of the subject to the audience and use definitions, examples, anecdotes, illustrations, quotes from experts, and visual aids to explain concepts.

As you do your research, use a wide variety of sources to ensure accuracy and objectivity. Use the thoughts of experts to support and expand your own ideas on the subject.

