**The ACOVA Basics**

**AUDIENCE**

**Know your audience before you speak**. What does the audience want from the speech? Identify ages, educational level, prior knowledge on the topic, interests and potential bias.

**CONTENT**

As you search for **appropriate content,** consider these questions.

* What is the **purpose** of the speech? *(Inform, motivate, persuade, entertain)*
* What content is **required**?
* What is the **engaging** content? *(If you want the audience to be interested in what you are saying, YOU need to be interested in what YOU are saying.)*
* What content should be **clarified** for my specific audience? *(What needs to be explained so listeners understand the meaning?)*
* What **connectors** should be included to hook audience members? *(Make them feel the speech is for them. Bridge the gap between the speaker and the listener.)*
* What content should be **excluded**? *(Determine what is important versus interesting.)*

**ORGANIZATION**

A speech should start with an **opening** that grabs the attention of the audience and makes the listeners want to hear more.

* The **challenge**: *“Today I am going to ask you to do something very difficult…”*
* **Provocative question**: *“What would you do if you had no money and you were starving?”*
* **Powerful** **quote** – Choose a relevant quote from a renowned person the audience will recognize.
* **Surprising statistic** – *“The average internet user spends fewer than 10 seconds on a web page before moving on.”*
* **Unusual fact** – *“There is a garbage patch the size of Texas floating in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.”*
* **Poignant story** – powerful and personal stories
* The **unexpected** *– “I left my first job as a lawyer to join the circus and it was the best decision I have ever made.”*
* The **teaser** – *“Three minutes from now, I will tell you something you will never forget as long as you live.”*

**Organizing the information** in your speech can happen in a variety of formats – choose the most logical.

* **Chronological/sequential** – In order of how it happened
* **Problem and solution** – Explain the problem and present the solution
* **Compare and contrast** - The similarities and the differences
* **Topical** – Group similar ideas together.
* **Geographical** – By location if relevant
* **Order of importance** – Persuasive speeches moving people towards action

**Signposts** are transitions between ideas. The basic formula for a presentation with signposts is, “Tell us what you are going to say, say it, and tell us what you said.” As you become more skilled, you should choose more creative words that signify transitions. Sign posts are like mile-markers on the highway

Wrap up your speech with a **powerful closing**. Play it safe with “In closing” or challenge yourself to leave a memorable thought or a call to action.

**VISUAL AIDS**

* **Relevant** – based on the purpose of the speech
* **Important** – Does it ADD significant information? VA’s should help us understand.
* **Accessible** - Think about the audience and keep the VA mentally and visually access able.
* **Simple** – KISS (Keep it simple students). Design, do not decorate. Use minimal text and be sure it is easy to follow.

**APPEARANCE**

Before a speaker utters one word, they have to create a visual impression on the audience. Build an image! Choose outfits that limit annoying habits and keep hair in place. Choose clothes that make you feel confident and look impressive.