

How to Create an Effective Introduction

1. Gain the Attention of Your Audience

The first few sentences of your speech should serve to gain the attention of your listeners. Instead of saying “Today, I will speak about . . . “ or “My topic is . . . ,” begin with one of the following openers:

- A rhetorical question (no answer expected)
- A participatory question (wait for answers from the audience or a show of hands)
- A colorful description
- A quotation (from a famous person or from a piece of literature or music—you can find quotations arranged by subject matter in quotation dictionaries in any library or bookstore)
- An audiovisual aid
- A suspenseful story
- A joke or funny anecdote
- A reference to a current event
- Surprising statistics
- Another interesting way to gain audience attention
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2. Motivate Your Audience

Point out how the topic relates to your listeners and why it is relevant for them. This part of your introduction should answer the question: “Why should the audience listen?”

3. Establish Your Credibility

Tell the audience what makes you knowledgeable on the subject. You may list classes you have taken, professional training, research projects, or personal experiences that make you a credible speaker. This part of your introduction should answer the question: “Why should the audience listen to *you*?”

4. Preview Your Main Points

There is a saying: “Tell them what you are going to say; say it; then tell them what you said” (Jaffe, 1998). To list your main points briefly before you move to the body of your speech (where you mention them again and elaborate on them) may seem like overkill to you; however, for your audience, this preview provides invaluable guidance that helps them focus on each point with more ease and follow your train of thought throughout the speech.