

Master Guide: Structural Connectives in Public Speaking

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SPC2608: Introduction to Public Speaking

In public speaking, your audience doesn't have the luxury of "rewinding" a live performance. Structural connectives—the verbal bridges between your ideas—are what keep your listeners from getting lost. This handout breaks down the five essential tools for guiding an audience through a speech.

1. The Preview / Roadmap

Location: Immediately follows the Thesis Statement in the Introduction.

Purpose: It provides a "mental map" of the speech's main points. By telling the audience where you are going, you reduce their cognitive load and help them retain information.

- **Key Detail:** A roadmap should be brief but explicit. It usually lists the 2–4 main points in the exact order you will present them.
 - **Example:**
"To understand the impact of urban beekeeping, we will first explore the decline of wild pollinator populations, then examine the logistics of maintaining a rooftop hive, and finally, assess the economic benefits for local community gardens."
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2. Signposts

Location: Throughout the speech, usually at the beginning of sentences.

Purpose: Brief words or phrases that tell the audience exactly where you are in the speech. They act like mile markers on a highway.

- **Key Detail:** Signposts can be numbers (First, Second, Third), questions (So, why does this matter?), or focus-shifters (Most importantly..., Moving on...).
 - **Example:**
"The **first** reason for this shift is..."
"Now, **let's look at the data** from last year."
"**In conclusion**, the evidence is clear."
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3. Internal Previews

Location: Within the body of the speech, just before starting a complex main point.

Purpose: To give the audience a "mini-roadmap" for the specific section you are about to enter. This is especially useful for dense or technical information.

- **Key Detail:** While the *Introduction Preview* covers the whole speech, an *Internal Preview* focuses only on the next sub-points of a single section.
- **Example:**
"As we look at the logistics of rooftop hives, we need to focus on three specific requirements: local zoning laws, equipment costs, and seasonal maintenance schedules."

4. Transition Sentences

Location: Between main points (e.g., between Point A and Point B).

Purpose: To bridge what was just said with what is coming next. A strong transition summarizes the previous point and introduces the next.

- **Key Detail:** Effective transitions use a "Look Back/Look Forward" structure. This reinforces the speech's logic.
- **Example:**
"Now that we've seen how wild pollinators are struggling (**Look Back**), let's discuss how we can support them through the logistics of setting up a rooftop hive (**Look Forward**)."

5. Topic Sentences

Location: The very first sentence of a main point or paragraph.

Purpose: To state the central argument or theme of that specific section. In public speaking, this acts as an "oral anchor."

- **Key Detail:** Unlike a written essay where topic sentences can be subtle, in public speaking, they should be declarative and clear so the audience immediately knows the "point" of the next 2–3 minutes of talking.
- **Example:**
"Rooftop beekeeping is not just a hobby; it is a cost-effective solution for urban food security."

Summary Table for Quick Reference

Tool	Where it goes	Function
Preview/Roadmap	After Thesis	Sets the agenda for the whole speech.
Signposts	Everywhere	Alerts the audience to a change in direction or focus.
Internal Preview	Start of a Main Point	Previews the sub-points within a specific section.
Transition	Between Main Points	Connects the previous idea to the upcoming one.
Topic Sentence	Start of a Point	States the main claim or focus of that section.