



Outlier Conference

Speech Structure Tips

Overview: Speech Structure

There are many theories on the best structure for a great presentation. There's no single trick to it, but here is one structure used at TED conferences:

1. Start by making your audience care, using a relatable example or an intriguing idea.
2. Explain your idea clearly and with conviction.
3. Describe your evidence and how and why your idea could be implemented or help the community.
4. End by addressing how your idea could affect your audience.

You could also follow this simple structure: **What? So What? Now what?**

Whatever structure you decide on, remember:

1. The primary goal of your talk is to communicate an idea effectively, not to tell a story or to evoke emotions. These are tools, not an end in themselves.
2. Your structure should be invisible to the audience. In other words, don't talk about how you're going to talk about your topic – just talk about it!

Some parts of this document were adapted from the TED guide "How to give a TEDx talk"

Deep Dive: Introduction

Public speaking experts say that an audience member will take about **30 seconds** to decide whether they're going to listen to you or not. Hence, a strong introduction is crucial.

At the beginning of your talk, draw in your listeners with something they care about. If it's a topic the data visualization community thinks about a lot, start with a clear statement of what the idea is. If it's a field they never or rarely think about, start off by invoking something they *do* think about a lot and relate that concept to your idea.

Here are four ways to start strong:

1. Deliver a dose of **drama**. If your talk were a movie or a novel, how would it open? What is the most compelling or dramatic part of your message that you could open with?
2. Ignite **curiosity**. What surprising question could you ask about your topic? Could you frame your topic in a surprising way? Is there a crazy example you could use?
3. Show a **compelling slide, video or object**. Are there any glorious, impactful or intriguing pictures or videos that illustrate your idea?
4. **Tease** them. What kind of language or statements will seduce the audience into wanting to come along for the ride? How could you signal where the talk is going without giving it all away?

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Deep Dive: Body

Below are a few tips on how to expand and explain your idea.

- Make a list of all the evidence you want to use: think about items that your audience already knows about and the things you'll need to convince them of or explain.
- When choosing material for your speech, strive answer either the *why* and the *how* questions. Why is something true? Present reasons, causes or give observations. How can we implement this? Provide steps and methods.
- Then, put all elements together in a coherent manner. Borrow a technique called *steps of logic* from debating: each section of a speech should consist of as many supporting elements as necessary to explain your idea in full depth. So, when you write down a sentence, ask yourself *why*. The next sentence should answer this why. Then you ask and answer again, and repeat. You stop when there are no more whys left to answer. If you're presenting a solution, you can replace the chain of *whys* with a chain of *hows*.
- Don't use too much jargon, and when you do use it, make sure to explain new terminology.
- (Respectfully) address any controversies in your claims, including legitimate counterarguments, reasons you might be wrong, or doubts your audience might have about your idea.
- Don't let citations interrupt the flow of your explanation: save them for after you've made your point, or place them in the fine print of your slides.

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Deep Dive: Conclusion

Here are some thoughts that may help you craft a powerful closing:

- Find a landing point in your conclusion that will leave your audience feeling positive toward you and your idea. Don't use your conclusion to simply summarize what you've already said. Tell your audience how your idea might affect their lives or the future of the data visualization field.
- Avoid ending with a pitch (such as soliciting funds, showing a book cover, using corporate logos).
- If appropriate, give your audience a call to action.
- Alternatively, turn what you've discussed into an inspiring or hopeful vision of what might be.
- Loop back to something you discussed at the beginning to go "full circle".

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