

**A POCKET  
GUIDE TO  
PUBLIC  
SPEAKING  
4<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**

**Chapter 7**

**Selecting a Topic and Purpose**

# Decide Where to Begin

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- Methods
  - ▶ Make an inventory of your expertise.
  - ▶ Focus on social issues of consequence.
- Pick a topic that you
  - ▶ Are drawn to;
  - ▶ Want to know more about.

# Steer Clear of Overused and Trivial Topics

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- Stay away from overused topics.
- Consider topics that yield fresh insights.
- Beware of choosing highly charged topics.

# Try Brainstorming to Generate Ideas

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- Word association
  - ▶ Write down a single topic.
  - ▶ Write things that come to mind.
  - ▶ Continue until you have 15-20 items.
  - ▶ Narrow the list.
  - ▶ Select the best topic.

# Try Brainstorming to Generate Ideas (cont.)

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- Topic (mind) mapping
  - ▶ Write a potential topic on paper.
  - ▶ Write down related ideas around it.
- A topic map
  - ▶ Allows you to visualize relationships;
  - ▶ Spurs creative thinking.

# Identify the General Purpose of Your Speech

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- General speech purpose
  - ▶ Answers the question, “What is my objective in speaking on this topic to this audience on this occasion?”

# Identify the General Purpose of Your Speech (cont.)

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- Three general purposes for a speech:
  - ▶ Educate or inform
  - ▶ Persuade
  - ▶ Mark a special occasion
- Speech occasion often suggests a purpose

# Narrow Your Topic

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- Consider what the audience already knows.
- Consider what aspects are most relevant.
- Pick a discrete topic category.
- Restrict your main points.
  - ▶ Should be between two and five



# Narrow Your Topic (cont.)

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- Brainstorming can help narrow your topic.
  - ▶ Brainstorm by category.
  - ▶ Use an online subject directory.
  - ▶ Browse through related subtopic links.

# Form a Specific Speech Purpose

- Specific speech purpose
  - ▶ What you want listeners to learn/do/reconsider/agree with
  - ▶ Be specific about your aim.
  - ▶ State your aim in action form.
  - ▶ Seldom articulated in the speech itself

# Compose a Thesis Statement

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- Thesis statement (central idea)
  - ▶ Theme of the speech
  - ▶ Stated in a single, declarative sentence
  - ▶ Expresses what you attempt to demonstrate
  - ▶ Must be clearly stated
    - ▶ Entire speech rests on it

# Postpone Development of Main Points

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- Formulate the purpose and thesis first.
  - ▶ Develop main points afterward.
- Informative or persuasive speech
  - ▶ Thesis statement
    - ▶ Proposes it is true or is believed
    - ▶ Presents facts and evidence

# Postpone Development of Main Points (cont.)

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- Persuasive speech
  - ▶ Thesis represents what you will prove
  - ▶ Main points are your arguments
- Informative speech
  - ▶ Thesis describes what listeners will learn