

Chapter 4

Exploring Public Speaking, 4th edition

Open Resource Textbook for Basic Public
Speaking Course

Authors: Faculty of Dalton State College, Dalton,
Georgia

Overview

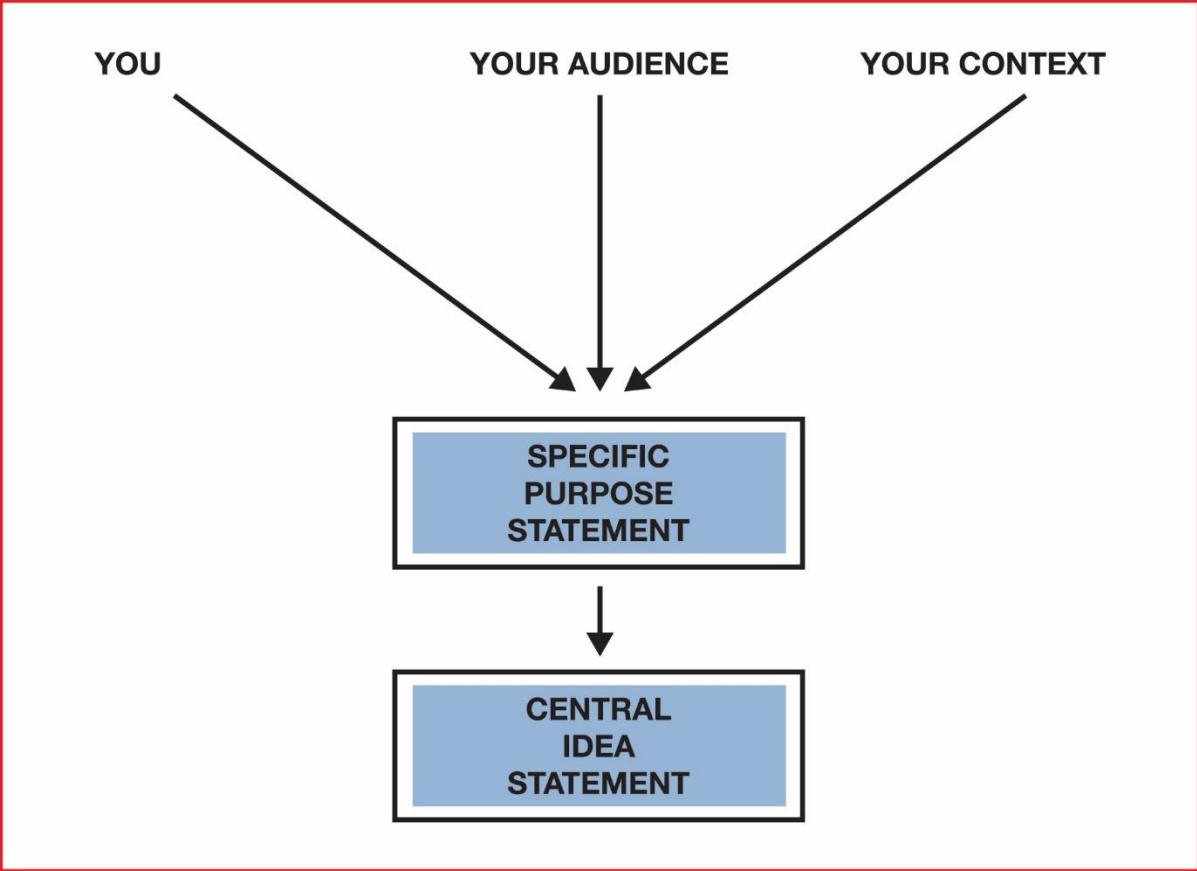
- Getting started with your topic
- Formulating a specific purpose statement
- Formulating a central idea statement
- Problems to avoid with specific purpose and central idea statements

Getting Started with Your Topic and Purpose

- Focus overall on purpose, then topic
- Determine general purpose
 - Inform
 - Persuade
 - Inspire/entertain/amuse

Formulating the Specific Purpose Statement

- Begin with personal inventory
 - Passions
 - Interests
 - Experiences
 - Training
 - What you like/hate



Specific Purpose Statement Format

- To (specific communication verb- infinitive phrase)
 - Inform, persuade, demonstrate, define, describe, explain, convince, prove, argue
- Target Audience
- The content (how to choose athletic shoes, that MGM Studios is better than DisneyWorld)

Guidelines for the Specific Purpose Statement

- Content part should be singular and focused
- Content must match the focus of the purpose word
- The purpose/content should be relevant to the audience

Examples

- To inform my classmates of the origin of the hospice movement.
- To describe to my coworkers the steps to apply for retirement.
- To define for a group of new graduate students the term “academic freedom”
- To explain to the Lions Club members the problems faced by veterans of the wars in Middle East.

- To persuade the member of Alpha Omicron Pi to go on alternative spring break.
- To motivate my classmates to engage in the college's study abroad program.
- To convince my classroom audience that they need at least seven hours of sleep per night on a regular basis.

Formulating the Central Idea Statement

- Central Idea essentially the same as thesis statement in purpose
- Some strict rules from English Composition can be loosened.
- Announcing topic and main points directly is acceptable, but not best (do as your instructor directs!)
- Specific Purpose and Central Idea connected but not the same

Examples

- Specific Purpose: To explain to my classmates the benefits of participating in a semester-long internship.
- Central Idea Statement: Spending a semester working for a local company or nonprofit will have great benefit now and in the future. You will gain experience for your resume, learn about your field, and make connections with employers.

OR

- Central Idea Statement: By spending a semester working for a local company or nonprofit, you will gain experience for your resume, learn about your field, and make connections with employers.

Problems to avoid

- ❑ Covering too much material
 - ❑ May need to revise specific purpose after some preparation
 - ❑ Think “L” or “T” rather than A-Z
- ❑ Too much focus such that no one is interested
- ❑ Communication verb and content do not match in sense
- ❑ Content has two parts – “and”

Problems to Avoid

- Format
 - Do not write either statement as a question.
 - Use complete sentences for central idea and infinitive phrase for specific purpose
 - Use concrete, clear language rather than jargon or slang
- Be sure that specific purpose and the body content are aligned.
- Do not say specific purpose to the audience.
- Practice your central idea to make it “stand out” vocally

Finally

- ▣ Be aware of all class instructions.
- ▣ Be flexible; you may need revision as you practice.
- ▣ Discussion: Something to think about (end of chapter)