How to plan and write

Now that you have a sense of which information may work to persuade your audience and the outcome you want to achieve with your speech, it’s time to look at structure. A well-structured speech needs to be logically developed. The speech should inform the audience about the broader context of an issue, answering the question: why does this matter? You should clearly articulate your position within this broader context (what are you arguing for?): Your position should then be defended using a combination of arguments based on evidence, just like a written presentation of a viewpoint. Finally, the audience should be given something to do or think about as part of the desired outcome you have in mind.

Using Monroe’s Motivated Sequence

There are many ways to structure a speech. Alan Monroe at Purdue University (Indiana, USA) developed one of the most influential techniques in the mid-1930s. Monroe’s ‘Motivated Sequence’ is a way of organising persuasive speeches that inspire people to take action.

According to Monroe, most people respond to a speech by seeking to:

1. be convinced of a speaker’s authority
2. understand the issue or problem
3. sympathise with the issue or problem
4. be convinced the speaker’s approach to the issue or problem is feasible and beneficial
5. know what they can do to help bring about a resolution to the issue or problem.

Monroe calls these five steps:

1. Attention
2. Need
3. Satisfaction
4. Visualisation
5. Action.

Importantly, the process Monroe describes is internal. He suggests that most people’s cognitive processes lead them to respond to information in predictable ways: his five steps. As writers, then, we can use Monroe’s steps to anticipate the phases our audience will go through in responding to our speech, helping us to structure our presentation to satisfy the emotional and intellectual needs of our audience.

Here is a chart using Monroe’s Motivated Sequence to inform the structure of a speech:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Ideal audience response</th>
<th>Writer options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>To make the audience listen</td>
<td>‘I want to hear what you have to say.’</td>
<td>Tell a story, present a compelling statistic or example that illustrates the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>To get the audience to feel a need or want.</td>
<td>‘I agree. I have that need/want.’</td>
<td>Identify the context. Why does the issue matter to people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>To tell the audience how to fill this need or want.</td>
<td>‘I see your solution will work.’</td>
<td>Present evidence of past successes, use facts, figures or expert testimony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualisation</td>
<td>To show the audience the benefits of a solution.</td>
<td>‘This is a great idea.’</td>
<td>Reinroduce the context. What would the world look like if the audience took your side. Or if they didn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>To prompt the audience to take action.</td>
<td>‘I want it. I’ll do it.’</td>
<td>Involve the audience by introducing a challenge or an appeal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selecting your information

Understanding the audience you are speaking to and the objectives of your speech will help you to identify the strongest arguments in support of your point of view. Logical, reasonable arguments are not always your most powerful advocates. Consider that most people who smoke cigarettes are well informed about the documented health risks associated with smoking. Emotional appeals might be more effective in persuading an audience of smokers to give up the habit. This could explain why the Australian Government requires graphic images to be placed on the packaging of tobacco products.

So, in deciding on the information that best suits your persuasive needs, consider who exactly you will be talking to. Asking questions about your audience can help you to identify the most relevant and persuasive information and evidence to use in your presentation.

Use language and draw from examples that are appropriate to your issue, audience and purpose.

For example, if you were delivering a speech about banning plastic bottles to an audience of health practitioners, you might emphasise the human health risks associated with the consumption of chemicals from plastics. Your speech might also make a plea to the medical community to help underline these health risks to the broader community. Tailor the information and the call to action to a specific audience for maximum effect.
THINK ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE

1. Who will be the audience for your oral presentation?
2. How is your issue relevant to your audience?
3. What does your audience care about?
4. What does your audience not care about?
5. Does your audience have any other relevant characteristics that you should take into account (e.g., age, culture, race, gender, religion)?
6. What points of view do you think your audience members hold on your issue? What might be some of the reasons for audience members holding a point of view opposed to your own?
7. Identify one piece of information that will be especially relevant to and have an impact on your audience, and explain why.

ACTIVITY

How to present

The delivery of a speech is an important aspect of how an audience will respond to it. Language that sounds conversational and is appropriate for the given audience can make the delivery sound more natural and helps the speaker to build a rapport with the audience. It’s acceptable to use contractions such as ‘can’t’ instead of ‘cannot’ and ‘don’t’ instead of ‘do not’ if doing so sounds more natural for the tone of your presentation.

Use the tone of your voice to help convey your feelings and attitudes towards the issue and the various points of view you will consider. Vary your tone throughout to make your delivery more interesting for the audience, and to signal which opinions you are rejecting and which ones you support. Avoid becoming abusive towards individuals or ideas you don’t agree with; remember you are presenting a reasoned argument.

Should you use visuals?

Using visual aids such as photographs, charts, diagrams or videos can be effective. However, they can also break the connection you are establishing with the audience. A PowerPoint presentation literally moves you to the sidelines. Before deciding to use visual aids, ask yourself: what is the benefit of showing my audience this material? How do these visuals contribute to the purpose of my speech? Do the visuals clarify the information? Or am I using them just because I can?

Visuals should communicate something more effectively than words alone can.

Adding visuals is often motivated by the needs of a particular audience. A group of five-year-old children, for example, might benefit from a visual aid, whereas in a presentation to an adult audience on the same topic the visuals might seem patronising.

Key tips for successful delivery

- **Always number your pages**

  If all the pages scatter on the floor at the podium, there’s still hope.

- **Stay on message**

  You have a point of view to deliver, an argument to defend. Avoid the temptation to meander off topic or show off how much research you’ve done. Stay focused on the task at hand. If what you’re saying does not support your argument or the audience’s understanding of the topic, cut it. Remember the purpose you envisioned for your speech. Stick to it.

- **Write for the ear**

  Remember that you’re writing a speech, not an essay. People are listening, not reading, so your language and pace need to convey your message immediately. The audience doesn’t have the luxury of re-reading something they didn’t absorb the first time. Breathe. It sounds simple, but just remembering to take deep breaths between the transitions you present in your speech will help to slow your pace and make you appear more comfortable in front of an audience.

- **Practise reading your speech aloud**

  There’s no better way of finding out how long it takes to deliver your speech. Also, it will help you to identify potential issues with your delivery. Are some sentences too long – can you read them without having to take a breath? Do you stumble on certain words? It’s much better to identify and deal with these issues in the practice phase than for them to occur when you are being assessed.

How to write a statement of intention

An important part of your SAC task is to write a statement of intention to accompany your speech. This statement is a clear, coherent explanation of the choices you make as you write and edit your speech. It needs to be around 300-500 words.

You can write in the first person or the third person, though first person (e.g., ‘I decided to use an informal tone and familiar, everyday examples’) is probably easiest. You also need to decide whether to write in the future tense (‘I will use an emotional appeal’) or the past tense (‘I decided to use an emotional appeal’). The future tense is more consistent with the idea of explaining your intentions, and is used in the example below.

For each element you discuss, explain how you see the element as working to position and/or persuade the audience to agree.
The elements you could discuss include:

- how you will use form (e.g. in your speech you will engage the audience by asking questions, or in your video blog you will use a wide range of visual material)
- the ways in which you structure your argument, including how you will begin and/or end your presentation
- the persuasive strategies you will use (e.g. anecdote, analogy, expert or authority figures, evidence, attacks, emotional appeals, rebuttal)
- your use of style and tone, and particular choices of words and images.

Sample SAC response

The following speech presents a point of view on the issue of banning plastic water bottles. The intended audience is secondary students attending a school function. The aim of the speech is to encourage students to consider alternatives to buying water in plastic bottles.

Imagine you’re thirsty. So you drink a cool, refreshing liquid that’s vital to your survival.

Now imagine that you’ve paid for the drink even though you could easily have got it for free.

And imagine that the container you’ve drunk the water from is made of dangerous chemicals that can seriously affect your health. How would you feel if you knew that every time you bought a plastic water bottle, you were supporting the production of something that you knew was harmful to your health?

Well you don’t have to imagine it. Because that’s what happens when you buy, consume and discard a bottle of water. Disposable plastic water bottles contribute to the slurry of plastic waste that contaminates our planet, kills our animals and harms ourselves. They should be banned.

According to research published in the respected journal PLOS ONE in 2014, more than five trillion pieces of plastic, collectively weighing nearly 269,000 tonnes, are floating in the world’s oceans. That plastic causes damage to the marine food chain. As animals ingest the plastic and then ingest each other.

According to the website of environmental organisation One World One Ocean, once plastic ends up in the environment it never goes away.

Disposable plastic water bottles should be banned.

Not convinced?

Let’s talk about BPA. Bisphenol A is a synthetic oestrogen used in plastic that is found in the lining of tins, bottles and so on. It’s nasty. BPA migrates into food and drink and has been linked to a number of health problems such as cancer, neurological issues, diabetes and reproductive difficulties.

Australian and New Zealand food safety standards will tell you the overwhelming weight of scientific opinion is that there is no health or safety issue at the levels we’re exposed to.

Now, those studies are often conducted by the companies that make and sell plastics. So I’ll let you decide where you get your information.

I’m not a zealot. I understand that plastic is useful. I understand that plastic is cheap to produce and that many of the products we use and rely on are made of the stuff. But there’s too much plastic in the world. And we can do something to reduce the amount that’s out there.

We can ban the sale of plastic water bottles. It would be good for our health, good for the environment and good for our wallets.

‘Why not just recycle the bottles?’ you may ask. It seems like a good solution. But while recycling is important, it alone is not the answer. According to Terri-Anne Johnson, CEO of Clean Up Australia, less than 30 per cent of plastic bottles are recycled in most states.

So what can we do?

We can cry. We can get mad. We can write pithy slogans on bits of cardboard and march down the street feeling righteous.

Or we can do something constructive. We can use alternatives to plastic where possible, to reduce the amount of this noxious material in the environment. We can ban the sale of drinking water in plastic bottles tomorrow but we can stop buying them today.

But maybe I haven’t convinced you yet. Maybe you think I’m an alarmist. Maybe you don’t believe that plastic is bad for your health. Maybe you believe the environment doesn’t need our help?

Well then, you may still care about your wallet.

Bottled water is expensive.

According to the not-for-profit educational site Cool Australia, Australians spend over 500 million dollars on bottled water every year. 500 million dollars.

The average cost of a litre of tap water in Australia is 0.001 cents. What else can you buy that’s so good and so vital, for so little?

So instead of buying bottled water, get a stainless steel or a glass bottle that you can refill and take with you.

If you’re at a public event, like a music festival, visit the mobile water station instead of buying water.

Australian tap water is clean, healthy and nearly free. You can find a source of fresh drinking water in most parks and schools. By world standards our drinking water alone is enough to qualify us as the luckiest country.

Not buying water in a plastic bottle can help you save money, save the environment and save your health.

Don’t buy plastic. You can start that today.

Banning the sale of plastic bottles may take a little longer. But we should do it. Future generations will thank us.

Thank you.
Sample statement of intention

My oral presentation aims to support banning the sale of water in plastic bottles in Australia. Recent studies have added weight to mounting concerns about the damage that plastics do to the environment and to human health. Recent attempts to ban plastic bottles in the United States have failed, which has reinvigorated the debate among health and environmental advocates. The recent climate summit in Paris has also ensured that environmental issues remain at the forefront of the media.

One of the persuasive strategies that I will employ in my oral presentation is the use of key data taken from reliable sources on the physical and environmental toll of plastics. I will also use a range of evidence, including statistics, research and facts that support the banning of plastic bottles.

I will include a variety of appeals to help persuade my audience to support a ban on plastic water bottles. Since my audience is secondary students, I will use informal language and draw on examples familiar to that audience to help them relate to the topic. I will begin by making an emotional appeal to my audience by using direct address ("Imagine you are..."). This technique will engage the audience and identify them as part of the problem and solution. I will incorporate inclusive language throughout, such as 'us' and 'we', to ensure the presentation speaks directly to the audience. Appeals to common sense will show how the bottling and selling of water in Australia is largely unnecessary as Australian tap water is generally safe and readily accessible. I will appeal to reason by demonstrating that purchasing bottled water is an unnecessary expense and that adopting alternatives to purchasing bottled water can result in significant financial savings.

Throughout my presentation, I will employ a range of public speaking techniques to enhance my performance. I will use pauses to add emphasis to the key points of my argument, and I aim to speak steadily and clearly, so that the audience is able to hear each of my supporting arguments. I have a tendency to rush through presentations when I am nervous, so I would like focus on my pitch and pace. As a result, I hope to convince my audience to support a ban and encourage them to adopt alternatives to buying bottled water.