

Giving a Persuasive Speech

Deciding whether or not to join the League of Nations was a controversial issue, one which inspired many speeches and debates, such as those on the floor of the United States Senate and on university campuses. (Future Vice President Calvin Coolidge moderated one such debate, between Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (MA), whose speech you will read, and Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell.)

An effective, inspiring, enduring speech is one that hits home with the audience and speaks to them.

Crafting an effective speech requires some planning.

First, you need a topic. For this assignment, you are going to give a persuasive speech encouraging your fellow Senators to either vote for the treaty or to reject it.

Second, you need to consider your audience. Who are they and what do they want to hear? What would convince them to agree with you? There are three ways to reach the audience and get their attention. You can use:

- **Ethos** -- this means that you talk about what is morally or ethically right.
 - A speaker supporting the League might bring up the fact that offensive war is widely regarded as immoral and to be avoided whenever possible, and that the League is a way of achieving this.
- **Logos** -- this means that you look at logic.
 - A speaker against the League may point out that avoiding the League will allow America to preserve its sovereignty while still choosing to militarily intervene against aggressive nations.
- **Pathos** -- this means that you aim for emotions.
 - A speaker for the League may point out that many American soldiers died in the war, so joining the League would be a way to honor their sacrifice.

Ideally, you will use a combination of all three. You want to use emotion to pull them in, but you want to use logic and ethics to keep their attention and to persuade them. At no point, though, should you resort to calling names, insulting, or otherwise bashing the other side (these are sometimes called *ad hominem* arguments). Stick with *ethos* and *logos* to make your points.

Third, you want to draft your outline. One approach is to follow the “Attention-Argument-Counter-Action” (AACCA) approach.

- Attention -- get the audience's attention
- Argument -- present your argument
- Counter -- address the counterargument
- Action -- call the audience to action

A credible argument always makes it a point to discuss the counterpoints and explain why they are unpersuasive. You can use the provided worksheet to create your draft.

Fourth, you need to edit. Review your speech and make sure that you are clear and concise. Say what needs to be said and then stop.

Fifth, you have to practice. This will help you deliver your speech with confidence, which is absolutely vital if you want people to agree with you.