

An Introduction to Expository Speaking



Event Description

Expository Speaking is a five minute informative speech that introduces to the audience a topic of the student's choosing. The speaker should provide unique insights and explore interesting implications. At its core, Expository Speaking is an informative speech. Students doing Expository may cover topics ranging from an organization to a product, a process or concept. Effective speeches provide new information or perspectives on a topic, including those that are widely known.

Considerations for Selecting a Topic

When selecting a topic it is important for the student to find a subject that they are interested in learning about and discovering new insights. Since the student has to deliver the speech, it is important for them to find a topic that lends itself to engaging delivery for that student. A topic they are not interested in may lead to more static delivery. The topic should be avoided if the speech cannot impart new and unique information to the audience. Topics that are timely can be especially useful.

Students should also consider the relevance of the topic to the audience. While the student may be inspired by a subject they find intriguing, ultimately the goal of the speech is to provide information to an audience. Think about what the audience can do with this information—why do they need it? Why is the topic important to them? What is the audience's 'need to know'?


Traits of Successful Expository Speakers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Expository students to keep in mind:

- Articulate
- Process oriented
- Inquisitive
- Engaging
- Personable
- Enjoys research
- Passionate about writing
- Creative

Examples of Past Expository Topics

- Fibonacci
- Roller coaster design
- Concussions
- AED
- Lipitor
- Fitbit
- Corinthians

Learn More! The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive & educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Expository, we have videos of past national final round performances. We produce many other general public speaking resources, such as webinars, activities for class or practice, and more! 

Find Your Voice

"I enjoyed Expository because it didn't require the speaker to convince the audience of anything other than how exciting their topic was. Any speech that explores implications usually involves some level of individualized analysis, which keeps topics that are otherwise redundant fresh."

— Josh Planos, Association Alum

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Basic Understandings

Expository speaking is an informative speech that is five minutes long without the use of a visual aid (note: some tournaments permit the use of visual aids but at Nationals none are used). Students who participate in Expository provide unique and interesting information to the audience. An effective Expository introduces them to either a completely new topic or something new about a topic people may know a lot about. Students who do this event would need to be well researched and personally invested in the topic they are wanting to speak on. If the topic is not meaningful to the person it may become harder to deliver the speech to the audience effectively.



Research

Expository research is as diverse as the topics students select. Expository research might include newspaper and magazine articles, academic journals, non-fiction books, interviews, and credible digital content. Depending upon the topic, it might be possible that a student's own meaningful experiences may be in the speech.

Source materials need to be incorporated throughout the speech with oral citation. The citation style varies with the type of source. For example, students should provide author and title of books, although some students will also provide the source credibility of the author.

The name of the source and date may be sufficient for newspaper articles. It is important to recognize that whether the material is quoted directly from the source or paraphrased, sources must be cited. When drafting the Expository speech, indicate direct quotations from sources using both quotation marks and some other marking such as highlighting or underlining. Choose your quoted text wisely as it should not be overwhelming in comparison to your own analysis. Once all the research is gathered, the sources should all be compiled into a works cited page.

Structural Components

When constructing an Expository speech, students need to be sure to have a well thought out introduction, body, and conclusion. As a five minute speech it is necessary to succinctly express and develop ideas. Depth of information is still possible with efficient word economy in writing.

The introduction would work to grab the audience's attention. The "attention grabbing device" should be related to the topic - shock strategies that are unrelated do not work. After this the introduction should provide sufficient context so that the audience understands what the topic is. While doing this the speaker should establish why the audience should care about the information that is going to be presented. To do this the speaker should establish reasons why the information is serious as well as how it's directly related to the audience. As with any good introductions, the speaker should preview the points of the body of the speech.

The body of the speech will likely be composed of two or three main points. The body would be the substance of the speech and will set up justifications for the impact of the topic as well as why it relates to the audience. Typical main points in Expository speaking include the background of the topic, the pros and cons of the topic at hand, the development of the topic, and the implications of the analysis presented.

The conclusion is going to wrap up the speech. It will tie back to the attention grabbing device from the introduction, as well as review the main points of the speech.

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A general breakdown of the timing of an Expository speech could be done in this manner:

INTRO • 30 – 45 seconds

BODY • 3:00 – 3:15

CONCLUSION • 15 – 30 seconds

Organizing

When developing the ideas of the speech think about answering the questions how and why! How does your topic lend itself to what you are establishing? Why does it happen? To develop a sound position it's necessary to avoid assertions. Furthermore, it's important to ensure that you establish the importance of each point. Why should the audience care? Organizing your ideas around this premise will assist you in the development of the speech.

Organizing the body of a speech is a process impacted by the topic the student has selected. The key is to choose an organizational pattern that works well to support the thesis of the speech. The student also needs to consider what the audience may or may not know already about the topic. Here are a couple of specific examples using the same topic:

Let's say that a student wants to tell us about one of the many popular products to help us manage our health, such as Fitbit's Activity Tracker. The student's thesis might suggest that these health products have a tremendous impact on an individual's own health as well as impacting societal awareness of health care. The first point may be what it is and how it is used so that we understand the specific product better. The student may then tell us about how the technology itself works, such as how it measures and reports vital health statistics. The third point might be how these health products are impacting society.

This is just one way of organizing a speech like this. The student might want to put more emphasis on the impact on society. Thus, the student might choose to use one point to note the impact of these products (sales numbers and projections, for example), another to explain how our healthcare costs may go down as a result of using these products, and a third point might be to explain what will happen with these products in the future. As you can see,

the topic might be the same, but these two speeches will be quite different from each other because of the choices made in the body of the speech.



Standing it Up/Practicing

As Expository is delivered without notes, the first step for the student after drafting and revising the speech is memorization. Remind students that brains are a muscle and the more that a muscle is used stronger it becomes. Likewise, the more time memorizing is practiced, the better the student becomes.

Here are some thoughts for the student regarding memorization: The more cues you give your brain to aid memorization the better. Sitting down staring at a script, re-reading the lines in your head, will not be beneficial. Memorize the story with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only your finalized text. You can include notes on gestures and movement. Then, tape it to a wall and actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by your notes. Sometimes, it's helpful to do this in front of a mirror, so you can evaluate the effectiveness of your choices. It is helpful to memorize a paragraph at a time, building from the previous paragraph. This will significantly decrease the time it takes to memorize your performance. Once memorized, you and your coach can then build from the choices you've made for your speech. Adjustments to gestures, movement, and line delivery can be made.

Once the student feels confident in their performance, the coach and student can begin practicing. Timing a

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run-through and critiquing the speech both orally and with written comments is a helpful method. Focus on the big picture in these early practices. Work on explanation of key concepts, engagement with the audience, and energy. Consider carefully how students are using their voice, including pause, pitch, tone, volume, diction, and inflection. Eventually the student will be ready for line-by-line practices. Line-by-line is characterized by intensive rehearsal of each section of the speech. This can be a paragraph, or working individual line delivery. As the student makes adjustments, be conscious of staying within the time limits.

The student is now ready to perform in front of other students, coaches, or even an audience. Attend tournaments and review ballots. At this stage, feedback is incredibly important. Take note of all comments. A fresh perspective on a speech is vitally important! Students need to be willing to take feedback and make appropriate modifications.

Even the most talented of performers need practice! Remind students to respect the time and resources of coaches and the school. If they give it their best effort every day, they will be successful no matter the tournament outcome.



Performance Tips

It may sound cliché, but confidence is key! If you've put the legwork in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Walk into the round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if

you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile! Be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than getting up to perform and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: if your round is 45 minutes long, you are only speaking for 5 of those minutes. The remaining minutes are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

Resources

Many resources can be found on your dashboard at www.speechanddebate.org. For Expository speaking we have final round videos from Nationals, as well as an informative article by Connie Link. Additionally, the textbook on *Original Oratory*, by Ashley Mack, has a number of useful resources that would help expository students.