

# SPEAKING TO INFORM

## Lesson 2

# informative speech

- A speech designed to convey knowledge and understanding
- three general criteria:
  - Is the information communicated accurately?
  - Is the information communicated clearly?
  - Is the information made meaningful and interesting to the audience?

# Types

- (1) speeches about objects,
- (2) speeches about processes,
- (3) speeches about events, and
- (4) speeches about concepts.

# SPEECHES ABOUT OBJECTS

- include anything that is visible, tangible and stable in form. Objects may have moving parts or be alive; they may be anything that is visible, include places, structures, animals, even people.
- You will not have time to tell your classmates everything about any of these subjects. Instead, you will choose a specific purpose that focuses on one aspect of your subject.

you

may organize your speech in chronological order

- If your specific purpose is to explain the history or evolution of your subject.
- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the major achievements of Frederick Douglass.
- Central Idea: Although born in slavery, Frederick Douglass became one of
- the greatest figures in American history.
- Main Points: I. Douglass spent the first 20 years of his life as a slave in Maryland.
- II. After escaping to the North, Douglass became a leader in the abolitionist movement to end slavery.
- III. During the Civil War, Douglass helped establish black regiments in the Union Army.
- IV. After the war, Douglass was a tireless champion of equal
- rights for his race.

you

## may organize your speech in spatial order

- If your specific purpose is to describe the main features of your subject, :
- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the design of the St. Louis Arch.
- Central Idea: The St. Louis Arch is divided into three sections, each with its own attractions.
- Main Points: I. The base of the St. Louis Arch houses a visitor's center with a museum, two movie theaters, and retail outlets.
- II. The middle of the St. Louis Arch contains a high-speed tram that carries visitors from the base to the top.
- III. The top of the St. Louis Arch has an observation deck 630 feet above the ground.

# topical order

- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the four major elements of a Japanese garden.
- Central Idea: The four major elements of a Japanese garden are stones, sand, water, and plants.
- Main Points:
  - I. The first element of a Japanese garden is stones, which symbolize mountains and islands.
  - II. The second element of a Japanese garden is sand, which symbolizes the sea or other vast areas.
  - III. The third element of a Japanese garden is water, which symbolizes purity and life.
  - IV. The fourth element of a Japanese garden is plants, which symbolize life and the changing seasons.

# Guides

- No matter which of these organizational methods you use—chronological, spatial, or topical—be sure to follow the following guides guidelines:
- (1) limit your speech to between two and five main points;
- (2) keep main points separate;
- (3) try to use the same pattern of wording for all main points;
- (4) balance the amount of time devoted to each main point.



# SPEECHES ABOUT PROCESSES

- A process is a systematic series of actions that leads to a specific result or product. Speeches about processes explain how something is made, how something is done, or how something works.
- There are two kinds.
- One kind explains a process so that that listeners will **understand** it better. Your goal is to have your audience know the steps of the process and how they relate to one another.
- A second kind of speech explains a process so listeners will be better able **to perform** the process themselves. Your goal in this kind of speech is to have the audience learn a skill.

# in chronological order

- When informing about a process, you will usually arrange your speech, explaining the process step by step from beginning to end. Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the major rituals of a traditional Bengali wedding in India.
- Central Idea: A traditional Bengali wedding consists of a series of rituals that
  - take place before, during, and after the wedding ceremony.
- Main Points: I. Pre-wedding rituals include giving gifts to the bride and
  - groom and dressing the bride in traditional fashion.
- II. Rituals during the wedding ceremony include an exchange of garlands between the bride and groom, the chanting of mantras, and the giving away of the bride by her uncle.
- III. Post-wedding rituals include a celebration at the home of the bride's family, a reception at the home of the groom's family, and the formal exit of the bride and groom.

## in topical order

- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience of the common methods used by stage magicians to perform their tricks.
- Central Idea: Stage magicians use two common methods to perform their tricks—mechanical devices and sleight of hand.
- Main Points: I. Many magic tricks rely on mechanical devices that may require little skill by the magician.
- II. Other magic tricks depend on the magician's skill in fooling people by sleight-of-hand manipulation.

# SPEECHES ABOUT EVENTS

- "anything that happens or is regarded as happening."
- you will need to narrow your focus and pick a specific purpose you can accomplish in a short speech

# in chronological order

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the history of the Paralympics.

- Central Idea: Olympic-style games for athletes with physical disabilities have made great strides since the first competition more than 60 years ago.
- Main Points: I. What would eventually become the Paralympics began
  - in 1948 with a sports competition in Great Britain involving World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries.
  - II. In 1952 the event expanded when athletes from the Netherlands took part.
  - III. The first official Paralympic Games for international athletes took place in Rome in 1960.
  - IV. In 2001 an agreement was signed officially holding the Paralympic Games alongside the summer and winter Olympic Games.

## in topical order

- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about three aspects of the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans.
- Central Idea: The Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans is renowned for its parades, costumes, and food.
- Main Points: I. The parades are lavish events that take place over the course of several weeks.
- II. The costumes include disguises, medallions, and the official Mardi Gras colors of purple, green, and gold.
- III. The food features Cajun and Creole dishes common to southern Louisiana.

# SPEECHES ABOUT CONCEPTS

- Concepts include beliefs, theories, ideas, principles, and the like. They are more abstract than objects, processes, or events.
- Speeches about concepts are often more complex than other kinds of informative speeches. When dealing with concepts, pay special attention to avoiding technical language, to defining terms clearly, and to using examples and comparisons to illustrate the concepts.

# in topical order

- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about the basic principles of nonviolent resistance.
- Central Idea: The basic principles of nonviolent resistance stress using moral means to achieve social change, refusing to inflict violence on one's enemies, and using suffering as a social force.
- Main Points: I. The first major principle of nonviolent resistance is that social change must be achieved by moral means.
- II. The second major principle of nonviolent resistance is that one should not inflict violence on one's enemies.
- III. The third major principle of nonviolent resistance is that suffering can be a powerful social force.



# Another approach

- is to define the concept you are dealing with, identify its major elements, and illustrate it with specific examples. An excellent instance of this came in a student speech about Islam:
- Specific Purpose: To inform my audience of the basic principles of Islam.
- Central Idea: The beliefs of Islam can be traced to the prophet Muhammad, are written in the Koran, and have produced a number of sects.
- Main Points: I. Islam was founded by the prophet Muhammad in the early 600s.
- II. The teachings of Islam are written in the Koran, the holy book of Islam.
- III. Today Islam is divided into a number of sects, the largest of which are the Sunnis and the Shiites.

# DON'T OVERESTIMATE WHAT THE AUDIENCE KNOWS

- always consider whether it will be clear to someone who is hearing about the topic for the first time
- remember that readers can study a printed passage again and again until they extract its meaning, but listeners don't have that luxury. They must understand what you say in the time it takes you to say it. The more you assume they know about the topic, the greater your chances of being misunderstood.

# RELATE THE SUBJECT DIRECTLY TO THE AUDIENCE

- The British dramatist Oscar Wilde arrived at his club after the disastrous opening-night performance of his new play.
- "Oscar, how did your play go?" asked a friend.
- "Oh," Wilde quipped, "the play was a great success, but the audience was a failure."
- what is fascinating to you may not be fascinating to everybody

# DON'T BE TOO TECHNICAL

- It may mean the subject matter is too specialized for the audience. Any subject can be popularized—but only up to a point. The important thing for a speaker to know is what can be explained to an ordinary audience and what cannot.

# AVOID ABSTRACTIONS

- "My task," said the novelist Joseph Conrad, "is, before all, to make you see."
- One way to avoid abstractions is through description.
- Another way to escape abstractions is with comparisons that put your subject in concrete, familiar terms.
- Like comparison, contrast can put an idea into concrete terms.

# PERSONALIZE YOUR IDEAS

- Listeners want to be entertained as they are being enlightened.
- And nothing enlivens a speech more than personal illustrations.
- Whenever possible, you should try to personalize your ideas and dramatize them in human terms.

# Acupuncture: New Uses for an Ancient Remedy

commentary	speech
The speaker starts with an extended example that captures attention and interest. In this case, the example works particularly well because it is personally related to the speaker and is richly detailed and vividly drawn.	Six months ago, my 78-year-old grandmother was quickly losing her independence. Severe arthritis in both knees hampered her ability to take care of herself. Shopping, getting around the neighborhood, even walking down her front steps was becoming almost impossible. Pain medications helped somewhat, but the side effects created their own problems.
As the speaker continues her opening example, she introduces the subject of her speech by talking about her grandmother's positive experience with acupuncture.	Then her doctor suggested acupuncture. My grandmother was skeptical at first, but she was willing to try just about anything. She did, and the results were miraculous. After six weeks, her pain and stiffness were significantly reduced, she was able to take care of her apartment again, she could get out on her own to go shopping, to visit friends and family, and to do the other things her arthritis had prevented in the past. Acupuncture restored her quality of life and

Mentioning her own experience with acupuncture helps establish the speaker's credibility	My grandmother's story is not unique. Performed for well over 2,000 years in China and other parts of Asia, acupuncture is becoming more and more popular in the U.S. and other Western countries for one simple reason—it works. Impressed by my grandmother's experience, I began acupuncture treatments for my migraine headaches, and now my headaches are completely gone.
Here the speaker reinforces her credibility and previews the main points to be discussed in the body of the speech. An explicit preview statement at the end of the introduction is especially important when speaking to inform.	Not surprisingly, I wanted to learn more about this treatment that produced such miraculous results for both my grandmother and myself. Today I will share part of what I have learned by explaining what happens when you receive an acupuncture treatment, how acupuncture works, the kinds of medical conditions that can be treated by acupuncture, and the growing use of acupuncture in combination with Western medical techniques. Let's start by looking at a



<p>Now the speaker moves into her first main point. The information in this and the following paragraph answers the audience's questions about what happens during an acupuncture treatment.</p>	<p>Acupuncture is the insertion of needles into the skin to achieve a balanced flow of energy, which in turn restores and preserves health. To prevent any chance of contamination from one person to another, acupuncturists in the U.S. use sterilized needles that are individually packaged and are disposed of after a single use.</p>
<p>Knowing that many people are squeamish about being poked with needles, the speaker makes sure to explain that the needles used in acupuncture are small and essentially painless. Notice that the speaker did not pass the needles around during her speech. Putting visual aids in the hands of the audience during a speech is an almost certain recipe for disaster because listeners will end up paying more attention to the visual aids than to the speaker's words.</p>	<p>I realize that the notion of having needles stuck into you may seem frightening, but the needles are so thin that the process is painless. Acupuncture needles are much smaller than the needles used for drawing blood or getting shots. Here are some needles that I received from my acupuncturist. After my speech I'll pass them around so you can see how incredibly light and small they are. They are so thin—about the thickness of a human hair—that you can hardly tell when they're inserted. And there's usually no sensation other than</p>

<p>This paragraph begins with a transition into the speaker's second main point. As in the previous paragraph, she relates the topic directly to her audience by speaking in terms of "you."</p>	<p>Now that you know what happens when you're treated by an acupuncturist, you're probably wondering how acupuncture works. The process is explained by Dr. Felix Mann, President of the Medical Acupuncture Society, in his book <i>Acupuncture: The Ancient Chinese Art of Healing and How It Works Scientifically</i>. According to traditional Chinese medicine, every life process is based on the flow of vital energy through the body. This energy is known in Chinese as qi and flows along channels or pathways called meridians.</p>
<p>As you can see from the video of this speech in the online Media Library for this chapter, the speaker uses a visual aid to clarify her explanation of the acupuncture meridians</p>	<p>The meridians are shown in this visual aid. As you can see, they cover the entire body, running from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet and down both arms. When the free flow of energy through these meridians is blocked, the result is pain, illness, disease, or other physical problems.</p>

<p>The speaker's explanation throughout this main point provides a good example of how to communicate technical information in everyday language. The quotation at the end of the paragraph nicely sums up this section of the speech.</p>	<p>The aim of acupuncture is to restore the open flow of energy through these meridians. This is done by placing needles at specific points on the meridians. Altogether there are more than 1,000 acupuncture points on the meridians. These points have been mapped out over the centuries with scientific precision. In China there is a saying: "There is no pain if there is free flow; if there is pain, there is no free flow."</p>
<p>A signpost of the beginning of this paragraph helps signal that the speaker is moving to her third main point, in which she explains some of the medical conditions that can be treated with acupuncture. As in the rest of the speech, she relies on highly credible sources and identifies them clearly. This is crucial if the audience is to accept the accuracy of the speaker's information, especially since she is not an expert on</p>	<p>Although acupuncture is based on a different view of the body from that held by Western doctors, the evidence is clear that it works in treating a wide range of medical conditions. The World Health Organization lists more than 40 conditions that can be effectively treated with acupuncture, including ear, nose, and throat ailments; asthma and other respiratory problems; and nervous system and muscular</p>

<p>The speaker's final main point deals with the growing integration of acupuncture with Western medical techniques. In this and the following paragraph, she uses a mix of examples, testimony, and statistics to illustrate her point. All in all, this speech provides an excellent case study in how to use supporting materials to buttress an informative presentation.</p>	<p>In light of all this, it is not surprising that a number of clinics and hospitals are combining acupuncture with Western medicine in an effort to provide patients the benefits of both. For example, Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, the third oldest hospital in the U.S., has added acupuncture to its wellness center. Positive results have also been seen at the Mattel Children's Hospital at UCLA. Dr. Lonnie Zeltzer, director of the hospital's pediatric pain program, confirms that acupuncture "really does help. Most children accept acupuncture, and in fact, really feel good about it."</p>
<p>As in the rest of her speech, the speaker's quotations are brief and well-chosen. Notice how she identifies the people she is quoting and establishes their credentials before pre-senting their testimony.</p>	<p>Another example of the integration of acupuncture with Western medicine is the Wasser Pain Management Center at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, Canada. Neurologist Allan Gordon, Director of the Center, says that introducing acupuncture into the hospital "expands the treatment available to chronic</p>

<p>The phrase "Today we have learned" signals that the speaker is moving into her conclusion. She then provides a concise summary of the main points developed in the body.</p>	<p>Today we have learned what happens during an acupuncture treatment, how acupuncture works, some of the illnesses that can be treated with acupuncture, and the growing integration of acupuncture with Western approaches to medicine. I hope you now know more about this ancient medical practice and the benefits it can provide.</p>
<p>After reinforcing her central idea about the benefits of acupuncture, the speaker refers back to her grandmother, whom she had discussed in the introduction. This unifies the entire speech and ends it on a personal note.</p>	<p>After years of skepticism about acupuncture, the West is finally beginning to recognize that acupuncture is a highly effective way to improve health and reduce pain and suffering. Just ask my grandmother.</p>

# Questions

- 1. What are the four types of informative speeches discussed in the chapter? Give an example of a good specific purpose statement for each type.
- 2. Why must informative speakers be careful not to overestimate what the audience knows about the topic? What can you do to make sure your ideas don't pass over the heads of your listeners?
- 1. What should you do as an informative speaker to relate your topic directly to the audience?
- 2. What two things should you watch out for in making sure your speech is not overly technical?
- 3. What are three methods you can use to avoid abstractions in your informative speech?
- 4. What does it mean to say that informative speakers should personalize their ideas?

# Home assignment

Analyze “The Hidden World of Chili Peppers”.

Identify the specific purpose, central idea, main points, and method of organization.

Evaluate the speech in light of the guidelines for informative speaking discussed in this chapter.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5P5-lj2cFo>

# The Hidden World of Chili Peppers

- Do you know where chili peppers originated and how they eventually spread around the world? Why some peppers are so much hotter than others? How the heat of a chili pepper is measured? What to do if you eat a too-hot pepper? The many medicinal benefits of chili peppers?
- These are just a few of the interesting facts presented in the following informative speech. As you read the speech, notice how the speaker blends historical and scientific materials to produce an entertaining, yet highly instructive, look at chili peppers. Notice, too, how the speaker applies the principles of effective informative speaking discussed in Chapter 14.
- Video of this speech is available in the online Media Library for this appendix. If you watch the speech, you will see that the speaker uses a number of well-designed visual aids to enhance the communication of his ideas.



- 1 Imagine your mouth burning like wildfire, your eyes squirting out uncontrollable tears, and your face red and sweating profusely. Are you sick? No, you just took a bite of a screaming hot chili pepper. Congratulations. You're partaking in a worldwide tradition that has been spicing up lives and diets for thousands of years.
- 2 My own desire for spicy meals led me to investigate why I get red in the face and salivate over the mere thought of eating a spicy chili. In the process, I've discovered there's a lot more to chili peppers than I'd ever imagined. Today I'd like to share with you what I've learned about the history of chili peppers, why they can be so spicy, what to do if you eat a too-hot pepper, and some of the ways peppers are used other than in foods.

- 3 The chili pepper has a long and fascinating history. Its scientific name is *Capsicum*. This is different from the common black pepper you have on your dining room table, whose scientific name is *Piper nigrum*. Black pepper was first cultivated in Asia and was prized in the West as early as the Roman Empire. In contrast, the chili pepper originated more than 5,000 years ago in South America, near what is today Bolivia and Brazil. Over time, it spread to Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.
- 4 But it wasn't until Columbus came in the 1490s that the chili pepper became known to the rest of the world. As stated in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, within fifty years after Columbus returned to Spain with sample plants, chili peppers could be found growing in coastal areas from Africa to Asia. From there, they spread inland, until they took hold of the taste buds of people around the globe. Today they're most widely used in Mexico, Central and South America, Africa, Asia, the Balkans, and the United States. Carolyn Dille and Susan Belsinger, authors of *The Chili Pepper Book*, estimate that 25 percent of the world's adult population uses chili peppers as a part of their daily diet.
- 5 Now that we know a little bit about the history of chili peppers, let's see why they can put such a fire in our belly. The pleasure and pain involved in eating chili peppers comes from a chemical called capsaicin. Capsaicin is concentrated in the pepper's veins and seeds. To enjoy the flavor of a chili pepper without burning your stomach or mouth, avoid the veins and seeds when cooking or eating them.

- 6 P. W. Bosland tells us in the book *Spices, Herbs, and Edible Fungi* that chili pepper intensity is measured in two ways. The first was developed by Wilbur L. Scoville in 1912. This method uses trained testers to measure chili peppers in Scoville Heat Units. These range from zero to 300,000. According to Bosland, this test is subjective because it relies on the individual tester's sensitivity to capsaicin.
- 7 The second, more widely used test is called the High Performance Liquid Chromatography test, more commonly known as HPLC. This is also measured in Scoville Heat Units, but it's more objective. The chili pods are dried and ground, and then the chemicals responsible for the heat are analyzed and rated according to pungency.
- 8 The hottest pepper on record is the deceptively small and unimposing orange habanero pepper. It's been rated as high as 300,000 Scoville Heat Units, and it's so powerful that some people have an allergic reaction just by touching it, which is why I'm holding it by the stem. The mildest pepper is the standard green bell, which you see at the grocery store everyday. It's been rated at zero Scoville Heat Units.
- 9 If you eat an orange habanero pepper, it's important to know how to deal with the burning sensation. Whatever you do, do not rinse your mouth with water. Dave DeWitt in *The Chili Pepper Encyclopedia* tells us capsaicin is not soluble in water. And even if you drink a gallon of ice water, it's not going to help. According to the Chili Pepper Institute at New Mexico State University, the best solution is to consume a dairy product such as milk or yogurt, which contain a substance that strips away capsaicin from the interior cells of your mouth. This is why some hot foods, like Indian foods, are served with yogurt sauce.

- 10 If you burn your skin, the Institute recommends cleaning the area with rubbing alcohol and then soaking it with milk. Above all, remember two things: First, always wear gloves when you cut a hot pepper such as a habanero. Second, never rub your eyes when working with hot chili peppers.
- 11 Although chili peppers are prized above all for the flavor they add to food, they have other benefits as well. Pepper sprays have become a standard weapon for the personal protection of individuals and law-enforcement agencies. The New York Times reports that sales of pepper sprays have risen steadily and show no sign of slowing.
- 12 Chili peppers are also valued for their medicinal properties. According to Jack Challem, author of The Nutrition Reporter, there have been more than 1,300 medical studies on capsaicin, the active ingredient in peppers. Moderate doses have been proved to aid digestion, reduce hypertension, improve circulation, and help dissolve blood clots. Preliminary research by Professor Kenji Okajima at Japan's Kumamoto University School of Medicine suggests that a combination of chili peppers and soybeans can promote hair growth and might hold promise as a cure for baldness.
- 13 In closing, it's difficult to imagine our lives without the spice added by chili peppers. From their origins in South America to their current popularity around the world, peppers have been used not only to flavor our food but also to improve our health and personal safety. While it remains to be seen whether or not chili peppers can actually cure baldness, we can be sure this ancient plant will continue to find new uses in our modern age.