



SOME SUGGESTIONS ABOUT STORYTELLING

- Either “big stories” (really important experiences in our lives) or “little stories” (a casual encounter, observation of an everyday occurrence, weird habit, etc.) can work well in speeches if the crux of the story links easily to your main point. So much depends upon how you “index” the narrative material.
- Consider “zooming in” at some point in your story to a particular scene with descriptive details and actual dialogue. Often such scenes are introduced by the phrase “One day ...” – and you can see the audience spring to attention.
- Another good idea is to compare or contrast two brief vignettes. The “meaning” then lies in the space between the two.
- If your point is to focus on the tension between two perspectives, it can be very effective to tell the story from both angles.
- Not all stories require an intro, but most audiences appreciate some hint about the point of the story in advance. Then you can complete the circle by going back to that theme when the story is over. The more inherently interesting the story, the more possible it is to leave out the intro.
- One interesting structural variation is to tell part of the story, comment a bit, then tell the rest of the story. Interspersing narrative and analysis keeps the audience engaged.
- Include concrete details to increase “memorability” -- names, colors, sounds, time of day, etc.
- Often the most effective part of the speech involves your own reactions to your story (emotional or otherwise).
- It’s really important to find some way to involve the audience in your story or commentary. Make an effort to indicate (directly or indirectly) how this experience can have meaning for **them**.
- Your tone or attitude matters: tell your story because it’s important to you to make your point by sharing it, not out of some need to prove yourself more knowledgeable or experienced than your audience.
- While it’s OK to refer to notes for the commentary, try hard to tell your story note-free.
- Consider adding life to a pre-written speech by illustrating some point with a spontaneous, unscripted story. Make a note in the margin where the story is relevant.
- Avoid becoming overly emotional while telling your story by practicing it beforehand with friends.