

# Persuasive Speech Tips and Topics

## How to write a convincing speech for your public speaking class

Need some tips on how to write a persuasive speech for your public speaking class? Here's some tips on how to write a great speech and find persuasive speech topics.

Writing a persuasive speech can be one of the most difficult tasks in your public speaking class. For a persuasive speech to be effective, you have to accomplish a difficult task: persuasion! It's much easier to write an informative speech or ceremonial speech than it is to write and deliver an effective persuasive speech that changes someone's mind or behavior.

I've been teaching public speaking for a long time, and can offer you some helpful tips on how to get over your fear of public speaking and how to write great speeches for your public speaking class. Here are some tips to help you write a persuasive speech. Remember, your goal is effectiveness. You want to change people's minds and their behavior.

1. Find an appropriate and interesting persuasive speech topic. For many students, this is one of the most difficult parts of writing a persuasive speech. Here are some tips on how to choose a persuasive speaking topics. If you need more specific suggestions, here are some example persuasive speech topics, some fun persuasive speech topics about popular culture and sports, and some tired persuasive speaking topics to avoid.
2. Set realistic goals. Your speech is, what, eight minutes long? You're not going to change someone's mind about a major issue in eight minutes. You *might* change their mind about a smaller part of that issue. For example, you're not going to be change someone's mind about gun control, but you might change their mind about the need to restrict the use of a specific weapon. Here are some examples of how to take a "big" persuasive topic and make it more effective by discussing a smaller part of that topic.
3. Know your audience well. To be persuasive, you absolutely must identify with your audience and make your audience identify with you. This is so important, and yet many speakers don't try. Who are the members of your audience? What is important to them? Are they conservative? Liberal? Religious? Serious? Young? In order to write and deliver a speech that effectively persuades an audience, you need to understand who the audience is and what kinds of appeals might persuade them.
4. Use "local" examples. To help identify with the audience, use local examples that they can relate to. For example, if you're giving a speech about how big chain coffee shops cause small ones to go out of business, mention a popular coffee shop near campus that went out of business because they couldn't compete with the chains.
5. Use excellent evidence. Do your research, and pack your speech with lots of statistics, facts, quotes from credible people, and emotional examples. Remember, don't rely too strongly on examples as evidence. You can find an isolated example of just about anything.

6. Represent the other side accurately. When discussing the other side's point of view, make sure you are accurate. You need to accurately represent their motives and their point of view. If you are giving a pro-choice speech, do not imply that pro-life audience members do not care about the well-being of teen mothers. If you are giving a pro-life speech, do not imply that pro-choice audience members do not like children. People who disagree with you will feel alienated and stop listening.
7. Represent the other side sympathetically. This can be difficult to do, but it's so important! State clearly that although you disagree with the other side, you understand that people who disagree with you have good reasons for doing so. *Never* say or imply that people who disagree with you are immoral or unkind. If you insult someone, they certainly will not be persuaded.
8. Find common ground with the other side. The audience will identify with you if they understand that although you have different opinions, you have similar goals and values. They also might agree with you if you persuade them your point of view does not conflict with their values. For example, if you are giving a speech in favor of school dress codes, tell the audience that you share their concern about students and personal freedom. Then explain to them why you feel dress codes will actually increase student freedoms.
9. Use good disclaimers. "Disclaimers" are statements that present an argument against your position and explain why this argument is not correct. A good disclaimer goes like this: "I understand that many people support embryonic stem cell research because it can lead to medical breakthroughs. While this is true, let me explain to you how adult stem cells are also very promising." Remember, represent opposing views with accuracy and respect.
10. Ask the audience to take action-- and make it easy for them to do so. Hand out a petition for students to sign, or a self-addressed stamped envelopes to mail to someone. Make your action step as easy as possible, because most people are very busy and/or very lazy. If you ask them to do something like "call your Congressman," they won't.
11. Show the audience that you care very much about this topic. If the audience doesn't believe that you care, why should they?