

The Conclusion

A day is never ended without a sunset of some kind. If the sunset is captivating the entire day is often long remembered because of its impressive ending. A speech is much the same. It must have an ending and to be most successful the ending should be impressive.

The conclusion brings together all the thoughts, emotions, discussions, arguments, and feelings which the speaker has tried to communicate to his audience. The closing words should make a powerful emotional impression on the listeners, since in most cases logic alone is insufficient to move an audience to act or believe as the speaker suggests. Not only this, but the conclusion is the last opportunity to emphasize the point of the speech. It should be a natural culmination of all that has been spoken. It should not be weak, insipid remarks which are begun or ended just as the speaker starts a hesitating but very obvious journey towards his chair.

The conclusion should be, without exception, one of the most carefully prepared parts of a speech. Just when it should be prepared is largely a matter of opinion. Some authorities advise preparing it first because such a practice enables a speaker to point his talk toward a predetermined end. Other speakers suggest preparing the conclusion last because this procedure allows a person to draw his final words from the full draft of his speech. Regardless of when a conclusion is prepared, there is one point on which all authorities agree and it is that the conclusion must be carefully worded, carefully organized, carefully rehearsed and in most cases committed to memory or nearly so. The conclusion should be brief, generally not more than one-eighth to one-tenth of the entire speech, perhaps less, depending on the speech, the speaker, the audience, the occasion and the environment in which the speech is delivered. A conclusion should never bring in new material, since such an action requires a discussion of the new material which in turn unnecessarily prolongs the speech. Also the introduction of new material brings about an undesirable anticlimax and frequently irritates an audience because a speaker runs past a perfect place to stop.

When a speaker moves into his conclusion, it should be obvious that he is closing his remarks. His intentions should be so clear that he should not have to tell the audience what he is doing by saying, "In conclusion..."

The importance of the delivery of a conclusion cannot be overemphasized. The total organism, mind, body and soul, must be harmoniously at work. The eye contact should be direct, the gestures and actions appropriate, the posture alert, and the voice sincere, distinct and well articulated. The speaker's effort in delivering the conclusion may be likened to a foot racer who culminates an entire race in one great, last surge of power as he lunges toward the tape- and victory.

Now that you have been told what should be contained within a conclusion there remains one major question which is, "How do you actually go about attaining these ends, i.e., what methods should be used?"

There are numerous ways to develop a conclusion. Some of the better known are listed as follows:

1. Summary is a method often utilized in closing a speech. It is sometimes expressed by restatement of the speech title, of the purpose, of some specific phrase that has been used several times in the speech, by an apt quotation, either prose or poetry, which adroitly says what the speaker wishes to be said, or by any other means which tends to bring the

main point of the speech into final focus for the audience. An example of a very brief summary is contained in the following words which were once used by a speaker to summarize a speech against Hitler's aggression in Czechoslovakia:

Example: "Czechoslovakia will live again! The hordes of Hitler, the Huns of Europe, the intrigue of Berlin shall not swallow up this mighty and prideful people. They shall rise up and fight their horrible aggressor. Yes, Czechoslovakia will live again!"