

The Conclusion

The conclusion is the last thing your audience hears. It is your last chance to make sure they have gotten your main ideas. In addition, the conclusion contributes immeasurably to the final impression they have of you.

- The conclusion fulfills several key functions in a presentation:
 - 1. It reinforces your main ideas. This helps promote the audience's understanding and retention of your ideas.
 - 2. It offers a last impression of you, the presenter.
 - 3. It provides closure and lets the audience know the presentation is over.

Organizationally, the conclusion always consists of **first** a recap of the main ideas and **second** a power punch ending.

- The conclusion is about 10-15% of the total speech. For a 5-minute speech, that is about 30 seconds. For a 20-minute presentation, that is about 2 minutes
- Be sure to practice the conclusion as many times as the introduction. You definitely don't want to run out of steam at the end of the presentation.
- Deliver the conclusion in an enthusiastic, high-energy style. End the presentation with a bang and leave your listeners with the impression that you are a powerful, dynamic presenter.

- Techniques that will help provide a power punch ending:
 - 1. Recite or reword a familiar saying, slogan, proverb, or motto.
 - 2. Tell a story (or end a story begun earlier in the presentation.)
 - 3. Use a quotation. (Look at the final sentence of books and magazine articles for quick help.)
 - 4. Refer to something introduced earlier in the presentation, especially in the introduction. This suggests having come full circle and is a powerful indicator of completeness. Remember, if you cannot figure out how to get out, get out the same way you got in.

- 5. Tell your personal experience or involvement.
- 6. State your position or intention.
- 7. Complete a process or problem begun in the presentation.
- 8. Ask the audience to participate mentally (by imagining something) or physically (by a show of hands or by calling something out.)
- 9. Project the future.
- 10. Ask a really interesting rhetorical question.
- 11. Use an audio visual aid. (Especially if it illustrates your point or finishes a process.)
- 12. Stress common ground issues.

- Some things to avoid:
 - Don't run out of steam at the end of the presentation. Keep your energy level high right up to the last word. Sprint over the finish line.
 - Do not lower your voice during the conclusion. Do not gather your things while you are still delivering the conclusion. This suggests that you can't wait to be finished and don't really care about your presentation or your audience.
 - Don't rush off from the speaker's area when the presentation is over. Take your time and acknowledge the audience's applause with eye contact and a smile, if appropriate.

- Do not apologize for not having delivered the presentation you intended or the one they expected.
- Do not substitute a question and answer period for the conclusion. If you do conduct a question and answer period, do it after the conclusion, not in lieu of it.
- Do not conclude by saying "In conclusion..." It's trite.
- Do not conclude by saying, "Well, that's it."

- Remember that people tend to remember best how things begin and end.
- Final impressions are just as powerful as first impressions, maybe more.
- Make sure the conclusion contributes to the final impression you want to create.
- The time you spend preparing it and practicing it is a most worthwhile investment.