

Why Bookends Are Important to Every Speech

When you think of bookends, you probably think of the supports that people use on bookshelves to keep rows of books upright. In a speech, the “bookends”, as I like to think of them, are the beginning and ending of your speech. Your opening and conclusion are (arguably) the most vital parts of your speech.

The opening of your speech is when you should use an interesting hook to get your audience engaged. Here are some ideas to come up with hooks:

- Open with a quote, and make sure to give context about what it means.
 - Ex: “According to the great mathematician, scientist, and philosopher Billy Bob Joe, ‘blah blah blah..’. ”
- Start telling an interesting story, and bring your audience into the setting by telling them to imagine/picture ____ or that you wished they were there when ____ happened in _____. Make sure to include plenty of details!
 - Ex: Picture sitting on a small bench beside a serene, burbling river. The sun is shining, and the birds are singing. Suddenly, you hear thunder, and look up. A storm begins to brew.
- Ask rhetorical or relatable questions, like “What would happen if ____?” or “Have you ever ____?”
 - Ex: Have you ever thought about what would happen if humans kept throwing our waste into the oceans? Scientist ____ has, and our future looks bleak.
- Name an incredible or shocking statistic and explain its significance in the context of your topic.

- Ex: Did you know that ___% of the world's population has no access to fresh water or nutritious food, but that meanwhile we waste ___tons of food yearly in the United States?
- Surprise your audience in some way.
 - Ex: One night when I was in bed, the summer of 2014, it felt like any other night. I peacefully began to drift off, when suddenly, BAM BAM BAM!!! By the sound of it, several things had just crashed in the attic, only feet above my head! My heart raced. Was an intruder poking around?

Dive deeper into a short preview of your speech, just enough to hold their attention, and then begin telling them the actual content of your body. Your opening should ensure that your audience will pay attention for the rest of the speech. Even if they daydream, your opening should provide them with an idea to stay in their mind for as long as it takes to get to the end of your speech.

Your body is extremely important as well, of course- it's when you'll tell them all the information your speech is meant to deliver! However, it will not be the focus of today's post.

The closing of your speech finally gives you a chance to make a lasting impression. Over the course of your speech, your audience may have a tough time recalling something that they heard a few minutes ago for the first time. Even if someone's mind wanders during the body of your speech, your conclusion should quickly summarize everything that you already said succinctly, so that they get the gist of your speech anyway, and so that people who were paying attention get a quick refresher.

Make sure to return to what you said at the beginning!! Any morals or takeaways or call to action from your story or just your topic should be expressed as well, just to wrap it all up. Try to use concluding words like the following:

- In the end, ____
- In conclusion, ____
- To summarize/To conclude, ____
- All in all, ____
- And remember, always ____.
- I hope that you enjoyed my speech and that (insert what you want them to take away from your speech)...so that (insert a benefit)
- (If it's a story):
 - And finally, ____, and they all lived happily ever after, forever ____.
 - In the end, ____ never did ____, but we were all ____ to ____.
- Here's what I would like you to do... (call to action)

As you can see, the opening and conclusion is extremely important to your audience's impression of your speech as well as what they take away from it when it's all over. A strong opening and a solid conclusion are sure to win your audience over! Use some of these tips next time you are writing a presentation for class to give your speech an extra boost.