



Finding the Right Words: A simple speech-writing cheat sheet

No matter how much time you have to present...it's never enough.

How do you fit a lifetime's worth of knowledge, insight and ideas into a memorable and easy-to-digest package that will spur the audience to action?

This cheat sheet will give you a simple, all-purpose template that will consistently get your point across but is flexible enough to let your creativity to shine through.

Let's start by dealing with that buzzing cloud of ideas, questions and self-judgment that keeps pulling you off track. **Grab a piece of paper and write (or mind map, or doodle) every thought that comes into your head.** Set a timer for 10 minutes, and keep going until the time is up. Don't be shy, and don't hold back. Get it all out.



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CONTINUED

When you look at the notes you just made, you may see some themes emerging. Go ahead and make a note of those, and let's start giving your ideas some structure.

Writing a speech is like any other problem-solving process: you look at where you are; you think about where you want to go; and you make a plan to get there.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM YOU WANT TO SOLVE?

WHAT'S YOUR SOLUTION?



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CONTINUED

WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Paint a picture of it with your words. While you're at it, grab some markers and paint an ACTUAL picture in bright colours.



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CONTINUED

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR AUDIENCE, AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROBLEM AND THE
SOLUTION:

WHAT'S THE #1 THING YOU WANT THE AUDIENCE TO DO
AFTER YOUR SPEECH? (Make it pithy. Make it
memorable. Make it SING.)

**You're going to work backwards from here. Everything in your
speech should funnel the audience towards this outcome. Anything
that doesn't? CUT IT.**



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CONTINUED

**WHAT DOES THE AUDIENCE NEED TO KNOW, BELIEVE AND/OR FEEL
BEFORE THEY'LL DO THAT THING?**

Do you need to show them WHY to act?

OR

Are they looking for advice on HOW to act?

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CONTINUED

Got it? Great! Let's put it together in a clear structure.

INTRO: Catch their attention with a story, quote, thought-provoking question or unexpected statement. Tell them what problem you're trying to solve. Briefly state that #1 thing you want them to take away.

KEY INFORMATION: Help them understand the problem and its solution. What caused it? What are its (present and future) consequences? Who is affected?

A BETTER ALTERNATIVE: Contrast the current situation with the change that could result from your solution. Give the audience something to believe in!

CALL TO ACTION: Give the audience something specific that they can do right away. It might be simple (if you're just getting them to believe in WHY they should help) or ambitious (if they're already fired up and wondering HOW they can help).

CONCLUSION: Remind the audience what's at stake. Re-state your call to action. End with an inspiring vision of what they can achieve.