Outlining in Speeches (UW-La Crosse Public Speaking Center)

Most professional and classroom presentations require speakers to develop speech outlines.

Here are some ideas for developing effective outlines:

Functions of outlines

- A blueprint or road map of a speech
- Shows connections between ideas
- Provides structure for speaker and audience

Types of outlines

- **Full sentence preparation outline**
  - All main points and subpoints in a speech
  - Includes examples, research, and transitions written out
  - Developed as a full draft of the speech (everything in the speech is written out

- **Key word speaking outline**
  - Created from the full sentence outline
    - Uses key words and phrases
    - Includes source citations from research
  - May be transferred to notecards
  - Might include delivery cues/notes for a speaker
    - Slow down, smile, breathe!
    - You are doing great!

Some instructors have very specific outlining formats, might use different terminology than the book, or limit the number of words or notecards allowed. Please refer to your assignment sheet for more details.

Incorporate principles of effective outlining

- **Subordination**: Speeches have "a hierarchy of ideas" (p. 143)
  - Main points are more important than subpoints
  - Use indentation to show subordination

- **Coordination**: All ideas at the same level have the same importance
  - All main points are of equal value in terms of time, support, and development in your speech
  - Consider coordination when developing the speech

- **Division**: any time a main point has a subpoint, there must be two or more subpoints
  - If not, revise speech to include an additional subpoint or eliminate subpoint
  - Include additional examples so each main point has enough support

Tips for developing effective outlines

- Practice with key word outline (as opposed to practicing with a full sentence outline)

- Use automatic outlining function on Word programs
  - Using the space bar or creating your own outline can create inconsistent outlines
  - Automatic outlining can create a clean and consistent outline

- Be consistent with outline format
  - Use all key words or full sentences for your information
  - Check outline before submitting it

- If available, use instructor resources for specific formatting for the assignment