



*from the glovebox of Donna Morgan
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Public speaking is viewed by many as a difficult road to travel. The directions below may make the journey from thought to spoken word a little more pleasant for all who travel the communication highway.

KNOW YOUR DESTINATION. What do you really want to communicate? Keep your specific objectives in mind as you plan. The main function of a speech is communication not performance. Be sincere and be yourself.

GET TO KNOW YOUR PASSENGERS. Educate yourself about your audience. What are their interests? What is the general age of the group? Are members mainly men, women, boys or girls? Put yourself in your audience's place and speak to them in their terms.

PLAN YOUR ROUTE. Give your speech a sturdy structure. The most frequently used structure has three basic parts:

Opening: contains an attention-getter for the audience; gives them a preview of what is to come; lets them know where you stand on the topic.

Body: usually has three main points with supporting information; makes clear transitions between the main points.

Conclusion: usually begins with "in conclusion"; summarizes speech, particularly the three main points; tells the audience what you want them to do, if you want some action taken; connects with the opening to frame your speech.

TUNE UP YOUR VEHICLE. Give yourself time to practice your speech. Practice out loud in front of a mirror then in front of a friend who can provide advice and criticism. Try tape recording yourself to see if you need to speed up or slow down. Simplify parts of the speech that seem too complex. Focus on what might prevent you from communicating your message clearly.

Above all, don't memorize your entire speech and don't plan to read it. Use notes and an outline to help you stay on track. Memorize only particularly good phrases or examples that you don't want to lose.

WATCH FOR ROAD HAZARDS. Learn all you can about where you will present your speech. Visit the site if possible. Find out if the setting will be formal or informal. Will you be at a table up front? Will you speak from a podium? Will you have a microphone? At what point on the agenda you will speak? Will the audience be ready for a break or lunch?

FOLLOW THE SPEED LIMIT AND OTHER DRIVING RULES. Help the audience absorb your message by speaking slowly and clearly. Use pauses, facial expressions and hand gestures to mark important points. Look at various individuals in the audience and speak in a respectful, conversational tone. Remember you are there to help your audience understand your topic.

