

Enticing Hooks

script

The judges are ready – the timer is ready. You take a deep breath and dive in to your piece. Those first few sentences can make all the difference. Will your audience react with a yawn, or sit up a little straighter and lean towards you anticipating an interesting speech? If you can reel them in with an enticing hook right from the start, you will be on the way to successful communication.

1. Start with a smile

-a joke

-an amusing personal story – best audience responses if story

is funny or embarrassing

Even if subject matter is heavy, a lighthearted introduction creates real

rapport with your audience.

1. Go for the drama
2. a shocking statistic
3. In his fine book *As I Was Saying*, former NCFCAer Thane Rehn suggests, “Instead of opening with, “Today I would like to talk about crime,” it is far more interesting to begin by telling the audience, “By the time I finish this sentence, another person in America will be murdered.””\*

This kind of opening will shock people out of their complacency.

1. The website *Six Minutes* offers this example based on *index card wisdom* by Jessica Hagy:

Suppose you were delivering a speech to raise awareness in your community about school security. How would you **open your speech?**

“*I’m going to talk to you today about security in our schools…*”

“*School security is an important issue that we must deal with…*”

Both openings are direct, to-the-point, and boring! What if there was a

better way?

Imagine opening your speech with the following lines:

Tobacco. [long pause]

Alcohol. [long pause]

Guns. [long pause]

Criminal items seized in a search [slight pause] of a 6th grade locker in

a bad school district.

Ms. Hagy lists 6 different tools employed to make this opening work so well:

-Employs a classical technique: the rule of three.

Andrew Dlugan in How to Use the Rule of Three in Your

Speeches writes:

“The rule of three is a powerful speechwriting technique that you learn, practice, and master…it allows you to express concepts more completely, emphasize your points, and increase the memorability of your message.”

Here are some examples of famous groups of 3:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Gold, frankincense and myrrh

Truth, Justice, and the American Way (Superman)

Three Little Pigs

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite (French motto)

Stop, Drop, and Roll

Government of the people, by the people, for the people

Veni, vidi, vici

-Uses **alliteration** (3 of the same letter) -“**S**eized in a **s**earch of a

**s**ixth…”

-**Pauses** after the three opening words **add drama**.

**-Drama also created** because the danger increases with each item (i.e.

guns are more dangerous than alcohol and tobacco)

-Mid-sentence pause after “search” **signals an important statement**

coming up.

-Audience thinks these items were seized from some criminal hideout,

and then **surprised to learn** they were found in a school locker.

All this in just 19 words!

III Go with a few well-chosen words

1. Begin with a sharp, clear statement

Let your audience know in a concise way what the main idea of your speech will be. Don’t overwhelm people with a rushing river of rapid words.

1. Use a relevant quote

Famous or inspirational words from historical figures or current celebrities can be powerful – but keep them short. Too much will cause confusion and loss of interest.

1. Use popular song lyrics

These can surprise the audience when used in ways that can support

or sum up your speech.

1. Use a proverb – folk sayings, old wives’ tales, or words of wisdom

can provide a meaningful bridge to your speech.

Mr. Dlugan encourages speechwriters to add a new twist by

converting statements into questions or vice versa, or tweaking a

word or two:

Does a stitch in time save nine?

Why can’t you teach an old dog new tricks?

A meaningful pause after the well-chosen words lets their meaning sink in

IV Use misdirection

Let the audience think you are heading in one direction – then surprise

them by revealing your true mission.

Thane Rehn gives us a great example of this in *As I Was Saying:*

*“I am in love with a woman who is six hundred years old. You may think that is crazy, but you might just fall for her too when you see her smile. I’m not the only one, because this lady has been admired by everyone from Lousi XIV to Napoleon. Her name is the Mona Lisa.”*

That is certainly more interesting than “Today, I’d like to talk about the

Mona Lisa.”

Last year, one of our competitors used this same idea in her speech. She

started out with:

*“I remember the first time I met him. It was at a debate*

*tournament. His name kept popping up…”*

She went onto describe how

she became familiar with Frederic Bastiat – a French economist from

the 1800’s – not a modern boyfriend!

A persuasive speech on Clutter Control two years ago opened with a

declaration that America really needed to slim down:

*We have a problem.  It is a problem that has been growing steadily for the last few decades – and I mean growing – literally!  Yes, it is one of excess.  We need to shed some pounds.  From 1970 – 2005 we have grown 55 percent – and we are showing no signs of stopping!*

As the speaker described this crisis some members of the audience

looked visibly uncomfortable. However, when the speaker continued with:

*The fact is: Americans need to lose weight (pause) - in clutter.  We need to put our homes on diets and battle the bulge!  The stakes are high – our time management, our mental health, and even our relationship with God!*

…people relaxed and chuckled at how they had been misled.

Now let’s take a minute and talk specifically about interps.

Everything we talked about so far can be used for a platform or interp introduction. However, an interp has some special considerations which we will talk about now.

I A. An interp intro may need to set the scene for the listener.

If the speaker is doing a complete book (a children’s for example), this is not so critical. But if the interp is only part of a book – condensed or a few chapters, using the intro to explain what is going on is critical. Confusing interps are quite commonplace – don’t let this happen to your interp! Make sure you use the 150 word intro to clear up anything that might make your selection unclear.

II B. An interp intro may need to explain why this piece is important or relevant

to today

While platform speakers can explain their motivation for choosing a topic at any point in their speech, the intro is the only opportunity for the interp speaker to address this issue.

III C. An interp allows for some extra creativity in the opening

Several years ago, two of our members did a Duo on Dr. Seuss’ *Oh The Places You’ll Go*. As there was no need to set a scene for this book, the girls had a creative opening. One was a GPS (low to the ground) in front of the other who pretended to be driving. The GPS guided the driver away from things like disastrous decisions or bad mates, and towards great careers, and happiness. They then went on to say that navigating life can be tricky and led into the start of the book. This was a very effective attention grabber.

So, I hope you’ll see how important these first few seconds of your piece can be. They are worth some special thought and brainstorming!