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Oral Presentations: Organizing Your Presentation*

Outline three to five main points that will help you meet your objective in giving the presentation. You can write an outline in words and phrases or in complete sentences, but it is best to favor short phrases over complete sentences. Be sure to include appropriate supporting material (statistics examples, anecdotes, jokes, expert opinions, quotations, etc.). Outlining your points will:

- help you to see key words easier
- let you add to your notes at the last minute without crowding
- allow your speech to flow more naturally

Choose the organizational pattern that best suits your objectives. Some common organizational patterns include:

- **Topical** (moves from idea to idea, theme to theme, etc.)
- **Chronological** (uses time sequences for a framework)
- **Classification** (presents information according to discrete categories)
- **Problem/Solution** (presents a problem with one or more solutions to it)
- **Cause/Effect** (a popular and specific version of the problem/solution model)

Don't forget to frame your presentation with both a discernible **introduction and conclusion**.

- The **introduction** should:
 - a. get the audience's attention
 - b. present your topic in a clear and compelling fashion
 - c. show the topic's importance, relevance, or interest
 - d. forecast the main appoints or major ideas of your presentation
- The **conclusion** should:
 - a. inform the audience that you're about to close
 - b. summarize the main points of your presentation
 - c. leave the audience with an idea or concept to remember or to ponder

* Adapted from the Virtual Presentation Assistant of the Department of Communication, University of Kansas.