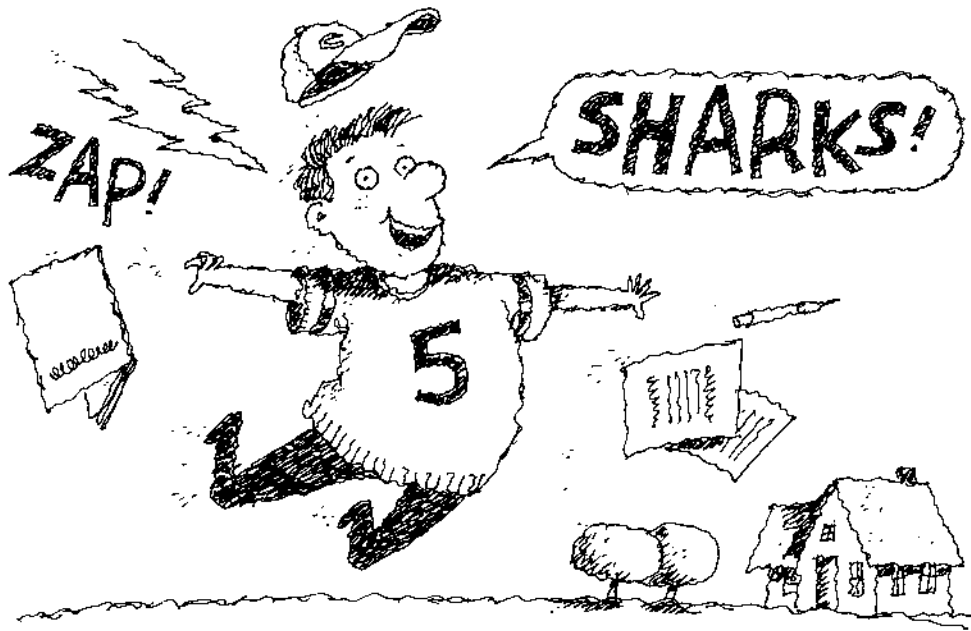


# Steps to the Perfect Speech Topic

Great speeches start with great ideas. Once in a while, you'll be lucky enough to have a great idea for a speech just pop into your head. Here's a plan for the other 99 percent of the time.



**1.**

**Brainstorm!** This means letting your mind go free, and recording every idea that occurs to you. Don't play "critic." At this stage, there are no bad ideas. The whole goal is to fill the page. For now, think quantity, not quality. So go ahead: Grab a piece of paper and start brainstorming speech topics. When you're done, proceed to Step 2.

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2.

Congratulations! You've got a page full of ideas. Only...you may now think that some of them aren't so great. But don't worry: This is not a problem. Because now, you're going to carefully consider each idea, saving the ones that have the potential to make good speech topics and tossing out the "rejects." The following questions should help you decide which ones to keep.

**Is this topic of great interest to me?** The more you care about your topic, the more your audience will care about it, and the more attentive they'll be. Also, it's much more enjoyable to research and write about a topic that means a lot to you.

**Is this topic of interest to the audience?** If you're the only one who cares about it, it's going to be hard to keep your listeners tuned in. If you're not sure about your audience's feelings on the topic, ask your classmates.

**Can this topic be researched?** You might have a great idea for a speech, but if you can't locate reliable sources of information on the subject, you won't have much to talk about.

**Is this topic too broad, too narrow, or just right?** Picking a topic that's too broad—like the history of the world—is a lot like ordering an entire extra-large pizza all for yourself: There's no way you'll get through the whole thing. At the other extreme, a narrow topic like "my right pinky toenail" just doesn't offer enough substance to be satisfying. The trick is to choose a topic that's big enough to hold your audience's attention but not so vast that you can't cover it in three to five minutes.

3.

Sometimes a third step is required on the road to a perfect topic. For instance, you might have what you believe to be an excellent idea—let's say it's horses—but it's just too extensive a field to cover in a single speech. The solution: Build a web. Put the word horses in a circle in the middle, and draw lines radiating from it. At the end of each line, write something that relates to horses—such as saddles, English-style riding, Western-style riding, competitions, and horseshoes. Now you've got five topics where you once had one—and each is more manageable than the original. If you find that these new topics are still too big, no problem: Just start another web with one of the new topics in the middle. Continue the process until you've got "the perfect topic!"

