The Speaker's Map Guide

The Complete System, Step by Step

Once you have learned The Speaker's Map System, you can use this Guide and the four worksheets to prepare future presentations without returning to the teaching chapters. Begin with Step One, even if you have spoken on the Topic before.

Here is what each step accomplishes:

1. **Presentation Analysis.** Establish the Preliminary Goal, consider the audience and speaking situation, and decide what that information means for this presentation.
2. **Funnel to a Clear Theme.** Brainstorm, eliminate ideas, explore possible directions, and review the entire Funnel before selecting the Theme.
3. **Main Point Worksheet.** Confirm the Goal and develop the Presentation Theme. Choose a Category—the kind of Main Points needed, such as Reasons Why, Steps, or Benefits. Brainstorm, eliminate, group related ideas, and use the groups to develop Main Points and possible Support.
4. **Create the Speaker's Map.** Order the Main Points, develop the Support, and add the Introduction, Transitions, and Conclusion. Put key-word cues on the Map as you go.

Once the Map is complete, practice from it, speak from it, and save the worksheets and Map for next time.

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Step One: Presentation Analysis

1. Identify Your Preliminary Goal

At the top of the Presentation Analysis Worksheet, complete the sentence:

After my presentation, the audience will:

State what you want people to know, understand, decide, or do. Be specific. If you write "gain support," ask what that means. Do you want the audience to agree, give permission, participate, or take another action? This is your Preliminary Goal. It may be right as it stands, or you may adjust it as you learn more about the audience and situation.

2. Complete the Information and Significance Columns

Work across the worksheet one row at a time.

Information: Write what you know or believe to be true about the audience and speaking situation.

Significance: Ask yourself, *What does this mean for this presentation?* Write your answer in the Significance column. This helps you decide what to include, leave out, or emphasize.

If a question does not apply, use a dash in both columns. If the information has no effect on the presentation, put a dash in the Significance column.

Question 3 is the Central Question:

What does this audience want or need to know in order for me to reach my Goal?

Keep this question in mind throughout preparation. It helps you decide what the audience needs, rather than simply using everything you know about the Topic.

For Question 6, consider anything unusual about the situation—for example, whether someone will need to explain your message to people who are not present.

3. Review the Preliminary Goal

Look at the Goal alongside your Significance answers. Does it still fit the audience and situation? You may need a more specific action, a smaller request, or additional information before asking for a decision. **Change the Goal only if needed.** You will confirm it in Step Three.

Step Two: Funnel to a Clear Theme

The Funnel helps you move from a broad Topic to the one main idea this audience needs to understand or accept. It also helps you decide what does not belong in this presentation.

1. Begin Broadly

Write the Topic at the top of the Funneling Worksheet. For about 30 to 45 seconds, brainstorm anything related to it—ideas, questions, examples, concerns, or directions. Write without stopping to judge or organize. If you get stuck, repeat the last word or phrase until another idea comes to mind.

2. Narrow the Possibilities

Cross out ideas that do not belong or do not fit this audience and Goal. From what remains, underline three strong possibilities. Consider what you learned in Presentation Analysis; circle one to carry forward and write it as the Topic for the next section. You are choosing a direction, not the final Theme.

3. Continue Through the Funnel

Brainstorm again from that narrower Topic. In the first three sections, cross out what does not belong, underline three possibilities, and circle one to carry forward. In the final section, brainstorm without circling another idea. Continue to the bottom even if an earlier idea seems right.

4. Select the Theme

Brainstorm in the final section, then **look back over the entire Funnel**, not just the bottom. Consider the audience, Goal, and time available. Ask:

What is the one main idea this audience needs to understand or accept for me to reach my Goal?

The Theme may come from any part of the Funnel. The narrowest idea is not automatically best. State the Theme in a sentence or short phrase and write it in the box at the bottom of the worksheet.

Step Three: Main Point Worksheet

This worksheet turns your Theme into Main Points and possible Support. Keep the completed Presentation Analysis and Funneling Worksheets nearby.

Part One: Complete the Focus Statement

The **Focus Statement** brings together the Goal, Presentation Theme, and Category. It directs your planning; it is not a sentence you will read to the audience.

1. **Confirm Your Goal.** Reconsider the Preliminary Goal alongside the Theme you selected. Keep it if it still fits, or make it more specific. Write the Goal in the Focus Statement.
2. **Complete the Presentation Theme.** Decide whether you are primarily informing or persuading the audience, and check the appropriate box. Use the Theme from your Funnel, refining it if needed, to complete "To inform the audience…" or "To persuade the audience…"

The completed Presentation Theme states what the audience needs to understand or accept for you to reach your Goal.

3. **Choose a Category.** Look at your Presentation Theme and ask: **What kind of information do I need to develop this message?**

The answer becomes your Category. For example, you might need Reasons Why, Steps, or Benefits. The Category guides your brainstorming and tells you what kind of Main Points to develop.

More than one Category may fit. Choose the one that gives you the clearest direction. Then check that the Goal, Presentation Theme, and Category work together.

Part Two: Brainstorm and Eliminate

4. **Brainstorm from the Category.** Write ideas without deciding yet which will become Main Points. If your Category is Reasons Why, brainstorm reasons; if it is Steps, brainstorm steps. Do not organize as you write.
5. **Eliminate What Does Not Belong.** Ask: **Does this idea belong under my Category?** Cross out ideas that do not fit and repetitions you do not need. The remaining ideas are what you will group. An idea left out may still be useful in another presentation.

Part Three: Develop the Main Points

6. **Group Related Ideas.** Most presentations will have three Main Points. Look at the ideas that remain. Which ones seem to belong together? Put a 1 beside the ideas in one group, a 2 beside another, and a 3 beside a third. These groups will help you develop your Main Points.
7. **Develop the Main Points.** Move the ideas numbered 1 into the first box at the bottom of the Main Point Worksheet, those numbered 2 into the second, and those numbered 3 into the third. Look at each group. What larger point do those ideas make together? State it as a reason, benefit, step, or whatever your Category calls for. Write it on the Main Point line above the related ideas.
8. **Check the Main Points.** Each should fit the Category, develop the Presentation Theme, and help you reach the Goal. Revise any point that does not fit.
9. **Review Possible Support.** The ideas beneath each Main Point are possible Support. Keep those that may help explain or support the point and set aside what does not. In Step Four, you'll choose and develop the Support the audience needs under each Main Point so you can reach your Goal.

If something does not fit: If your material no longer fits the Category, check the Presentation Theme first. If that still works, choose a better Category. If not, refine the Presentation Theme and then choose the Category. Review your existing ideas before brainstorming again.

When You Already Have More Information Than You Can Use: Sometimes you begin with a report, binder, or existing slide deck containing more information than you can use in one presentation.

Rather than trying to include everything, begin by eliminating what does not belong and grouping what remains. The groups may help you see the larger ideas and clarify your Theme and Category.

Once the Theme and Category are clear, use the groups to develop the Main Points. Then check them against the Focus Statement to make sure all the pieces fit together.

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Step Four: Create the Speaker's Map

Use the one-page Speaker's Map to organize your presentation. **Keep the complete Focus Statement at the top as a reference. Use key words for the ideas you will speak from, not complete sentences.**

1. **Transfer the Focus Statement.** Copy the completed Focus Statement from the Main Point Worksheet to the top of your Map, including the Goal, Presentation Theme, and Category. Mark the appropriate Inform/Persuade choice.
2. **Order the Main Points.** Decide what the audience needs first and what should follow. Steps may have an obvious sequence; otherwise choose the order easiest to understand. Add each Main Point to the Body using enough key words to remind you of the complete thought.
3. **Develop the Support.** Work out the explanations, facts, examples, comparisons, or stories that make each Main Point clear and convincing. Then put brief key-word reminders beneath that Main Point on the Map.
4. **Mark Visuals.** Decide whether slides or other visuals will help make a point. Do this after organizing the message, not before. Number the visuals and write each number on the Map beside the Support where you plan to use it. Not every point needs a visual.
5. **Develop the Introduction after the Body.** It has three parts:
   - **Attention Getter:** A question, fact, story, or direct reference to the situation that gives people a reason to listen. Write key words; the first few words may be written out if helpful.
   - **Theme:** State the central idea of the presentation. The wording may differ from the Presentation Theme in the Focus Statement, but the meaning should stay the same.
   - **Overview:** Briefly tell listeners the Main Points in the order you will cover them.
6. **Add Transitions.** Transitions help listeners follow the movement from one Main Point to the next. The wording will often come naturally as you practice. Add a few key-word cues to the Map when needed.
7. **Develop the Conclusion.** It has three parts:
   - **Recap:** Briefly remind listeners of the Main Points.
   - **Theme:** Remind the audience of the central idea you want them to remember or accept.
   - **Closing Statement:** Leave listeners with the final thought or action. If persuading, make the request specific; if informing, reinforce what matters most. Do not introduce new information.

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8. **Review the Whole Map.** Check the order of Main Points, usefulness of Support, placement of visuals, and consistency of Introduction and Conclusion with the Theme. Can you find the next idea at a glance? If a cue does not bring back the thought, change it. If the Map is crowded, simplify it. If developing the Support shows that a Main Point needs revision, change the full statement on your Main Point Worksheet, check it against the Focus Statement, and then update the key words on the Map. Keep a clear copy for practice and speaking.

Practice from the Speaker's Map

The Map contains reminders, not everything you will say. Practice to become familiar with the ideas and comfortable using the Map—not to memorize a fixed presentation.

1. **Look at the whole Map.** Follow the Introduction, Main Points and Support, Transitions, and Conclusion. Make sure the organization is clear and each cue brings the idea back to you.
2. **Practice in sections.** Talk through each Main Point and its Support in your own words. Practice the Introduction and Conclusion separately. It may help to know the first few words of your Introduction. Practice moving from one Main Point to the next. If a cue doesn't bring an idea back to you, replace it with clearer key words.
3. **Put it together and time it.** Talk through the presentation once or twice. Use visuals at their marked places. If it is too long or does not flow, revise the Map and Support rather than speaking faster.
4. **Fine-tune delivery.** Recording yourself can help you notice what is getting in the way. Listen first for whether the message is clear and easy to follow. Then listen for habits such as speaking too quickly, speaking too softly, or filling the space between thoughts with "um," "uh," or "you know." Choose one or two things to work on rather than trying to correct everything at once.

When practicing, don't try to get the words to come out exactly the same way every time.

Think about telling the same vacation story to several different people. You know what happened, which parts matter, and what you want the listener to understand. But you probably wouldn't use exactly the same words each time.

Speaking from the Speaker's Map works the same way. The Theme, Main Points, Support, and basic structure remain the same, but the wording may change. That doesn't mean you're unprepared. It means you're thinking about what you want to communicate instead of trying to remember exact wording.

The purpose of practice is to know the ideas well enough to express them naturally when you speak.

Deliver from the Speaker's Map

1. **Before you speak.** Notice your feet on the floor and the room around you. Look at the audience, pause, and begin with the Attention Getter, then the Theme and Overview.
2. **Make it a single conversation.** Look at one person long enough to complete a thought, then look at another. Glance at the Map when you need a cue and return your attention to listeners. You are not reading from the Map.
3. **Take Your Time.** Instead of filling the silence with "um" or "uh," pause and find the next thought. Let your hands and movement be natural. If you rush, mark S-L-O-W on the Map. If you are nervous, notice it and return your attention to the audience and message.
4. **Keep visuals in their place.** A slide should support one point, not compete for attention. Use key words when possible. When showing a chart, photo, or graph, tell the audience what to notice and give them time to look. Do not talk to the screen or rely on slides as your notes.
5. **Answer questions directly.** Listen, pause, and ask: **What is the Main Point I want to make?** State it, give the Support the listener needs, and stop. If you do not know, say so and follow up when appropriate. Be clear. Be concise. Be quiet.
6. **Adjust and finish clearly.** If you lose your place, glance at the Map and continue. If time is cut, leave out less important Support or, when necessary, a Main Point. Do not rush. End with your planned Recap, Theme, and Closing Statement. Then stop.

When the Situation Calls for a Different Approach

If a Script Is Required: Occasionally, you may have to use exact wording, such as when delivering an official statement or formal announcement.

Even then, begin with The Speaker's Map System. Decide what the audience needs to understand and organize the message before writing the script.

Make the script easy to use while speaking. Use large type, short paragraphs, and plenty of space so you can find your place quickly.

Practice looking up at the audience and returning to the script without losing your place. Even when the words must be exact, you want to sound as though you're talking to the audience, not simply reading to them.

If You Are Presenting as a Team: A team presentation should feel like one presentation, not several separate talks put together.

Begin with one Speaker's Map for the entire presentation. This keeps everyone working toward the same Goal and Theme and helps make sure the individual sections fit together.

Each speaker may also develop a separate Map for their part. Decide ahead of time how one speaker will finish and the next will begin, so the audience can follow the presentation without interruption.

If called on without preparation: Before you speak, pause to decide the Main Point you want to make and what you want the listener to understand or do. Then explain your idea naturally, in your own words, giving the listener what they need to understand it, and stop.

If presenting online: Keep the Map near the camera where you can glance at it without losing contact with your audience.

Use the Speaker's Map Again

1. **Start with the worksheets.** For a new Topic, begin with blank worksheets. If you've presented on the Topic before, take out the worksheets and Map you saved.

Begin with Presentation Analysis: Has the audience, Goal, time, or speaking situation changed? Review Information and Significance, and ask the Central Question again: **What does this audience want or need to know in order for me to reach my Goal?**

2. **Keep what fits and change what does not.** Review the Theme, Category, Main Points, and Support. A different audience may need different examples, more background, or less detail. If the direction has changed, return to the Funnel. Revise the Map and practice from the new version.

3. **Learn from the presentation.** After speaking, complete the Post-Presentation Evaluation in Resources. Record what worked and what you would adjust in the organization, Support, timing, or delivery. Save it with the worksheets and Map so the work is available next time.

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