



Researching and Presenting

Level 3 Project



Table of Contents

3	Researching and Presenting
4	Part 1: Get Started
5	Introduction and Assignment
6	Learning in Researching and Presenting
7	Part 2: Researching a Topic
7	Selecting a Topic
9	Choose Credible Sources
11	Interview an Expert
13	Citing Sources
15	Part 3: Organizing a Speech
15	Organizational Structures
18	Part 4: Plan Your Presentation
19	Review and Apply
20	Complete Your Assignment
21	Evaluation Criteria
22	Part 5: Demonstrate Your Learning
23	Complete Your Project
24	Before You Move On

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL
toastmasters.org

©2016 Toastmasters International. All rights reserved. Toastmasters International, the Toastmasters International logo, and all other Toastmasters International trademarks and copyrights are the sole property of Toastmasters International and may be used only with permission.

Item 8321 Rev. 12/2023

Researching and Presenting

About Researching and Presenting

In this project, you will learn strategies for choosing a topic and selecting the most reliable sources for research. You will study options for producing a well-organized speech using a variety of organizational structures. You will find a brief review of methods for citing research and a section to help you examine your transitions between sections of your speech to make sure they are smooth and effective.

Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

Project Checklist

Evaluation Resource

Research Worksheet

Speech Outline Worksheet

Part 1: Get Started

Introduction

In Part 1, you will find an introduction to the value of effective research and selecting a topic that fulfills your goal and engages your audience.

Complete Know-Wonder-Learned

This activity will support you in considering what you already know about researching a topic, how much you understand about the need to define a purpose for a speech, and what you wonder about crafting a speech that is well-researched and effectively presented.

Topic Selection

The first step in writing any speech is selecting a topic. In this project, you will look at effective methods for narrowing and broadening a topic so that it can be researched effectively and help you organize your speech content to engage an audience.

Introduction and Assignment

Introduction

As a Toastmaster, you will give many speeches. Assignments are always provided, but choosing the topic is often up to you. Once you select a topic that interests you, your job is to sift through information, find sources that are relevant, and structure them into an engaging speech.

Your Assignment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to learn or review basic research methods and present a well-organized, well-researched speech on any topic.

Overview: Select a topic that you are not already familiar with or that you wish to learn more about. Be sure your topic is narrow enough to be an effective 5- to 7-minute speech. Research the topic and begin organizing the information, as described in this project. Practice your speech and continue to refine its organization. Present your speech at a club meeting.

Your speech can be persuasive, humorous, informational, or crafted in any style that appeals to you and supports your speech content.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



Weblink: Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist.

Learning in Researching and Presenting



Assess and Reflect

To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

Know

For example: I know how to research unfamiliar topics and cite my research sources.

Wonder

For example: I wonder how to organize an effective presentation.

Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Research and present an unfamiliar topic.
- Organize the speech clearly to maximize audience understanding.
- Craft clear and engaging transitions between main sections of your speech.
- Use and cite credible sources to support speech content.
- Create and provide a thorough source list for audience members.

Part 2: Researching a Topic

Selecting a Topic

In Part 2, you will find a review of methods for selecting a topic that interests you, can be researched, and will engage your audience.

Locating Credible Sources

There are topics that have a wide variety of research sources available and others that have a very narrow selection. Whatever your topic, you will need to select sources that are reliable, that you are willing to share with your audience, and that will help audience members do their own research if they choose to do so.

Cite Your Sources

Wherever you collect your research—online, a library, and/or through communication with an expert—you must cite your sources well.

Selecting a Topic

When choosing a speech topic, think about your goals for the project. For instance, you're tasked with delivering a 5- to 7-minute speech. You may have a passion for tropical fish, and you want to learn more and share your knowledge. Be sure your topic is narrow enough to fit the speech length. Too much information or too little can cause your speech to seem disorganized or overly broad. In this example, it might be more effective to focus on a single type of fish.

Your hobbies, personal interests, or family life can provide numerous speech topics. If you are knowledgeable about a particular topic, give a presentation about an aspect that interests you most. Speeches can be opportunities to satisfy your curiosity and learn more about a topic of interest.

Use the Research and Speech Outline worksheets included in this project to help organize your ideas and sources.



Watch a video on Base Camp to learn more.

Selecting a Topic—When you begin your research, you may change your topic a few times before you find the best fit for your speech.

Choose a Method

Research is the collection and analysis of information that pertains to your topic. The ways to research are as many as there are people who research, but there are a few points to keep in mind.

Consider Your Timeframe

Start by considering what you can cover in a 5- to 7-minute speech. You may choose to select a small portion of your research around which to organize your speech, or you may limit the scope of your research to what you can include in your speech.

Hone Your Interests

Your Enthusiasm Matters

Choose a topic that interests you. Even a topic that may seem strange to others can be effective in the hands of someone with sincere enthusiasm for the material.

Acknowledge the Commitment

Research takes time. You are less likely to complete the task effectively or create an engaging speech if you are bored with the topic.

Be Flexible

Create a List

Create a list of a few different topics. Choose your favorite and be flexible. You can always make a change if you don't find your first choice as interesting as you thought it would be.

Change Topics

You may also change topics if, during your research, you discover the complexity will be impossible to cover in a short speech or that there isn't enough information available to support your point of view.

Start With What You Know

List what you already know about your topic, and generate questions you want to answer to determine areas to research. For example, you know that Toastmasters is an international organization, but you may not know the number of countries where clubs can be found.

Choose Credible Sources

In general, a credible source is one that is unbiased and supported by evidence. Information for this section is derived from the article “Is My Source Credible?” developed by the University of Maryland Global Campus Library.

Ask the Right Questions

Listed below are questions you can ask when considering a source for your research and how your answers can help you make the best choices to provide credible, reliable sources for your audience.

There are eight questions to consider.

Is the source in-depth and well-documented?

This would mean it is more than a page or two with an abstract (a short, academic summary), a reference list, and documented research or data.

If your considered source doesn't have everything on the list, it may still be a reliable source. Check the data the developer used. Where did it come from? What research did they use? Did the author provide links so that you can view the research yourself?

If the answer to all of the above questions is no, it might be unreliable. If the answer is yes to many of the questions, you will have to use your best judgment on whether or not to use the source. It may be worth saving but continuing your search for a more verifiably reliable source.

Who is the audience?

Is it researchers, professors, students, the general population, or professionals in a specific field?

Consider if the author's audience reflects yours. If not, be sure you can easily summarize the author's research in a way that will work for your audience.

For example, you might be an engineer who wants to deliver a speech on a topic that interests you but isn't in your specific field. During your research you may decide to talk about satellite technology. You will need to be sure you can summarize each source in a way that will engage and inform your audience if they have no engineering background. If not, it might be best to move on.

What is the purpose of the source?

Is it intended to provide information or report original research or experiments? To entertain or persuade the general public? Perhaps provide news or information specific to a trade or industry?

The purpose of a source can go a long way to helping you identify its reliability. For example, you may run across a satirical site with the express purpose of entertaining. That would be great for a speech with the same purpose but not for the assigned speech for this project, which has the general purpose of informing your audience.

Who are the authors?

Are they respected and well-known in the field? Are they easily identifiable? Have they written about other similar topics? What are their credentials?

This important question can make or break the reliability of a source. Websites, books, and other media sources can look credible on the surface but on closer inspection can be linked to or created by individuals with suspicious or undisclosed credentials.

If you are not able to trace the author of your source, or confirm that person is qualified to speak on the topic, and verify that they are a generally accepted authority on the subject, move on.

Is the source reputable?

Is it published on a reputable, non-biased website, or in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, and not in a newspaper, blog, or wiki?

Though there are newspapers, blogs, and even biased websites that provide credible information, they require more work on your part to confirm their sources before you rely on their information.

For example, a newspaper may run an outstanding article on volcanic activity on Mars with well-researched, reliable sources of data that may not be fully proven. To effectively use the source, you would need to share information about the nature of the new data and communicate that it needs more research.

Is the source current for your topic?

When using a search engine to research online, it isn't surprising to find an article from several years ago. On some topics that does not have a huge impact, but on others, current research might actually contradict information that was considered fact at the time the article in question was written.

Check the date and confirm that nothing new has happened on your topic if your planned source is dated.

Is there supporting documentation?

A well-documented resource is authenticated with evidence. This can include graphs, charts, illustrations, or any written material that supports the point of view of the resource and the authors.

Once you are confident the source is reliable, what the source provides can be very helpful to you. The more information the source provides for you, the more you can provide for your audience.

Is there more?

When it comes to research, having a broad spectrum of choices will help you develop a speech that provides the information you want to share and helps you do it in an effective way.

It may be that the first source you discover gives you everything you need, but you will never be disappointed if you confirm the information or add another source or two that supports your original source.

One final note on research: If you can only find a single source on your topic or a single source that shares your point of view, you may want to consider a different topic or adjusting the focus of your speech to an area of the topic where a wider collection of reliable information is available.

Interview an Expert

If you have the opportunity, interview an expert in your field of research.

Credibility

When you cite an interview with an expert, you enhance the credibility of your research.

Questions

Creating a list of questions helps guide your interview.

Record

Recording your interview or taking detailed notes can help you recall the information your expert shares.

Sources

You may supplement an expert's response with additional sources that support their point of view or provide another.

Perspectives

Using multiple sources gives you the opportunity to compare perspectives and write a better, more well-rounded speech.

Citing Sources

Acknowledge your sources during your speech by mentioning the name of the writer or study and the publication in which it appears or by providing a link or document that includes the information.

When you cite a reliable source and give audience members a means of accessing the information themselves, you improve your credibility. Supporting your facts well adds impact to your speech and your point of view. A general guideline for citing sources is to provide enough information that audience members can conduct their own research if the topic or subject matter interests them.

Follow Citation Guidelines When Citing Sources

For articles from magazines, journals, newspapers, and the internet, state the author of the piece, the publication in which it can be found, and the publication date. For example, "In a 2005 article in *Asia Pacific View Point*, Goh Beng Lan argues..."

If your source is a book, you may state just the title and the author. For example, "In his book, *Psychological Science Around the World: Latin America*, Ezequiel Benito writes..."

For interviews, share the name and credentials of your expert. For example, "Dr. Monica Turner, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, says..."

Tell your audience if the author of an article is an expert in a given field. For example, "David Chen, a marine biologist at Florida State University, says that..."

There are sources that are generally reliable and those that are less reliable.

1. Which of the following would be the most reliable source for research?

- A. A blog post with an unknown author and no sources cited
- B. A university website article with a well-known expert author and cited sources
- C. A social media post with an author listed but no cited sources
- D. A podcast by an individual who provides few or no credentials

2. What is the best way to confirm an author or other expert is credible?

- A. The author or expert agrees with your point of view
- B. The author or expert cites multiple sources of research that lead to uncredited websites and data that cannot be confirmed
- C. The author or expert has credentials that can be confirmed and lists multiple verifiable sources of research
- D. The author or expert has credentials that can be confirmed and makes several points without sharing their data source or research

3. Which source below is most likely to help you locate credible sources for research?

- A. Social media
- B. A friend with an interest in the subject
- C. A magazine article written in 1967
- D. A peer-reviewed scientific journal article from a few months ago

Answers: 1. B 2. C 3. D

Part 3: Organizing a Speech

Organize Your Speech

In Part 3, you will find a review of methods for organizing your speech. No matter how well-researched your topic, a poorly written or delivered speech will never get your message across to your audience.

Speech Organizational Structures

This section provides a review of the different types of organizational structures you might use to write your speech.

Write Your Speech

This section offers some insight into writing a speech. You can also take a moment to review the Writing a Speech with Purpose project in Level 1 of your Pathways path if you are looking to review those skills.

Organizational Structures

The first place to start is to understand what a well-organized speech looks like. The design of a speech can enhance audience members' understanding of your topic and your purpose. When your speech is well-structured and easy to follow, it is more effective. Review some of the organizational structures that may help you during the writing process.

Chronological

Chronologically organized speeches follow a sequence of events.

Topical

A topical structure organizes speeches by topics and subtopics. Break your speech into sections that explain major concepts related to your topic, followed by smaller and smaller subtopics.

Spatial

A spatial structure organizes a speech by geography or the physical structure of the topic. Construct a speech that discusses the impact of your topic upon a region or the world. Spatial also refers to content that covers the physical landscape of a specific location. For example, if you are giving a speech about Germany, you may organize your presentation in a way that implies movement across the country. Your content could begin in the south at the Alps and then travel northward towards the Baltic Sea.

Causal

A causal structure organizes speeches to link a cause to an effect or an effect to its cause.

Comparative

A comparative structure organizes speeches by describing two or more objects and their shared and/or different attributes. Show how your topic compares to another by examining similarities and differences.

Problem/Solution

Speeches organized by problem and solution are arranged in a particular sequence. First, state the issue and explain its significance. Then propose a feasible and advantageous solution.

Particular/General/Particular

A particular/general/particular structure organizes speeches by a specific example that frames broader content and illustrates the main or personal objective of the speech. The example given at the beginning of your speech is echoed in the conclusion to help clarify or elucidate your primary message.

The basic structure of a speech is an introduction, a main body with transitions, and a conclusion.

Introduction

As you learned in your Writing a Speech with Purpose project, a strong introduction grabs the audience's attention while stating your topic. You may choose to start with how your topic relates to your life, tell a funny story, or list a few interesting facts. However you begin, this is your opportunity to fully engage audience members and prepare them for what they are about to learn from the research you plan to share with them.

Body

In a well-researched speech, the body will likely be organized around single ideas with clear transitions between sections. By Level 3 of your path, it is time to show how you can smooth those transitions with humor, storytelling, or any method you want to use that will make the shift from one idea to the next seamless for your audience.

Conclusion

The more powerful your conclusion, the more likely your audience will be to follow up on what they learned from you. All the work you do to research your topic and provide audience members with a reference list for their own research will be most effective if you leave them with something that resonates. A strong conclusion delivers your message.

Transitions

Smooth transitions help audience members move with you from one idea to another. These valuable bridges help audiences follow the concepts you present.

Transitional Words

Words that connect one section to the next are transitional words. There are many. A few examples include *afterward, also, but, then, finally, instead,* and *later*.

Transitional Phrases

Common phrases can also connect parts of your speech. Phrases such as *according to, as a result, for example,* and *this means* can ease your audience from one part of your speech to the next.

Transitional Statements

Statements that can help guide your audience from one section to another include chronologies like *first, second,* and *third*. "*We consider three things when developing...*" is also a statement that acts as a transition from one section to the next.

When to Transition

Transitions most often occur between the introduction and body of a speech, between thoughts in the body of a speech, and between the body and the conclusion.

Part 4: Plan Your Presentation

Allow Enough Time

Depending on the complexity of your topic and speech, research can take time. Like most projects in Pathways, there are important steps to take before you can successfully complete your assignment. In this case, you need to be sure you are comfortable with your sources, that your sources support the content of your speech, and that you have cited those sources well.

Review the Resources

This project includes resources like the Research Worksheet and the Speech Outline Worksheet. Both, along with other resources available in your project, can help you plan and organize your speech.

Communicate

Before your speech, communicate with your evaluator if at all possible. The evaluation resource includes sections on how well-researched your speech appears, whether or not you cite sources, and how well you deliver your speech. Be sure to share your goals with your evaluator so they can give you feedback on topics that are most important to you.

Review and Apply

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- Compile a list of your best research options for your topic.
- What is the value of writing a clearly organized speech?
- What is the value of an engaging transition between main sections of your speech?
- What format will you use to organize your sources and communicate them to your audience?
- Why is it important to share your sources with an audience?

Complete Your Assignment



Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

This project includes:

- Researching a topic
- The Research Worksheet
- The Speech Outline Worksheet
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Select a topic for your speech that you are not already familiar with or that you wish to learn more about. Make sure it is narrow enough to cover in your speaking time. For example, the topic of “dogs” is so broad that a 5- to 7-minute speech would appear shallow. Narrowing your topic to “young Golden Retrievers” allows you to develop a speech that reflects thoughtful research.

Research your topic by locating multiple generally reliable sources.

Schedule your speech with the Vice President Education.

Write your speech.

Prepare a list of sources to share with audience members.

Rehearse your speech.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response

- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the interviewer
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the interviewer
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the interviewer
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the interviewer
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the interviewer

Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

Well-Researched

- 5 – Delivers exemplary speech with content that is well-supported by research and makes sources readily available
- 4 – Speech content is excellent and supported by research, and sources are available if requested
- 3 – Speech content is well-researched, and sources are available if requested
- 2 – Speech content appears to be researched though member struggles to recall sources
- 1 – Speech content may or may not be researched, and sources are not available

Part 5: Demonstrate Your Learning

Make the Most of Base Camp

Hopefully, you are taking full advantage of Base Camp and the tools you can find there. If not, take a moment to leave feedback for a fellow club member, award a badge to someone who contributed at your last club meeting, or save a copy of a recent speech or speech evaluation to My Documents.

Complete the Learned Section of Know-Wonder-Learned

Once you have completed all the work in this project, take a moment to consider what you learned and add it to the Learned column. Completing this activity will help you solidify your knowledge and support you as you consider what you might like to learn in the future.

Complete Your Project

- Know-Wonder-Learned activity
- Careful review of the Researching and Presenting project
- Deliver your speech
- Receive your speech evaluation by a fellow club member

Complete Your Project



Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

Learned

For example: I learned the value of effective transitions when writing and delivering a speech.

Before You Move On

Review Your Learning

Review all the material in this project.

Deliver Your Speech

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

Receive Your Evaluation

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

Assess and Reflect

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Congratulations!

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Researching and Presenting project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



toastmasters.org