

Evaluating your Informative Purpose

- * Is there plenty of information available? If you explain the types of ice in a core sample from the Antarctica, you'll probably have trouble finding books and web sites that contain the basic information. Expository information is probably in hard-to-read scholarly papers, and numerical information is probably in complicated tables. Also, in Youngstown it might be hard to find an expert.
- * Does it seem to "click" for an audience? Explaining how scribes copied the Bible in mediaeval monasteries might be a bit duller than explaining how player pianos of the 1880s worked. Doing a speech on the history of typography might have less flash than one on the history of NASCAR. Similarly, ice under the antarctica is less intriguing to Youngstown audiences than are the salt mines under Lake Erie.
- * Does it naturally break apart so you can grab a little "chunk" and develop that chunk out to 8 minutes for your speech? "How a computer works" would require so many "chunks" that you'd be explaining them for hours; or, if you condensed them all into 7 or 8 minutes, your speech would be so superficial as to be worthless. BUT, if you were to focus on the "One Laptop Per Child" program (<http://laptop.org/>), you'd have a perfect little speech.
- * Does it lend itself to visuals and to PowerPoint slides? A speech about the "City of the Dead" under Paris is visual, but a speech about a managed economy is not.
- * Does it have some intellectual heft to it? How a kidney is transplanted is inherently more sophisticated than how to make fire with two sticks.
- * An informative speech should help audience members move from what they already know to some spot of unknown. Does your informative purpose take them a reasonable distance from their comfort zone? The test is to ask whether you can fill in the bridge with lots of examples, similes, stories, metaphors, and so on. Otherwise, the leap may be too great.
- * Is this a specific purpose that is popular among high school students? If so, it won't work for an audience of educated adults.
- * Will it lead to an original informative presentation, or will it seem oddly like one someone else has done? Make it your work.