


FLORIDA ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITY

THE SPEAKING CENTER

Attention Grabbing Devices

(Adapted from A Pocket Guide to Public Speaking, 6th edition)

The following are some ideas on how to get audience attention:

- **Illustration:** You can say to the audience “Remember when...” and provide a picture, or paint a scene by telling the audience to imagine a scene when X occurred.
- **Short story:** In journalism, this is called “telling the story through someone”—it is what many reporters do to make a news topic relevant to their audience. A short personal story or story about someone else can really grip people, but the key is to make it short and not drag on. Also, you can use the story in your conclusion. You can introduce a character and the problem that was confronted. In the conclusion, you can show how the person or group within the story worked out the issue, hopefully by doing what you suggest in the speech.
- **Statistic or surprising fact:** A really good statistic can get people thinking and challenge their perspective. Cite where you got the statistic to show it’s credible.
- **Aphorism:** An aphorism is a common phrase or saying, such as “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Add a twist to the aphorism for added effect (“an apple a day keeps the doctor away... except if you’re sitting with an apple computer for 8 hours a day.”)
- **Analogy or metaphor:** Saying an analogy (“User interface is like peeling an onion” or) can really break down complex terms into more simpler ones, making it more digestible for your audience.
- **Question:** This is usually an acceptable introduction but in an online presentation you cannot get a response so the question will leave people uncomfortable by not allowing them to answer. Starting with an engaging question can add a great amount of audience engagement, or even asking a rhetorical question can get them thinking out-of-the-box.
- **Quote:** A great way to start your online presentation is with a quote—but it should be related to your presentation and from a credible source. Make

sure your quote is understandable. Maybe include the quote in a slide in your PowerPoint. Some quotes, even well worded ones, are hard to follow. Make sure the quote is relevant and tasteful.

- **Songs/Poem:** You can use a poem through out the speech to initially grab attention, as transitioning from point to point, and ultimately ending the speech with the final lines. The same can be done with songs. Another engaging way to use lyrical ideas is with mnemonic devices weaved through out the outline.
- **Poll:** Ask the audience to respond by show of hand. Asking for a response will create engagement and interactivity.
- **Humor:** Be cautious when using this strategy. You must really know your audience. Best used with inside jokes and funny true stories. Always make sure your joke isn't insulting as it will hamper/ruin your speech. Jokes need to be perfect for the crowd as there is never one-joke-fits-all. It must be tailored to audience.

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