



# DELIVER YOUR MESSAGE WITH HUMOR

LEVEL 5 PROJECT



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# INTRODUCTION



At the heart of every successful humorous speech is great storytelling. Longer speeches, like a keynote-length speech, are no different. The challenge for the successful speaker tasked with writing and delivering a longer speech is to create a presentation that combines or extends stories to engage and entertain the audience through the entire speech.

The work you have done in the previous projects, collecting and cataloging your stories and understanding your audiences, will help you develop not only this keynote, but your future speeches as well.

# YOUR ASSIGNMENT

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to practice developing and presenting a longer humorous speech.

**Overview:** Write and present an 18- to 22-minute keynote-style humorous speech. You may choose to use visual aids if they fit your speech and your style. If you receive advanced approval from the vice president education, you may present your speech to a non-Toastmasters audience.

**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 16.**

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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.

# ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

**5**  
EXEMPLARY

**4**  
EXCEL

**3**  
ACCOMPLISHED

**2**  
EMERGING

**1**  
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project					Statement	Post-Project				
5	4	3	2	1	I can develop a well-crafted, keynote-length humorous speech.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I understand how to keep an audience engaged and entertained through an entire keynote-length speech.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to adjust a speech while I am delivering it based on the reaction of the audience.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I understand how to use transitions to connect unrelated stories or topics.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I can effectively use humor as the foundation for a strong speech that delivers a message.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5	4	3	2	1

# COMPETENCIES



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

- Construct a well-developed, humorous speech that reflects an understanding of the audience and audience demographics.
- Deliver a keynote-length speech that incorporates humor.
- Create and deliver a speech that incorporates humor and humorous stories or anecdotes into a strong message appropriate for an effective keynote address.
- Engage an audience with humor that leads to an understanding of a well-developed underlying message.

## THE KEYNOTE-STYLE SPEECH

A keynote-length speech is often used to anchor an event. The most effective keynote speeches engage and entertain the audience, leaving them with something to think about. Humor is particularly effective when working to break down barriers to understanding a new topic or thinking about the world in a new way.

Even when the stated goal is to make the audience laugh, reaching beyond the laughter and creating a meaningful experience for both the speaker and the audience will build a positive memory for all.

One of your first challenges in creating a keynote-style speech is to decide what you want to say. Not just the words in your speech, but the message you want to convey, the point you want to make, and the unified idea you would like to deliver to your audience.

## CREATING YOUR SPEECH

As with every speech you give, your humorous keynote should reflect who you are. If you will present your keynote-length speech to your club, you can decide the tone and topic.

Often, when you deliver a keynote outside your Toastmasters club, you will be asked to deliver a message based on the needs of the organization sponsoring the speech. You will have to bend and coordinate your stories to fit the needs of your audience and the topic requested of you.

If your goal is to practice presenting a keynote speech to share outside of your Toastmasters club, you might ask your vice president education or club to select your topic. Creating a speech based on a topic given to you by your club will allow you to practice developing a presentation that focuses on another person's or organization's goals.

Once you have selected or been assigned a topic, there are several decisions you will need to make before you start developing your speech. You will need to decide on your core message for the topic you have selected or been assigned, the stories and anecdotes you will use to deliver your message, and the transitions that will connect your stories and your core message.



## YOUR CORE MESSAGE

Making people laugh is an important goal of a humorous speech, but it doesn't negate the need for an important core message.

- The connection, or linking of stories, deepens the meaning of any speech and is particularly important when humor is one of your primary goals.
- Take a few minutes to state your core message or a list of possible ideas to narrow down later. Use the Story Collection tool to create your list. You may also choose to start by selecting the stories you want to include first. There is no wrong way to develop a speech as long as it works for you.
- Use the Speech Outline Worksheet on page 21 or connect to the Story Collection tool to organize the humorous stories and anecdotes of your speech around your message. The work you have done to develop a library of stories will make this process easier. Be sure to add any new stories to your library so you will be able to readily access them for speeches later.
- Once your stories are selected and your theme defined (or at least narrowed to a short list of possibilities), it is time to think about how you will connect them into a cohesive whole.



As you put your stories together and adjust them to fit your core message, be sure the message resonates with you. If you struggle to make your stories or core message fit together, you may be trying to create something that doesn't reflect your experiences or values.

Every speech, regardless of who assigns the topic or influences the message, must be authentically you or the speech is likely to fail.

If the core message is the issue, change it. If the problem is that the stories you have do not convey the message you want, add more stories. This can mean being vulnerable to your audience and sharing something you would not normally share. Humor takes courage.





## TRANSITIONS

### Connect Your Ideas

Transitions are always important for the continuity of a speech. With a longer speech, transitions are an essential tool for connecting a variety of ideas. The way you design your transitions can help you bring the audience back to your message and bring more humor to your speech.

### Use Body Language

Effective transitions will connect your stories and anecdotes to your message and to each other. As a seasoned speech writer, you have most likely worked on transitions many times. Remember that a transition does not always have to include words. It can be a longer pause, a facial expression, or body language. Nonverbal transitions are especially common in comedic presentations.

### Review Your Successes

To hone your skills, think back to the most successful speeches you have given. Consider the transitions from those speeches and if you might be able to apply the same strategies to some of the transitions in your longer speech. You may also consider watching a few professional speeches, especially those that are given by humorists or comedians. There are many available online. Look for college and university graduation speeches, or check the websites of professional keynote speakers for videos of previous speeches.

### View Expert Addresses

As you view others' speeches, be sure to keep in mind that speakers have different styles. If you choose to emulate a particular style, it needs to work for your style of speaking, your topic, and your audience.

Even if the person you are watching is the best speaker in the world, their style may not work for you or you may be uncomfortable with their methods. If you feel strongly you would not be successful if you emulated their style, don't.

Find someone to view whose style feels comfortable and makes you want to learn the nuances of how they created successful transitions.



Add a transitions collection to your Story Collection tool to keep track of ideas and web links and return to them later.

## PREPARE—BEYOND WRITING

Every speaker has a personal style of preparation that works best for them. Some will create their speech by making brief notes or creating an outline, while other speakers prefer to memorize every word.

Memorizing can be an effective tool to mitigate nerves or build confidence, but it can also create problems. Speakers who prefer to memorize are likely to have more successful longer speeches if they avoid memorizing every word and instead focus on components, like stories or transitions. Leaving mental space will create flexibility within the prepared content to allow for accommodating the audience.

As with a shorter speech, flexibility contributes to a presentation that seems more natural and conversational as opposed to rigidly prepared. The longer the speech, the more important it is for the speaker to be prepared—to have practiced, and to be comfortable with and ready for changes or adjustments during their speech.

Most speakers will take the time to review their speeches before they present them. Some even deliver a speech to a practice group for feedback before they present the final speech. It will never be more important to take the time to practice than with a keynote-length speech. Especially if your goal is to develop professional speaking skills, you will need to practice at every available opportunity.

Take advantage of all opportunities for public speaking within your club. If another club, community organization, or your place of business is in need of a speaker, volunteer your services. Try different stories to make your point and see what works best with different types of audiences.

Putting in the effort to practice and adjust your speech according to the feedback you receive will help you feel confident and prepared when you present your humorous keynote-length speech.

# AUDIENCE PERSONALITY TRAITS

## Observe

When you arrive at an event for an important speech, you are likely to be nervous. Take the time to look around, greet people, and listen to what they are talking about.

Your knowledge of your own stories and the practice you have done using varying stories told in different ways will help you if you need to change anything with short notice.

Know too that making changes is not required. Flexibility is an important trait in a successful speaker, but you have a prepared speech in front of you and you can use it, regardless of what you hear from attendees. Trust yourself and know that when it is your time to speak, you can adjust if necessary.

## Empathize

One of the most important tools in your humor arsenal is your ability to empathize with others. Audiences, like individuals, can have a certain personality.

Being aware of audience response to other speakers and the event itself will bring you a higher level of understanding. You may want to review the information in “The Power of Humor in an Impromptu Speech” at Level 4 to refresh your understanding of audience demographics.

## Adjust

At the event, be prepared to make adjustments. Look for cues around you. Notice when the audience laughs or doesn't. Be especially aware if audience members take offense to a particular type of content, or find it demeaning in some way.

Some audiences are in a laughing mood. These audiences are wonderful for humorists, as long as the humorist expects the audience to laugh. If, however, you intend to use a story or share an anecdote that is touching or bittersweet, this type of audience may not respond as you would like or you might inadvertently bring down a positive, upbeat audience.

To help you prepare for your speech, focus on honing your audience awareness. Be sure you understand what the audience expects of you. Being self-aware will also give you better tools. Recognize your own expectations and adjust them if needed.

Once you begin your keynote, there are steps you can take to support a successful speech.

### **Understand the Longer Speech**

Longer speeches, like a keynote, will have an ebb and flow with the audience. There may be times when the audience is highly engaged and times when they are less attentive. You will need to depend on your inner clock to decide if it is time to shift topics, add a short, entertaining anecdote, or shift to a new topic altogether.

### **Be Aware of Your Audience**

You don't necessarily need to be worried about the single audience member yawning in the back row, but you will need to respond with a change of some kind if you notice that a significant percentage of them have their eyes on their smartphones.

### **Review Relevant Projects**

If you haven't completed the "Managing a Difficult Audience" project (an elective available to you at Level 4), you may want to review the content. Aside from a review of the different types of difficult audience members and a strategy for each, you can gain a better understanding of audience device use. Not all device use is the same.

### **Recognize Engagement**

When you see many audience members looking at devices, it may be that they are getting bored. However, if you just gave a tip or named a book you love, they may be making a note.

### **Make Adjustments**

Recognizing the difference between audience members who are engaged and accessing more information or taking notes and those distracted and disengaged will help you make positive adjustments in your speech. An example of a positive adjustment is pausing for a second so that people can make a note before you move on.

### **Understand Audience Motivation**

Your awareness and ability to empathize will help you understand the motivation of audience members and lead to a more successful speech.

# DRAW ON YOUR EXPERIENCE

## PLAN FOR THE UNEXPECTED

All speeches are better when the speaker is cognizant of the audience response, but when delivering a humorous speech it is mandatory. As anyone who has ever tried stand-up comedy can tell you, there is nothing more arduous than your best jokes or humorous stories failing to get a laugh from the audience.

## PRACTICE PROBLEM SOLVING

Think back to your Level 4 project. The most important reason to practice giving an impromptu speech was to give you the opportunity to problem solve in real time. You may need to do the same thing when you present your keynote-length speech.

## PREPARE ENOUGH MATERIAL

Before you prepare and present your humorous keynote-length speech, be sure you have enough stories in mind to make adjustments as you speak. Know what stories you can add or adjust if a story that is intended to deliver your message fails to do so.

## TAKE THE TIME YOU NEED

Preparation and a well-developed library of personal stories will keep a slow section of your speech from becoming a failed speech. If you are not sure you have enough material, stop now and add to your Story Collection. You will be better served by postponing your keynote-length speech than by moving ahead when you do not have enough material in place.



## BE FLEXIBLE AND RESILIENT

Remember that humor is a relative thing. One audience may laugh hysterically at your favorite anecdote and the next may barely smile. The success of your humorous speech is not necessarily in the amount of laughter, but in the continued positive engagement of your audience.

Your Toastmasters club is a wonderful place for building skills and practicing in a safe environment. It is invaluable for raising confidence. If your goals include speaking to different groups and organizations, you will need to try your speeches outside the club environment to best understand what is most effective with different groups. Be sure you have practiced speaking before a variety of audiences before you volunteer to speak at a high-stakes event, such as a paid keynote or professional event important to your career.

Even if your keynote-length speech is effective, you might want to change stories midstream to practice making a significant adjustment as you speak.

# STAND UP!

For the truly brave at heart, present your speech publicly to an unfamiliar audience. On any given night in most cities and towns, there is a coffee house or restaurant that has an open-mike night. Open mike means that anyone can try their hand at stand-up comedy by taking the microphone for a few minutes. If you really want to test whether or not you are funny, an open mike is the gold standard.

## Focus on Storytelling

Successful stand-up comics, like successful speakers, are talented storytellers.

## Timing is Everything

Though they are both storytellers, their methods are unique. Speakers can take their time adding humor carefully and at intervals. In stand-up comedy the storytelling must be fast and to the point. There is no time to waste. You are likely to have a matter of seconds to get from “One day I was walking in the park...” to the punch line.

## Learn from Experts

Watch comics you enjoy and time how long it takes them to tell each individual story. Time the space between punch lines. Know that even if an hour-long comedy special only has two or three full-length stories, those stories are made up of moments that each garner a laugh.

## Work for Connection

In a stand-up routine, timing, body language, and delivery are incredibly important but not the only things that matter. Remember that what makes people laugh is the connection between the speaker and the audience.

## Be Honest and Vulnerable

You cannot tell someone else’s story and get a laugh; it has to be yours or at the very least, it has to touch a part of you that is honest and vulnerable. Stand-up takes a different kind of bravery than public speaking does, but the payoff for success is powerful.

## CONTINUING YOUR HUMOR PATH

There are many ways to continue building your sense of humor and working that humor into your speeches. Like in public speaking, speechwriting, and any other hobby you might have, practice and application build skills and confidence.

Humor builds most effectively by stretching and pushing into new and different areas. It is not a passive endeavor. Though you may never perform publicly as part of an improvisational group, joining one or taking a class will help you push the boundaries of what is familiar and will build your skill.

Trusting your presentation style, building high-quality content, practicing, and accepting feedback will help you create your most successful keynote-length speech. Your journey to develop a library of humorous anecdotes and stories will contribute to the construction of every speech you deliver for years to come.

Continue to add to your collection of stories and draw from it often for all types of speeches. The stories are yours to share and your ability to deliver a speech with humor will likely make you a sought-after speaker in your club and beyond.





## REVIEW AND APPLY

- How can audience awareness help you adjust as you speak?
- What are the important challenges that make a longer, keynote-length speech different from a regular Toastmasters speech?
- Why are transitions so important to a longer speech?
- How can listening to other speakers at an event help you succeed when you present your keynote-length speech?

## COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT

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

**Review:** Return to page 3 to review your assignment.

**Organize:** Use the Project Checklist on page 16 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.



**Schedule:** Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.

**Prepare:** Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 18–20 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.



# PROJECT CHECKLIST

## Deliver Your Message with Humor

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to practice developing and presenting a longer humorous speech.

**Overview:** Write and present an 18- to 22-minute keynote-style humorous speech. You may choose to use visual aids if they fit your speech and your style. If you receive advanced approval from the vice president education, you may present your speech to a non-Toastmasters audience.

**This project includes:**

- The Speech Outline Worksheet
- An 18- to 22-minute keynote-style humorous speech

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Develop the topic and core message of your humorous keynote-length speech.

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Schedule your speech with the vice president education.

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Refer to the material in your Story Collection tool and add any new stories, anecdotes, or jokes you might use in your speech.

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Write your speech.

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Develop visual aids if you intend to use them.

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Rehearse your speech.

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If possible, schedule time to practice your speech in front of an audience.

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After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your speech, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

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Additional Notes

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# EVALUATION FORM

Deliver Your Message with Humor

Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Speech Length: 18 – 22 minutes

**Speech Title** \_\_\_\_\_

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is for the member to practice developing and presenting a longer humorous speech.

## Notes for the Evaluator

The member completing this project has been working to build the skills necessary to engage an audience with humor for an extended period of time.

About this speech:

- The member will present an engaging, humorous keynote-style speech that also delivers a strong core message.
- The member should demonstrate excellent presentation skills and deliver compelling content.
- The speech is not a report on the content of the “Deliver Your Message with Humor” project.

## General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

## EVALUATION FORM – Deliver Your Message with Humor

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	4 EXCELS	3 ACCOMPLISHED	2 EMERGING	1 DEVELOPING	
<b>Clarity:</b> Spoken language is clear and is easily understood					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Vocal Variety:</b> Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Eye Contact:</b> Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Gestures:</b> Uses physical gestures effectively					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Audience Awareness:</b> Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Comfort Level:</b> Appears comfortable with the audience					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Interest:</b> Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Humor:</b> Delivers a well-designed speech that includes obvious humor and an underlying message					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

## Deliver Your Message with Humor

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

### 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 audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

### 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

### Humor

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech that includes perfectly timed humor and a strong, well-developed underlying message
- 4 – Delivers an excellent speech that includes well-timed humor and a solid underlying message
- 3 – Delivers a well-designed speech that includes obvious humor and an underlying message
- 2 – Delivers a speech that includes some humor and an obvious attempt at an underlying message
- 1 – Delivers a speech that may not be humorous and lacks an underlying message

# SPEECH OUTLINE WORKSHEET

## Opening

### A. Greeting

You may thank the Toastmaster or person who introduced you and acknowledge fellow Toastmasters and guests.

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### B. Capture audience interest

Begin with information about your topic that will capture the attention of the audience, such as an interesting fact about your topic that you discovered in your research.

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### C. Introduce your topic

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### D. Transition

This is a statement or sentence designed to lead smoothly into your first main point.

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## Body

### A. Main point 1

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#### 1. Sub-point

Details and specifics about your main point.

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#### Support/evidence

Use examples, facts, or statistics from your research to illustrate your main point and sub-point.

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#### 2. Sub-point

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#### Support/evidence

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#### 3. Sub-point

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Support/evidence

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4. Transition

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B. Main point 2

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1. Sub-point

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Support/evidence

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2. Sub-point

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Support/evidence

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3. Transition

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C. Main point 3

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1. Sub-point

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Support/evidence

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2. Sub-point

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Support/evidence

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### 3. Transition

Signal that the conclusion of the speech is approaching.

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## Conclusion

### A. Brief summary of your topic

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### B. Review main points

Main point 1

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Main point 2

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Main point 3

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### C. Close with impact

Finish with a strong statement; consider mirroring your attention-grabbing opening.

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