Preparing a Speech Outline

Learning the Skill

Good speeches contain at least three parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Before you give a speech, create an outline so all of your information is organized effectively. Use the following pattern to prepare a speech outline.

- The **introduction** sets up your speech. In it, you state your topic; that is, you tell the audience what you are going to talk about.
- The **body** develops your speech. You discuss each point in detail, giving your listeners plenty of evidence or information that will help explain and support each point.
- In the **conclusion**, you summarize the main points of your speech and emphasize what you want the audience to remember. An effective **closing**, or final sentence, can help make your speech particularly memorable.
- **Transitions** are statements that signal to the audience that you are moving from the introduction to the body, and again from the body to the conclusion.

Practicing the Skill

**Directions:** Russia’s physical geography has created unique challenges throughout the country’s history. Read the speech below about the construction of Russia’s Trans-Siberian Railway, and then answer the questions that follow.

In 1891 Russian Czar Alexander III made a decision that reshaped his country’s history: to build a railway across Siberia. The czar planned to use the railway to transport Russian peasants to Siberia to farm. He also viewed the railway as a chance to relieve food shortages in Russia, to build a Russian empire in the Far East, and to obtain mineral resources from Siberia. Thus began construction of an “iron road” that would, when finished, become the world’s longest railroad. It would not be an easy task.

Construction proceeded quickly—too quickly—at several locations at once. Building contractors did not take time to survey the land, often cheated the government out of money, and used poor materials and improper work practices. For example, rail ties were spaced twice as far apart as they should have been.

The biggest problem, however, was the land itself—a vast expanse of waterways, steppes, mountains, swamps, and forests. Moving rocks and earth and draining swamps had to be done by hand. Most of the materials to build the railway, like iron and stone, had to be “imported” from other parts of Russia. Hardwood needed to make ties was not available along most of the planned route.

At first, Russian migrant workers accomplished most of the construction, but the size of the project eventually required more workers. Prison laborers and foreigners were recruited,
including hundreds of thousands of Chinese, Koreans, Persians, and Turks. They faced extreme temperatures, permafrost, malaria, bandits, and even tigers. Wages were poor, and many workers died from exposure and disease.

Meanwhile, construction on the railway added a boost to the Russian economy. Entire towns and industries, like cement plants and timber mills, sprang up along the path of the railway.

When the railway opened to passengers in 1900, trains could travel only about 13 miles per hour. Because of poor construction, accidents were common. Today, the Trans-Siberian Railway stretches across 5,578 miles and seven time zones. Amazingly, the trip from Beijing to Moscow can be made in less than a week. The Trans-Siberian Railway is truly one of the "wonders of the world."

1. **Stating** What is the introduction to this speech?

2. **Identifying** Write the transition used to move to the body of the speech.

3. **Finding the Main Idea** What are the first two main points presented in the speech?

4. **Identifying** Which statement is the closing?
Applying the Skill

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper, create an outline for a speech about the types of landforms that cover Siberia. Use the format shown below.

I. Introduction

Transition: ____________________________

II. Body

A. Main Point 1
   1. Supporting information
   2. Supporting information

Transition: ____________________________

B. Main Point 2
   1. Supporting information
   2. Supporting information

Transition: ____________________________

III. Conclusion

Assessment Checklist
Assess your outline using the checklist below:

☐ Wrote introduction to grab reader interest
☐ Wrote at least two main points with supporting information in the body of the speech
☐ Created transitions to move from one part of the speech to the other
☐ Added a conclusion that summarized main points, and a closing to make the speech memorable