

Connecting the Parts of a Presentation

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In an oral presentation it is terribly important to provide road signs to help the audience keep track of the movement of your thoughts and to spell out the connections between your claims and evidence and between the points of the speech. After all, the listeners can't simply re-read a passage when something is unclear or when their attention wandered for just a moment. Good connectives are a user-friendly aspect to your presentation.

Transitions are the most common way that we connect our ideas. Transitions briefly mention what you were just talking about and signal where you are headed next.

“Now that we have looked at the governmental policies and acts supporting our response to this threat, let's look at some of the agencies currently in place.”

“We have seen the ways to recognize these diseases, now let us turn to ways to control outbreaks.”

In a complex presentation you may also use strategies such as internal previews and internal summaries in order to restate and reinforce your ideas so that the audience can see how it all fits together.

Internal Preview: “As we take up the complex issues surrounding our responsibility in responding to this threat, we will first address the issue of agent recognition and transmission, then look at the role of animal populations as sentinels of bioterrorist activity, and finally look at ways to control zoonosis.”

Internal Summary (and then a transition): “We've had a chance to explore the complex issues surrounding our responsibility in responding to this threat by looking at agent recognition and transmission and at the role of animal populations as sentinels of bioterrorist activity. Now that we understand those issues, let's take a look at the responsibility each of us has to control transmission.”

Another common way to connect your ideas together is to provide **Signposts** or signal words that let the audience know exactly where you are in the presentation. Signposts include terms such as “first”, “second”, or “third,” as well as common phrases such as “not only” or “another way to look at it...”

Questions offer another way to show the connection between the ideas in your presentation and to re-establish audience attention.

“Some of you may be wondering, ‘who is going to fund all of this work?’ Well, that’s a question I am happy to answer before I close tonight.”

Finally, some other simple words that are very useful to listeners are those that signal the logical relationship between your ideas. Phrases such as like “because,” “since,” “as indicated by,” or “in view of the fact that,” consistently signal to listeners that the next statement functions as a reason or as evidence for a claim. On the other hand, phrases such as “therefore,” “it follows that,” “it is reasonable to conclude that,” “we can see that,” consistently signal to listeners that the next statement functions as a conclusion or something that has been proven by the preceding evidence. Exercise care when using these logical indicators so that audience’s do not feel misled by your argument.