Public Speaking

Starting and ending a speech

Addressing the audience

As the first sentence to start and the last sentence to end your speech, I strongly recommend always using the same sentence to **address** (start) and **thank** (end) your audience.

Recommended way to start:

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. (Formal setting, when you are on stage.)

Hello, everyone. (Informal setting, meetings with people you know.)

Recommended way to end:

Thanks for your attention. Goodbye.

Thanks for listening. Have a great day.

Bad way to end:

That's all.

That's all, thanks for listening. (Basically, ban "*that's all*" from your vocabulary!)

Thanks for your listening. (This is not really wrong but sounds strange, just say "thanks for listening".)

Start Patterns

It is useful to design and **memorise** a few patterns you can use to start your speech; that way you can **recite them while filling in the information needed for the occasion**. That way you will never be caught out, even if you are asked to deliver a speech on the spot.

Some examples:

- **(Formal, when asked to give an opinion)**
  Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is <> and I was asked to comment on <topic>. I must tell you that I personally believe that <opinion>. Let me explain.*
- **(Formal, when presenting a plan to resolve an issue)**
  Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is <>. Today, I would like to draw your attention to several issues concerning <topic>. I personally believe that urgent action is needed to address these issues, and I will briefly outline my proposal in the hope you will support it.*
- **(Informal, when asked to comment on an idea)**
  Hello everyone, Daniel asked me to share my thoughts on <topic>. Personally, believe that <opinion>. In my capacity as <your role in relation to the topic> I have come across many situations where this applies. Let me tell you a story: 5 years ago…
- **(Informal, when asked to lead a difficult discussion)**
  Hello everyone, let's try to discuss <topic>. I know there are many different opinions about this, so let's hear what everyone has to say and try to come up with some useful ideas about how to make progress. Last week we all heard about…

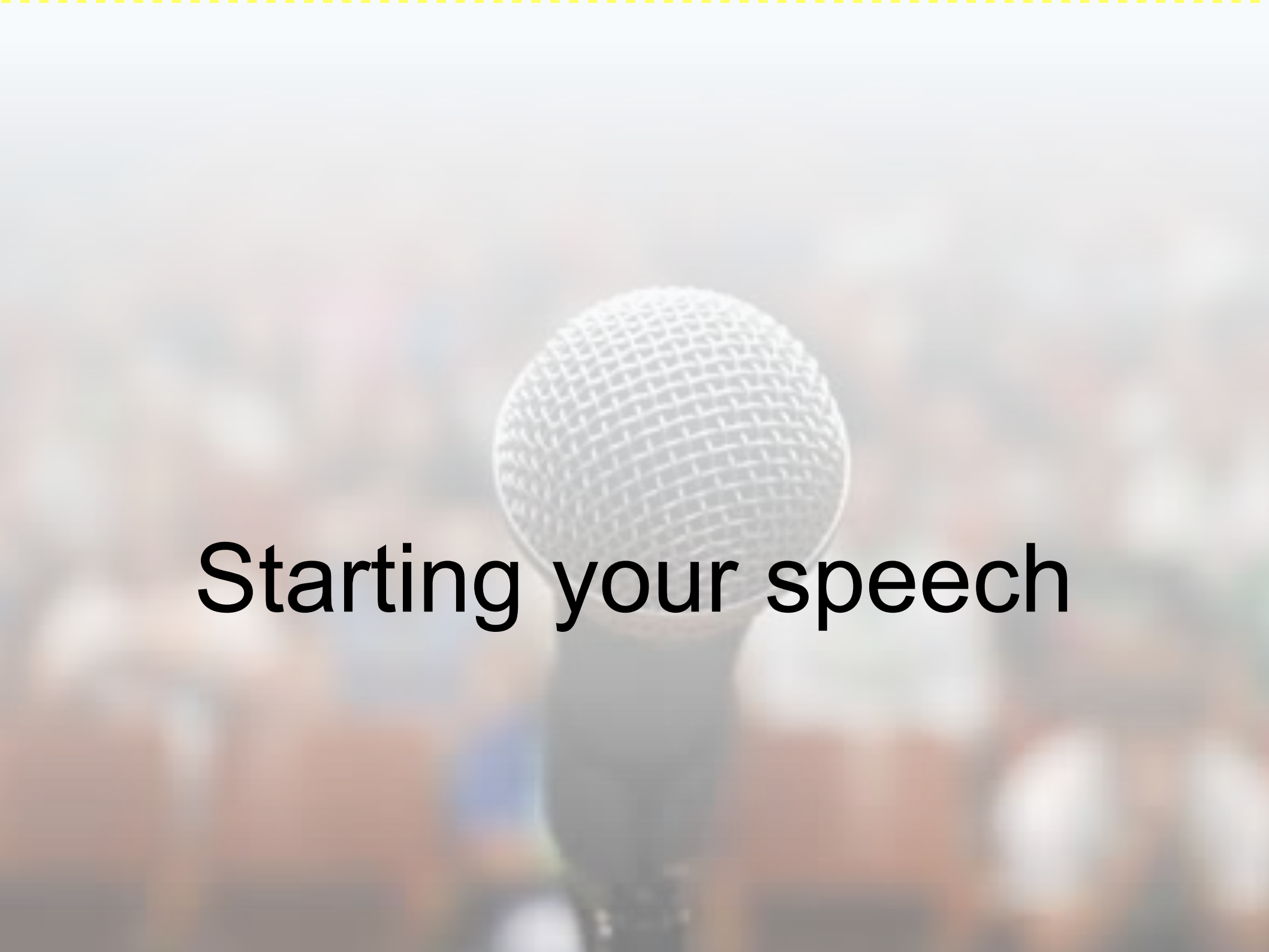
Smooth start and end

Don't immediately **launch into the content** of your speech:

- After addressing your audience, say **who you are, what you do, why you are the best person to discuss the topic** you are going to discuss (unless everyone knows you of course).
- Always make it clear w**hy you are discussing the topic** in the first place, and what you hope to achieve.
- Start informative speeches with an **overview** ("table of content") of what you are going to present, so the audience can follow your story more easily.

Similarly, **don't end** your speech **too abruptly**:

- End persuasive speeches with a **conclusion** and a **message**.
- End ceremonial speeches with a **toast** or **blessing**.
- End informative speeches with a **summary** of the most important points, and what your audience **should have learned** from it with respect to their jobs, their lives, their studies and so on.


Starting your speech

Ways to start a speech
Grab your audience's attention

- Make a **bold or surprising statement**

  Seat belts save lives! (bold)

  The fastest growing group on Twitter are people between 55 and 64 years old. (surprising)

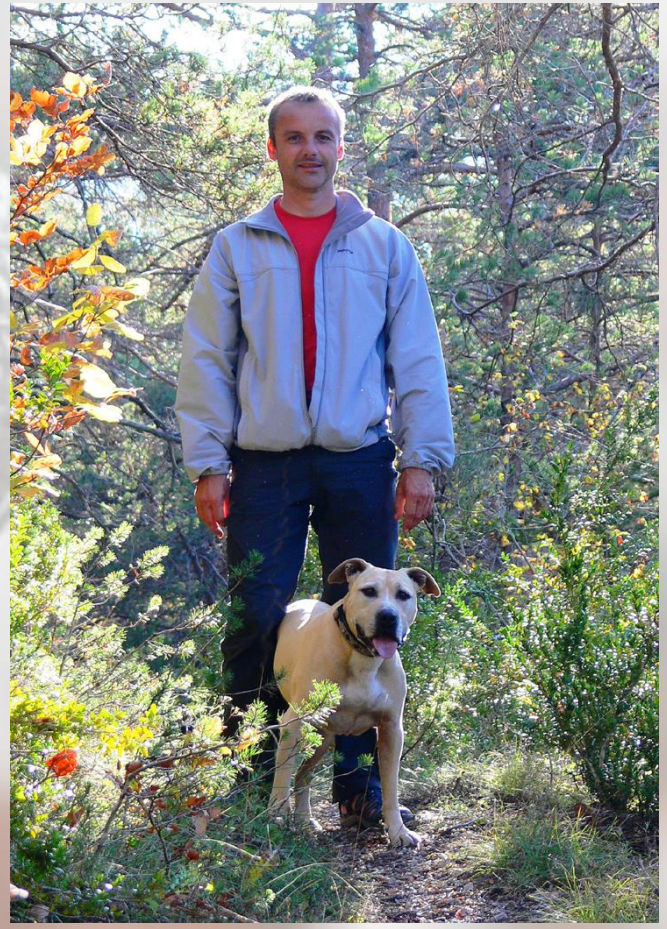
- Make you audience **curious** →

  How can you achieve success? How do you find out exactly what works and what doesn't? I will tell you the secret how you discover what you can improve yourself!

- Use a **quotation**

  If you can dream it, you can do it (Walt Disney).

- Tell a **story** or a **joke**



Ways to start a speech
Ask a question

- Ask if the audience has **experienced** what you are talking about

  Have you ever felt your car slip on a patch of ice?

  What was your favourite holiday when you were a child?

- Ask a **rhetorical** question

  Who hasn't thought of eating healthier food?

- Ask the audience to **visualise** something

  Imagine you are on a tropical beach. Can you feel the sand under your feet?... The warm sun beating down on your shoulders? ... Can you can hear the ocean waves? ... and the ocean breeze whispering in the leaves of the palm trees?

Ways to start a speech

Ask a question

Ask a **question** and elicit some **answers from members of the audience.** Then summarise the answers and carry on your speech.

Who has been in a car accident once? What happened? — <answer from the audience> — Wow, that's quite a story! I'm glad it turned out okay! So, people, as we have heard, even if <summarize the story> its' possible to make it out of a car wreck alive <pause for laughter>. Fortunately, most car accidents are not that serious, but when discussing the safety of traveling by road we must consider... <carry on your speech>

Note: Don't put a particular member of your audience on the spot, and have a solution when nobody responds to your question.

Ways to start a speech
Talk about the past

- Tell about a **personal experience** from the past that is related to the topic.

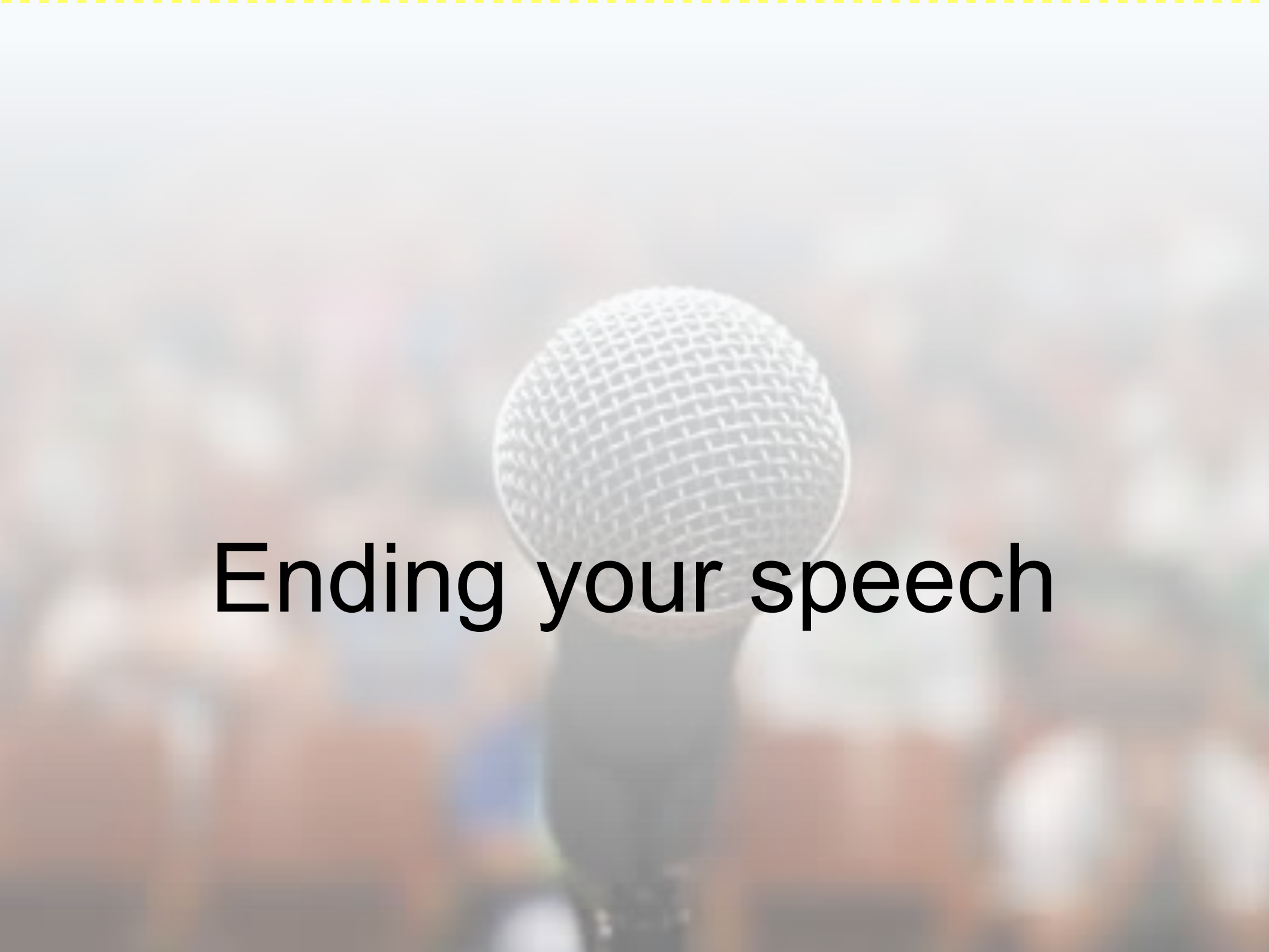
  A few years ago I had an experience that made me think about the topic we are discussing today … <story about what happened>

- Refer to a recent **news event**

  Yesterday I read in the news about the results of the peace talks between the EU and Russia.

- Refer to a **famous person or event**

  Confucius based many of his teachings on the assumption that every human relationship is a balancing act.



Ending your speech

Tip: Always write the end of your speech first !

When preparing a speech, always **think about how you are going to end it first.** The end of your speech must always contain a **strong message,** and be worded in a **compelling** way.

The end is the only part of your speech that people will remember. It must **pack a punch.**

How to end your speech

Leading speakers end their speeches like the opera star—on a **high note**, vocally and intellectually.

Just as the comedian should leave the audience laughing, **the speaker should leave the audience thinking**.

Last words linger. Last words crystallize your thoughts, galvanize your message, and mobilize your audience.

How to end your speech

Let's quickly review a few slides from the lesson we did before about how to end your speech using the following methods:

- Title Close
- Circular Close
- Contrast Close
- Challenge Close
- Invitation Close
- Quotation Close

Ways to end a speech
Refer back to the beginning of your speech

- End with the **title** or topic you are discussing.
  ("title close")

  With this I would like to conclude my speech, and hope you agree with me that "peace is possible"!

- Put the beginning of your speech in a **different light** or **highlight a contrast.**
  ("circular close“ and “contrast close”)

  As I said in the beginning of my speech, success means different things to different people. Now that I showed you the impact of industry on the environment, I will now leave you to ponder if your definition of success includes growing your company without destroying the environment.

Ways to end a speech
Challenge or invite

- End with an **invitation** or **challenge**

  Let's not sit on the side-lines. ***Let's*** *step out of the grey twilight into the bright sunshine and* ***take action****.*

  Now that I have explained to you how easy it is, ***you can go out and make a difference****, just go an do it!*

Ways to end a speech

Use a famous quote

In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.

Abraham Lincoln

Mankind must put an end to war before war puts an end to mankind.

John F. Kennedy

Keep looking up! I learn from the past, dream about the future and look up. There's nothing like a beautiful sunset to end a healthy day.

Rachel Boston

If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.

Lao Tzu

Exercise

Choose **one** of the following topics, and imagine you are giving a speech about it. **Think of a compelling way to end your speech**. It doesn't matter what your message is, just make sure your statement is powerful. I will ask some of you of you to deliver the statement to the class.

Topics:

- Economic growth in China
- Trade war with the US
- Climate change
- Giving an acceptance speech at your graduation
- Your hopes for a better future

Review

Starting and ending a speech

- Memorise and recite a **standard address and introduction.**
- **Start and end smoothly.**
- Start by grabbing your audience's **attention.**
- End on a high note, and make sure your **message packs a punch.**