Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Explain the four kinds of informative speeches discussed in the chapter.
2. Apply the six guidelines for informative speaking offered in the chapter.

Chapter Outline

I. Speaking to inform is one of the most important skills a student can develop.
   A. Public speaking to inform occurs in a wide range of everyday situations.
      1. There are endless situations in which people need to inform others.
      2. The ability to convey knowledge and understanding will prove valuable to students throughout their lives.
   B. There are three criteria for effective informative speaking.
      1. The information should be communicated accurately.
      2. The information should be communicated clearly.
      3. The information should be made meaningful and interesting to the audience.

II. Informative speeches can be classified into four types.
   A. Some informative speeches are about objects.
      1. Speeches about objects describe something that is visible, tangible, and stable in form.
2. Speeches about objects need to be sharply focused.
3. Speeches about objects can use a variety of organizational patterns.
   a. A speech about the history or evolution of an object would be arranged in chronological order.
   b. A speech about the main features of an object might be arranged in spatial order.
   c. Most informative speeches about objects will fall into topical order.
B. Some informative speeches are about processes.
   1. Speeches about processes explain how something is made, describe how something is done, or convey how something works.
   2. There are two kinds of informative speeches about processes.
      a. One type explains a process so the audience will understand it better.
      b. The other type explains a process so the audience will be able to perform the process themselves.
   3. Speeches about processes often require visual aids.
   4. Speeches about processes require careful organization.
      a. Speeches that explain a process step by step are arranged in chronological order.
      b. Speeches that focus on the major principles or techniques involved in performing the process are usually arranged in topical order.
      c. Whichever method of organization is used, each step in the process must be clear and easy for listeners to follow.
C. Some informative speeches are about events.
   1. Speeches about events can deal with any kind of happening or occurrence.
   2. There are many ways to organize a speech about an event.
      a. Speeches that recount the history of an event are arranged in chronological order.
      b. Speeches that deal with particular elements of an event are usually arranged in topical order.
D. Some informative speeches are about concepts.
   1. Speeches about concepts convey information concerning beliefs, theories, principles, or other abstract subjects.
   2. Speeches about concepts are usually arranged in topical order.
   3. Speeches about concepts are often more complex than other kinds of informative speeches.
      a. When discussing concepts, a speaker should avoid technical language and define terms clearly.
      b. A speaker should also use examples and comparisons to make concepts understandable to listeners.
E. The lines dividing speeches about objects, processes, events, and concepts are not absolute.
III. There are six guidelines for effective informative speaking.

A. Informative speakers should be wary of overestimating what the audience knows.
   1. In most cases, the audience will be only vaguely knowledgeable about the speaker’s topic.
   2. To avoid misunderstanding, the speaker must explain ideas thoroughly and clearly.

B. Informative speakers should find ways to relate the subject directly to the audience.
   1. Informative speakers must recognize that what is fascinating to them may not be fascinating to everybody.
   2. Effective informative speakers work to get the audience interested—and to keep them interested.

C. Informative speakers should avoid being too technical.
   1. An informative speech may be overly technical because the subject matter is too specialized for the audience or because of the speaker’s use of jargon.
   2. Effective informative speakers select topics that are not too technical for the audience and use appropriate language.

D. Informative speakers should avoid abstractions.
   1. Replacing tedious abstractions with specific details makes an informative speech more compelling.
   2. One way to avoid abstractions is through description.
   3. A second way to avoid abstractions is with comparisons.
   4. A third way to avoid abstractions is with contrast.

E. Informative speakers should personalize their ideas.
   1. Nothing enlivens an informative speech more than personal illustrations.
   2. Whenever possible, informative speakers should try to dramatize their ideas in human terms.
   3. The best way to accomplish this is with examples—real or hypothetical—that personalize the subject matter.

F. Informative speakers should be creative in thinking about ways to achieve their objectives.
   1. In public speaking, creativity involves using language imaginatively and resourcefully.
   2. Creativity can also influence any aspect of a speech, including a speaker’s visual aids.

**Exercises for Critical Thinking** *(from text page 297)*

1. Below is a list of subjects for informative speeches. Your task is twofold: (a) Select four of the topics and prepare a specific purpose statement for an informative speech about each of the four. Make sure your four specific purpose statements include at least one that deals with its topic as an object, one that deals with its topic as a process, one that deals with its topic as an event, and