



UNC
GREENSBORO

The University Speaking Center

Giving Good Reasons and Evidence

Reasons are statements that answer why you should believe or do something. If you have expertise in the subject matter, you are likely to know some of the reasons.

Example: If you are an exercise buff and you want the audience to “walk at least three times a week,” you know that three of the reasons for walking are (1) to help control weight, (2) to help strengthen the cardiovascular system, and (3) to help a person feel better.

For most of your persuasive speeches, you will want to do research to verify or discover reasons so that you can choose the best ones for your speech. Once you have a list of possible reasons, weigh and evaluate them to select three or four good ones. Here are some criteria for evaluating possible reasons.

1. Good reasons can be supported. Some reasons that sound impressive cannot be supported with facts.

Example: “The welfare system has been grossly abused” sounds like a good reason, but if you cannot find facts to support so strong a statement, either modify it or do not use it in your speech.

2. Good reasons are relevant to the proposition. Sometimes statements look like reasons, but they do not supply much proof.

Example: “The welfare system is supported by socialists” may sound like a reason for overhauling it to people who dislike socialism, but it does not offer any direct proof that the system needs overhauling.

3. Good reasons will have an impact on the intended audience. Suppose you have a great deal of factual evidence to back up the statement.

Example: “The welfare system does not encourage recipients to seek work.” Even if it is a well-supported reason, it would be an ineffective reason to use in a speech where the majority of the audience did not see “seeking work” as a primary criterion for evaluating the welfare system.

Although you cannot always be sure about the potential impact of a reason, you can estimate its possible impact based on your audience analysis. By themselves, reasons are only unsupported statements.

Although some reasons are self-explanatory and occasionally have a persuasive effect without further support, most listeners look for **evidence** or factual statements and expert opinions to support the reasons before they will either accept or act on them.

Before including evidence in your speech, you will want to ask at least three questions to assure yourself that what you present is “**good**” evidence.

1. What is the source of the evidence?

This question involves both the people who offered the opinions or compiled the facts and the book, journal, and source where they were reported.

2. Is the evidence recent?

Products, ideas, and statistics are best when they are recent. Five year old evidence may not be true today. Furthermore, an article in last week’s news magazine may be using five year old evidence in the story.

3. Is the evidence relevant?

Make sure your evidence directly supports the reason. If it does not, leave it out of the speech.