Persuasive speeches are usually designed to change some aspect of the symbolically structured reality upon which the audience bases its actions. Once you have researched your topic and gathered the materials required to make your case, you will need to organize them so that they can move your audience’s opinions. Effective organization may be summarized in two principles that arise from the twin themes grounding this book. First, effective persuasive speeches must be organized so that they project the reality you propose in a vivid and compelling manner that engages the audience’s imagination. That is, you must effectively picture the reality you want them to accept if you are to persuade them to adopt your proposition. Second, effective persuasive speeches must be organized so as to create a sense of conceptual motion. This sense of progressive movement from one vision of reality to another will need to be accomplished within at least two distinct levels of speech organization—which we might call the macro and microstructural levels.

The macrostructural level concerns the two largest organizational units within your speech. As Figure 14-1 illustrates, the highest level of macroorganization for persuasive speeches corresponds to the normal three-part structure of all speeches: introduction, body, and conclusion. At this level, a persuasive speech shares many attributes with informative speeches. Both should have a clear organic progression from introduction, to body, to conclusion. The introduction of each needs to capture and direct attention to the subject, reveal your source of expertise, and so forth. Their bodies must be clearly organized to create forward motion and should have an ample variety of supporting material to bring them fully to life. Their conclusions must summarize the speech and provide a sense of closure for the audience. However, the fact remains that the persuasive purpose requires adaptations of these general principles if you are to succeed in your persuasive goal. These adaptations will be described below.

The second macroorganizational level of persuasive speeches concerns the structure of their bodies. At this level, each main point (the Roman I, II, and III level of an outline) represents a unit of proof designed to move the audience’s thinking toward your proposition by leading them progressively through a sequence of stages. Just as there are several broad patterns for organizing for informative speeches (chronological order, spatial order, and so forth), there are a number of fundamental patterns of persuasive movement you can choose from in trying to convince the audience to accept your proposition. Each of the five organizational patterns presented in this chapter employs a distinct approach to creating conceptual motion in your speech and is designed to work best under different situations. We will be looking at these five macrostructural patterns of persuasive movements momentarily.

The microstructural level of organization concerns the internal construction of each of the proof units that compose the main body of the speech. At this level we will consider how specific patterns of reasoning and evidence may be woven together to support the main points required by the macrostructural plan you have chosen. Each microlevel proof should be designed to create a small amount of conceptual motion in favor of your proposition. Collectively, these little bursts of forward motion help move your audience’s beliefs along the path required by your final destination—accepting your proposition.

In this chapter, we will begin by discussing the five most frequently used structural plans for organizing the bodies of persuasive speeches. Once you have decided upon one of the five general “floor plans,” you can concern yourself with the microlevel of argumentation treated in the second half of this chapter, for this level fills in the rest of the structural detail of your speech. These microlevel arguments, usually just called proofs, give your speech additional layers of conceptual movement that propel your overall arguments along in the audience’s imagination.

This progression from macrostructural to microstructural considerations follows the same order as we might use to construct a house. You must first select the basic floor plan, pour the foundation, and build the load-bearing walls and roof before you can
hang the wall paper in the guest bathroom. Similarly, in constructing your persuasive speech, you first need to select an overall organizational plan that allows you to effectively address the issues (see Chapter 13) that will be critical in supporting your proposition. This is an important step because the five persuasive plans are as different from one another as a three-bedroom ranch house plan, a California contemporary, and a two-story colonial. For each persuasive plan has its own principle of conceptual movement that guides the essential structure of the speech.

**FIVE FLOOR PLANS FOR ORGANIZING PERSUASIVE SPEECHES**

One of the most obvious places persuasive speeches differ from informative is in the structure of their bodies. Persuasive speeches are organized so as to move the audience’s thinking through a sequence of steps from their present beliefs to the proposition the speaker wishes them to accept. The five basic floor plans you can use for organizing your persuasive speeches are (a) topical reasons, (b) problem-solution, (c) comparative advantages, (d) criteria-satisfaction, and (e) elimination of alternatives. Each of these structural plans represents a general path for conceptual movement that most audiences are readily familiar with. We frequently think in these five ways, so persuasion is facilitated by the familiarity of the path of organizational movement. We will look at each of these patterns, emphasizing the characteristics of the pattern that might make it the appropriate choice for particular audiences on particular occasions.

**Topical Reasons**

Because every persuasive speech requires you to present reasons to support a claim, one of the most useful patterns of organization is the straightforward identification of a topically organized slate of reasons. The topical reasons pattern gets its name because each of the reasons used to support your major claim functions almost like an independent topic (in this case, an independent proof unit). There is little attempt to systematically link the independent proof units into any larger pattern—although there is in each of the other patterns that follow. Therefore, this pattern creates the least amount of virtual movement: each separate reason lends only its own individual support to your claim.

This movement pattern is illustrated in Figure 14-2. As you can see, each reason is treated as an independent supporting pillar—much like the legs of a table—to hold up the proposition. The movement is from pillar to pillar (proof unit to proof unit), but the individual pillars are not necessarily tightly linked to one another.

In actual practice, the topical reasons pattern calls on you to clearly announce your persuasive proposition early in your speech and to present a topically organized list of reasons for accepting it. You will elaborate upon those reasons during the course of the body of your speech, but the main slate of reasons themselves provides the overall framework for your speech’s body. Thus, as you perform your introductory functions, you will typically not only announce the speech’s proposition but also the pattern of reasons you will use to support it. For example, an introduction to a topical reasons patterned speech might sound something like this:

**Drug abuse is one of the major problems we face as a nation today. During the Reagan Bush years, antidrug spending increased six fold—to over 7.9 billion dollars. And yet the “get tough” program has not accomplished its goals. In that time, according to Ellen Benoit, the price of a kilo of cocaine has dropped by 80 percent, there is 10 times as much cocaine on the street, 46 percent of all federal prisoners are there on drug-related offenses, and the taxpayers are paying over 36 billion a year on drug-related criminal prosecution.**

**Obviously the get tough policy of the past 12 years is not working and we need a change. Perhaps if “get tougher” is not working, it is now finally time to try a policy of “get easier.” By this I mean that we must take the profit out of the illicit drug business by regulating it rather than prohibiting it. So, today I would like to propose four reasons why the federal government should act to decriminalize such recreational drugs as cocaine and substitute regulatory statutes in place of criminal statutes.**

**The decriminalization of cocaine should be done for four reasons. First, decriminalization would reduce crime in a number of major categories. Second, decriminalization would reduce the actual amount of cocaine usage over time. Third, decriminalization would generate revenue that could be used for community education programs. And, finally, decriminalizing cocaine would improve not harm the contemporary American moral climate. Let me now explain why the reasons are true and how they support my contention that the decriminalization of cocaine is a rational policy for America as we move toward the 21st century.**
In this introduction, the speaker quickly performs the major introductory functions, establishes the proposition to be defended, and announces the topical reasons pattern of organization. This prepares the audience for the body and begins the speech’s sense of forward motion, as the speaker makes the transition to the first reason or unit of proof to be developed. Then, as these major points are developed with supporting reasoning and evidence, the speech gains a sense of growth and persuasive movement.

Having introduced the speech in this way, the speaker would then need to make sure that each main point of the body corresponded with one of the four topically arranged reasons. That is, each of the Roman level points in the outline would be one of the four reasons previously announced. Thus, for example, the macrolevel of organization for the body of the topical reasons speech might look like this:

I. Decriminalizing cocaine would reduce crime in a number of major categories.
II. Decriminalizing cocaine would reduce the amount of actual cocaine usage over time.
III. Decriminalizing cocaine would generate useful revenue for community programs.
IV. Decriminalizing cocaine would improve rather than harm the American moral climate.

Using the topical reasons pattern is not as simple, of course, as merely announcing the proposition and main reasons in the introduction, and then repeating them in greater detail in the body. Rarely are your main points so self-evidently true that you could avoid presenting more microlevel proofs to support them. Accordingly, you will supply reasons to support your reasons. And if the reasons for your reasons are not themselves transparently true to your audience, then those reasons would also need some support. Although an infinite regression of “reasons for your reasons” is neither possible nor desirable, you may very well have to embed several levels of reasoning within your overall topical reasons floor plan. This is accomplished through the microlevel of argumentation that is presented in the second half of the chapter.

Even though the main points of a topical reasons speech are not necessarily closely linked conceptually, the goal of creating conceptual motion is still important as you try to urge your audience’s thinking along a particular persuasive path. Some of this motion is created by using the same principles described for topically organized informative speeches. For example, try arranging your independent reasons in an order that suggests a principle of movement from one point to the next. The goal is to use this principle to create a sense of forward motion and climax, which you will, of course, mention at transitional points within the speech. Furthermore, another large portion of the persuasive motion is created within the more microlevel proofs you construct to support the macrostructure of the body. Applied to the example we have been using, the arrows in the following outline illustrate the flow of motion created as a speech progresses following the topical reasons pattern of organization.

---

Decriminalizing cocaine would reduce crime in a number of major categories.

A. Direct drug crimes would be largely eliminated.
   1. Evidence to support subreason A (definition)
   2. Evidence to support subreason A (statistics)
   3. Evidence to support subreason A (quotation)

B. Robbery and theft would be reduced.
   1. Evidence to support subreason B (definition)
   2. Evidence to support subreason B (statistics)
   3. Evidence to support subreason B (quotation)

C. Drug-related murders would be substantially reduced.
   1. Evidence to support subreason C (definition)
   2. Evidence to support subreason C (statistics)
   3. Evidence to support subreason C (quotation)

II. Decriminalizing cocaine would reduce the amount of actual cocaine usage over time.
   A. 1st subreason in support of Reason #2
      1. Evidence to support subreason A
   B. Etc.
   C. Etc.

III. Decriminalizing cocaine would generate useful revenue for community programs.
    A. Etc.
    B. Etc.
    C. Etc.

IV. Decriminalizing cocaine would improve rather than harm the American moral climate.
   A. Etc.
   B. Etc.

The topical reasons pattern of organization has many advantages. It is simple and direct to use; it gets to its point quickly and begins its defense of the proposition almost from the onset of the speech; although its main reasons are not closely linked, its very directness creates immediate forward motion toward your proposition; and it is extremely versatile—being useful for all types of propositions (fact, value, policy, and definition), and for all persuasive purposes (replacement of an old belief, changing a belief’s intensity, and so on). However, in spite of its many advantages, there are times when the topical reasons pattern is not your most persuasive choice. First, because its major points are relatively independent of one another, this pattern does not invite you to develop a complex persuasive strategy or set of arguments. Each reason does its own independent persuasive work without any natural help from the others. Furthermore, the very directness of the pattern is a potential source of problems. Because the topical reasons pattern launches so quickly into its defense of the proposition, it does relatively little to precondition the audience’s receptivity to the claim. Thus, if you think your audience may need some background preparation before they can be receptive to your proposal, or if you need to develop a more complex argument structure than the topical reason approach permits, the problem-solution pattern may be a better choice.
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Problem-Solution

A fully developed problem-solution speech uses at least four closely linked phases in creating its persuasive motion: (a) establish that a problem exists, (b) present an adequately detailed plan to solve the problem, (c) show that the proposed solution will actually work to solve the problem, and (d) demonstrate that your proposal would not create any significant new problems if it is tried. In contrast to the topical reasons pattern, the four phases of the problem-solution are closely linked in order to create a definite sense of progression from one issue to the next.

This strong sense of directional motion is illustrated in figure 14-3, where you can see that the description of a problem leads directly to the description of a solution, which is first justified on its positive merits and then on its absence of any negative merits.

![Problem-Solution Pattern for Organizing an Argumentative Case Structure](image)

Figure 14-3. Creating persuasive motion using the problem-solution pattern of organization.

Let us now look at each of the four phases of the problem-solution pattern in more detail.

In the problem-solution pattern, the first major point claims the specific problem exists. Because establishing the existence of a problem comes first, this pattern is especially useful under two circumstances: (a) when the audience is essentially unaware of the problem before they hear your speech, or (b) when the audience does not see the problem in the way you see it. In the first case, your goal is to introduce your audience to a problem upon which they have no prior opinion—formulating your portrayal of it in a sympathetic and compelling manner.

In the second case, the audience is presumed to have already made a judgment about the nature of the problem—but their assessment differs in fundamental ways from your own. Perhaps, for example, a new road is to be built and two different routes are being considered. One view of the problem is purely economic: Which route is cheapest to build? However, you might want the audience to see the problem as essentially ecological: Which route is the least harmful to the region’s endangered species? Because your

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audience sees the decision about the road as one type of problem (economic), and you see it as another (ecological), your first persuasive goal would be to have your audience understand the nature of the problem differently—which would, of course, lead to a different solution. Secondarily, it would also require one to think about different workability issues, justifications of the absence of additional problems, and so forth, than would be the case if the problem were seen as purely economic.

Whether your primary goal is to make your audience aware of a problem or to change their minds about its essential nature, your first task when using the problem-solution pattern is painting a vivid picture of the problem as you see it. To create a need for your solution, your first main point should include subpoints concerning such things as the following:

1. What is the nature of the problem?
2. Who is involved in the problem?
3. What kinds of harms are caused by the problem?
4. Who gets harmed by the problem?
5. How much harm is actually caused by the problem?
6. What were the causes of the problem?

Having created a need to correct some ill, your next major point will be that a solution exists—one you will describe in whatever detail is necessary to explain its operation. Sometimes this explanation is a simple description of a course of action to be taken; at other times the solution phase will require a detailed explanation of a complex plan involving a series of actions. Whichever is the case, the third phase of a problem-solution speech requires you to explain exactly how your plan would eliminate the problem as you have described it. For example, the following introduction to a typical problem-solution speech might sound like this:

Imagine that you were in a movie theater, and every 12 minutes a popcorn peddler came by yelling, “Popcorn, peanuts.” What would you do? Get up and leave? Write to the management and protest?

Well, your children are faced with this situation every day—when they watch prime time morning television. This “popcorn peddling” by toy and cereal manufacturers constitutes a serious problem that needs immediate attention and action.

Today, I’d like to show you why advertising on children’s prime time television constitutes a serious problem both to you and to your children, and then tell you some of the things you can do to protect your children from being taken in by the peddlers of the latest fad in social popcorn.

With such an introduction, the outline of the rest of the speech might look something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. There is a serious problem caused by advertising on children’s prime time television.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. This advertising causes problems for parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 1st type of harm to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Evidence of harm #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Evidence of harm #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 2nd type of harm to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Evidence of harm #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Evidence of harm #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. This advertising causes problems for the children themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 1st type of harm to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Evidence of harm #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Evidence of harm #1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constructing Persuasive Arguments

2. 2nd type of harm to children
   a. Evidence of harm #2
   b. Evidence of harm #2
   C. This advertising causes harm for society as a whole.
   1. Etc.
   2. Etc.
   II. There is a solution to these problems.
      A. First, we must . . .
      1. Details
      2. Details
      B. Second, we must . . .
      C. Third, we must . . .
      III. The plan will solve the problems.
      A. The plan will solve the parents’ problems.
      1. 1st reason it will solve the parents’ problem
         a. Evidence to support the 1st reason
         b. Evidence to support the 1st reason
      2. 2nd reason it will solve the parents’ problem
         B. The solution will solve the children’s problems.
         C. The solution will solve society’s problems.
      IV. The solution will cause no new problems of its own.
         A. The solution is inexpensive to implement.
         B. The solution does not infringe on advertisers’ constitutional rights.
         C. Etc.

The problem-solution pattern is versatile in that it may be successfully used with neutral and uninformed audiences as well as informed and knowledgeable audiences. It works with less informed audiences because the problem phase emphasizes the presentation of information about the problem. Uninformed audiences will consider this information to be just the kind of useful background they need in order to make an informed decision. The pattern may also be used with informed and strongly committed audiences because you can construct an alternative picture of the problem—one they may not previously have imagined. Therefore, if you intend to picture the problem differently from how your audience envisions it, using the problem-solution pattern should help you restructure the audience’s vision of it. This feature of the problem-solution pattern is among its most important because you frequently need to change the audience’s picture of the situation before they will act on the solution you plan to propose.

Comparative Advantages

Not every proposition you advocate requires there to be a serious problem to remedy. Sometimes you merely wish to make things better than they presently are. Under such circumstances, you may find the comparative advantages pattern of organization useful. This pattern requires you to compare two different propositions with each other and to argue that one of them has a set of advantages over the other. It differs from the problem-solution pattern in that you do not assume that the current situation contains a major deficit to overcome—only that it could be improved by adopting your proposition.

The comparative advantages pattern is usually employed when you are comparing two policies (i.e., courses of action), but it need not be restricted to policy propositions exclusively. Any two competing propositions may be compared with one another, and the advantages of believing the one may be advocated in comparison with those of the other. For example, two competing theories explaining some phenomenon—anything from the rise of cancers in a particular geographical area to the details of the Kennedy assassination—can be compared on their ability to account for the data discovered.

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When using the comparative advantages pattern, each main point of your outline will be worded as an advantage that your proposition has over competing propositions. For example, suppose a speech’s introduction began as follows:

Recent films on the Kennedy assassination—J.F.K and Ruby—have reawakened a slumbering controversy. Even today, there is a clear choice between the belief that former President Kennedy was killed by a lone assassin and the claim that Lee Harvey Oswald was a minor figure in a much larger conspiracy. In my judgment, there are three advantages in believing that there was a larger conspiracy involved in Kennedy’s death. For the conspiracy theory I will propose tonight clarifies three of the major mysteries left by the lone gunman theory—mysteries that can be explained in no other way.

The outline for this speech might very well look like this:

I. The first advantage of believing in the conspiracy theory is that it . . .
   A. 1st reason the advantage will come about
      1. Evidence in support of reason #1
      2. Evidence in support of reason #2
   B. 2nd reason the advantage will come about
   II. The second advantage of believing in the conspiracy theory is that it . . .
   III. The third advantage of believing in the conspiracy theory is that it . . .

The strength of the comparative advantage pattern is that a speaker does not have to bear the burden of showing some major deficit in an opposing proposition or the current situation. Therefore, the pattern assumes a smaller burden of proof and a generally more positive tone. Its major limitation is that it is useful for a narrower range of propositions. Figure 14-4 illustrates the form of motion that the comparative advantage pattern seeks to create.

Figure 14-4. Creating persuasive motion using the comparative advantages pattern of organization
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Criteria-Satisfaction

Whenever we decide whether to accept a proposition, our decision will be based on some criterion or another—logic, the quality of the evidence, the character of the speaker, how it fits with our other fundamental beliefs, or some other. There are always standards of judgment to be applied to a particular case. The criteria-satisfaction pattern of organization works by helping the audience become consciously aware of the appropriate criteria for evaluating competing propositions. It does this by arguing in defense of a set of criteria to be used in judging the controversy at hand.

When employing the criteria-satisfaction pattern, the body of the speech is typically divided into two main parts. The first part (Roman numeral I in your outline) must establish the appropriateness and importance of a set of criteria you believe should be used for evaluating competing proposals. The second part requires you to establish why your preferred position best meets the criteria you established in the first part. This is accomplished in two phases, with the first showing how competing proposals fail to meet the proposed criteria adequately, and the second explaining why your preferred proposition fully meets the spirit and letter of the criteria. A simpler version of the pattern omits the discussion of the competing propositions and moves directly from the defense of the criteria to showing how your most preferred solution fits those criteria. Figure 14-5 illustrates the type of conceptual motion encouraged by the fully developed criteria-satisfaction pattern of organization.

Figure 14-5. Creating persuasive motion using the criteria-satisfaction pattern of organization

The introduction to a criteria-satisfaction speech will first sketch some issue to which your most preferred proposition will be an answer. Then it will preview the criteria-satisfaction pattern that will be used—noting that you will propose a certain number of criteria and then evaluate competing options based on those criteria. For example, a typical introduction to a criteria-satisfaction speech might go like this:


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladies and gentlemen of the council, Tonight you must vote on whether or not to allow the Ace Trash Company to build its new garbage dump at the Rockport, Carter Road, or Zephelm site. This decision can only be made by seeing which site best meets the criteria required for a satisfactory solution. Tonight, I would like to argue first that there are three criteria that must be satisfied for a solution to be acceptable, and then to explain why the Rockport site best fulfills those criteria.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The following outline illustrates the criteria-satisfaction pattern of organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. There are three criteria that must be met.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Defense of criterion #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Evidence in support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evidence in support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Defense of criterion #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Evidence in support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evidence in support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Defense of criterion #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The three sites may be evaluated against these criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Evaluation of the Carter Road site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Evaluation against criterion #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evaluation against criterion #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evaluation against criterion #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Evaluation of the Zephelm site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Evaluation against criterion #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evaluation against criterion #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evaluation against criterion #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Evaluation of the Rockport site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Evaluation against criterion #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evaluation against criterion #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evaluation against criterion #3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One special strength of the criteria-satisfaction pattern is its usefulness in arguing about value-based decisions because, during the criteria phase, this pattern forcefully reveals the value structure that should be applied in a controversial area. By making the values more overtly visible to your audience, you can more readily show why your proposition is the most satisfactory one among the competitors.

Elimination of Alternatives

The elimination of alternatives pattern involves the systematic discounting of less desirable alternative propositions, followed by a defense of the most desirable one. To see how this pattern works, it is helpful to contrast it with the logic of the criteria-satisfaction pattern. In the criteria-satisfaction pattern, you will compare each of the several competing proposals against the same set of criteria, namely, those established in the first part of your speech. Your goal is to eliminate the options you least prefer by showing how they fail to successfully fulfill a set of criteria upon which they are all compared. In the elimination of alternatives pattern, the goal is the same—to eliminate all but one of the options competing for your audience’s belief. Furthermore, as each competing option is defeated, the resistance to your preferred option should be reduced, so that you conclude the speech with a defense of your most preferred option. Figure 14-6 illustrates this pattern of movement.
As you can see from the illustration, rather than establishing a common set of criteria to use for all competing beliefs, you make the claim that each competitor is unsatisfactory for its own individual set of reasons. There is no requirement that these reasons be parallel to one another, as there is in the criteria-satisfaction pattern. In the elimination of alternatives pattern, each main point works to eliminate one of the competing beliefs by showing its inadequacy on whatever criteria seem most appropriate.

In the elimination of alternatives pattern, your introduction will briefly allude to some problem the audience is aware of and will mention all of the seriously discussed solutions. Then your first main point will discuss the flaws you find in the first solution. The substructure of the point will be composed of a discussion of the reasons you find the alternative to be problematic. After you have shown that each of the major competing positions is inadequate, and your most preferred position is the only one left, the final major point of your speech explains why your preferred position does not have any of the flaws of the other solutions, nor others of its own that would keep it from being the best of the possible alternatives.

The body of a typical elimination of alternatives speech might look like this:

1. The first alternative is not satisfactory for three reasons.
   A. Reason #1
   B. Reason #2
   C. Reason #3

2. The second alternative is not satisfactory for two reasons.
   A. Reason #1
   B. Reason #2

3. The third alternative is not satisfactory for four reasons.

To conclude this first portion of the chapter, then: if you use one of these rather comprehensive organizational plans for the macroorganization of your speech, your audience should be moved, at the minimum, to consider your proposal seriously. Each pattern creates a distinctive type of persuasive motion that is easy for speakers to follow and that is readily recognized as reasonable to the typical American audience—even when they ultimately disagree with your conclusions. Furthermore, once you can organize your persuasive speech effectively to create conceptual motion using the five macrostructural plans treated above, you are ready to focus on the microstructural level of persuasive speech organization—constructing the individual units of proof that support your macrostructural reasoning. Careful attention to your individual arguments can add significant conceptual motion to your major points, while carelessness at the microlevel can undermine the effectiveness of an otherwise strong macroorganizational plan.

**Units of Proof: Constructing Individual Arguments**

Whenever you attempt to convince others to accept a new proposition, you will be trying to move their beliefs from one relatively stable construction of things (their current belief) to another (your proposition). To move your audience’s mind, you will usually have to lead them systematically through a chain of smaller steps. Accordingly, in this part of the chapter we turn to the microstructural level of persuasive organization—the construction of the individual proof units that flesh out and develop your speech. Here we will look at the reasoning process and how to weave your reasoning and evidence together to create a unit of proof capable of moving your audience’s thinking through a series of increments toward your overall proposition. The goal of this part, then, is to explain how to project a feeling of step-by-step rational motion for your audience.

These individual steps are known as proofs, and the entire process is referred to as argumentation—a special form of communication in which you present a claim and supply one or more reasons for accepting that claim. A persuasive speech is composed of a series of such proof units (arguments), organized in such a way that, if the listeners accept each of the smaller claims represented in the individual proof units, and these proof units are skillfully woven together into an appropriate macroorganizational structure, the audience eventually arrives at your proposition. Generally speaking, you will have as many proof units as you have issues to defend in your favor (see Chapter 13). Each issue will be worded as a reason to support your proposition. The process of using proofs to move an audience through a series of issues may be illustrated as in Figure 14-7.
The major tools you have for creating a feeling of rational motion are inductive and deductive arguments. Each of these types of argumentation reflects a distinctive way of projecting your reasoning into a verbal form for others to consider.  

**Inductive Reasoning and Evidence**

When our minds move from direct observations about the world to verbally formulated summarizing statements about those observations, the process is called inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning plays a critical role in persuasive speaking because your audiences want to know what evidence supports your claims and how you link the evidence to the claim you use it to support. Your evidence may come from either your own direct observations or those reported by others. Furthermore, the evidence used to begin the various inductive movement patterns may come from any of the seven kinds of supporting materials presented in Chapter 6—definitions, examples, narratives, statistics, quotations, comparisons and contrasts, and descriptions.

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*Although they are closely related terms and are frequently used interchangeably for stylistic variation, reasoning and argumentation do not represent identical concepts. They bear the same relationship to each other as do one’s private thinking and the public communication of that thought. REASONING may be defined as the private mental process of moving from one thought, idea, or observation to another in a systematic fashion. Because reasoning is a private process, its systematic progression of steps and final products are not available to others unless they are verbally communicated. ARGUMENTATION is the process of projecting a carefully formulated and edited version of your reasoning for others to consider. The purpose of constructing arguments (proof units) is to communicate the fruit of your reasoning about your topic in a way that leads your audience’s thinking along a systematic path that they feel as reasonable—that is, as related to their own preferred paths of private reasoning. Although argumentation is a communication skill and reasoning is a thinking skill, the two go hand in hand because your best private reasoning is the basis for your public argumentation, and your public argumentation provides the immediate basis for your audience’s subsequent private reasoning about your topic.*

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The movement from evidence to a summarizing proposition can follow at least six common paths—distinguished from one another based on the type of rational motion they use to proceed from the observation to the proposition. As figure 14-8 illustrates, the six most common paths of inductive motion are classification, sign, analogy, generalization, causation, and narrative probability.

**Reasoning by Classification.** The simplest and yet most fundamentally important type of inductive reasoning is classification. In **CLASSIFICATION**, you observe an event, assign it to a class of events, and attach an appropriate label to name it. For example, if you observe a race and see that Jack crossed the finish line first, and then formulate the proposition “Jack won today’s race,” you would be reasoning inductively because you have moved from a direct observation of an event (itself classified as a race) to a summarizing proposition (in this case, one classifying the event as winning a race). The following are additional examples of propositions that result from the inductive process of classification and verbal labeling.

- That was a very *rude* thing to do.
- A 13% flat tax is *regressive*.
- The proposed middle-class tax reduction plan is *pandering* to the voters.
- War is *hell*.
- All men are *mortal*.

What makes classification a significant form of inductive reasoning is that events do not *announce* which human categories they fit into. Events occur, things exist, but classifying them is a human activity requiring observers to decide which category the event best fits into, and which word it should therefore be labeled by. To do this requires the observer-classifier to determine the attributes that most significantly characterize the event, decide which class or classes those events would possibly match, and then select a label for the classification the person chooses to emphasize.
The role of reasoning in the classification process was clearly evident during the 1992 Democratic primary elections. During the early spring, when the candidates were all having various sorts of troubles, reporters frequently questioned whether there would be a *brokered* convention, and everyone involved said no; but there might be an *open* convention. For those who wanted a nominee selected through the primary election process, classifying a convention conducted in the absence of a set nominee was to have a *brokered* convention. But those who did not favor the presumptive nominee (which, after the April 7 primaries, was Bill Clinton) wanted what they were labeling an open convention, which would allow them to lobby for a different candidate. But whether it was classified as brokered or open, the situation imagined would be the same—powerful people lobbying delegates to vote for this or that candidate. But classifying it as brokered would imply that the process was a bad thing because the label emphasizes the power politics involved during the lobbying process; classifying it as open would be a good thing because this label emphasizes the freedom of choice gained on the part of the delegates. Each label features a different characteristic of the event as being important to the classification being produced.

### Constructing Persuasive Arguments

As this example illustrates, different people may observe essentially the same event and classify it quite differently, as signaled by the label they attach to the event. “Is the glass half-empty or half full?” is a way we commonly express our recognition of such differences. And should a candidate who got 40 percent of the vote in a three-way race be happy that the opponents only got 30 percent each or unhappy that 60 percent voted against her? The delegate count turns out the same, but how the election is interpreted is quite different based on the classification that gets accepted.

If 40 percent is classified as a big victory in a three-way race, then one or more competitors may become discouraged and decide to drop out; but if it is classified as a narrow victory, the opponents may get new hope and redouble their efforts. In this way, the classifications we make, and the labels we therefore select, can have profound repercussions for how persons respond to events and situations. Accordingly, a major part of your persuasive efforts can frequently involve convincing the audience to change its classification of an event, and therefore attach a different type of significance to whatever they are judging.

To use reasoning by classification in your speeches, you will argue that the details (evidence) you present concerning your observations (or those reported by others) justify a specific classification (and label), and fail to justify some alternative classification/label. Thus, when candidate Paul Tsongas said that middle-class tax cut offered by candidates such as Bill Clinton and Tom Harkin was *pandering*, he supported this claim with a description of the details of their plans that showed how they fulfilled the intensional criteria that define that term.

**Reasoning by Generalization.** Classification is an essential act of inductive reasoning and should be taken into account as you plan your persuasive strategy. However, inductive reasoning can go much further than mere classification of a single event. For example, you can use your specific observations to move to a general summarizing proposition. This path of inductive movement is known as *generalization* because the mind moves from one or more specific observations to a general claim based on those observations. For many people, the move from the specific to the general is, in fact, what they mean by inductive reasoning.

Thus, to return to an earlier example, if you were to observe two or three more races, and Jack wins those too, you might formulate some considerably more generalized inductions—like the following progressively more general ones:

- Jack sure is a fast runner. (generalization)
- Jack is likely to win next week’s race at the Camelot Games. (prediction)
- Jack is likely to win many more races this season. (generalized prediction)

To construct inductive generalizations like these involves a two-step process. First, you must discover a pattern or characteristic that exists within a number of specific
instances of some thing or event; then, based on this pattern or characteristic, you form a proposition that predicts that other, unobserved instances of the thing will exhibit the same characteristic or pattern. Thus, for example, if Jill received an A in all of her major courses during her first three semesters in school, you might generalize to predict that she will probably get As in her major courses this semester as well. In generalization, then, you are predicting that the pattern you have discovered by observation of instances which you have actually inspected will also be applicable to instances you are not able to directly inspect.

In using generalization in a speech, you would show how several representative cases all have the same characteristic, and conclude that other unobserved instances should probably also exhibit the same characteristic. For example, if you were arguing for term limitations for members of Congress, you might support a general claim—the need to get reelected frequently takes up more time than doing the public’s business—by presenting three or four instances where particular members consistently missed important votes or failed to attend committee hearings because they were meeting with potential contributors. The specific instances are held up to the audience as representative of the way most or all members of Congress behave when they face the constant need to campaign for reelection. In this way you have moved from representative instances to a general claim. Similarly, if you were defending the claim that “affirmative action laws are still needed in the United States,” you might describe a number of instances where such laws have been relaxed and the hiring practices of employers seemed to return to old, racially motivated patterns. If your examples are truly representative, these instances would allow you to formulate the following generalization: Wherever affirmative action laws have been relaxed, employers have failed to hire a proportional number equally qualified minorities.²

**Reasoning by Signs.** A sign is anything that indicates the existence or presence of something else: a fever is a sign of illness; a smile is a sign of happiness; using a cane is a sign of an injured leg, and so forth. In reasoning from signs, one directly observes some components of a past, present, or developing event and concludes that something you cannot presently directly observe also exists, happened, or will happen in the future.

Because signs are always component parts of whatever situations they are said to be signs of, sign reasoning may move from the sign to the proposition in either of two different ways. Sometimes the movement is from the observed existence of one specific sign to the proposed existence of another equally specific aspect of the total situation. This is illustrated in figure 14-9, which shows how a sign may be used to point toward the possible existence of other related signs.

²The generalizing process may be ranged along a continuum of degrees from low to high—with the notion of “higher” levels of generalization suggesting a greater distance between the observations and the breadth of the proposition produced. The more inclusive the proposition formulated, and/or the fewer the observations used to generate the proposition, the more highly generalized the proposition is. The highest level generalizations are all-inclusive statements based on a fairly small sample of instances, such as, “all Americans behave boozily when the go overseas,” this is a widely held inductive generalization about all American tourists, which is based on the directly observed behavior of only some American tourists. However, whether the generalization is high or low, the pattern of intellectual movement is the same: the observations of some instances yields a predictive proposition about other, unobserved, instances.
When using sign reasoning in your speech, you would typically follow the second path of rational movement (from the sign to the existence of a total condition) by making a summarizing claim and then providing evidence that supports the existence of signs you are using to support the truth of your summarizing proposition. Thus, for example, if you claimed that "During the Reagan-Bush years, the American economy was allowed to deteriorate badly," you might feature such signs as our 4-trillion-dollar debt, the amount of borrowing we have done from European and Asian nations to finance that debt, the number of unemployed and homeless people in America, the disparity between managerial and nonmanagerial salaries, the savings and loan bailout crisis, and the large number of personal and corporate bankruptcies.

**Reasoning by Analogy.** Two things, processes, situations, or events are analogous whenever they have the same essential form—that is, when they share a common pattern of elements and relations among those elements. Thus, all knock-knock jokes are analogous to one another because they all have the same essential form.

Reasoning by analogy occurs whenever one identifies a pattern of features within one thing and then proposes that, because something else displays a number of those same features, the second thing will also share additional formal (but not actually observed) characteristics of the pattern found in the first. Thus, during the presidential debates Democratic candidates argued over whether the Canadian or the European system of health care better suits the situation in the United States. Each advocate sought to argue by analogy—in this case by citing particular ways the U.S. was analogous either to Canada or to the European Community. Each candidate cited a number of similarities and argued that, because of those similarities, the system he favored should be the preferred model for adoption in the United States. In such cases, the issue would become, “Which of the

**Analogy Warrants**

- **Situation X has a certain pattern observable of characteristics**
- **Therefore**
- **Situation Y can be shown to have some of those same observable characteristics**

Similarly, when labor leaders negotiate contracts with various industries (automobile, heavy manufacturing), they frequently use a form of reasoning by analogy called patterned bargaining. In patterned bargaining, the union reasons from the contract gained with one company to achieve similar contracts with all similar companies, which they treat as analogous because they all produce similar goods. Thus, if one of the “Big Three” auto manufacturers agrees to a certain package of health care benefits, the others are asked to concede the same benefits because they are analogous companies.

Reasoning by analogy has many risks. Recently, for example, when the Caterpillar company balked at patterned bargaining based on a contract negotiated with John Deere, it argued that Deere and Caterpillar were not really analogous and therefore their contracts should be different. A large portion of Caterpillar’s output is exported, the company argued, and Deere’s is not. Therefore, they were not analogous companies because they competed in different markets and under different world competitive conditions. If they are right, then Deere and Caterpillar are not analogous for bargaining purposes, and the inductive reasoning used to support the patterned-bargaining argument would not be sound. From this example, you can see that when you argue using analogy as your principle of rational motion, you will need to make sure the two situations really have similar forms. Superficial similarities can be misleading if they don’t really capture the essence of the situations that are being compared. Because this pattern of inductive movement from the structure of past experiences to the structure of present situations is so normal, reasoning by analogy will probably be used frequently in your persuasive speeches.

**Reasoning by Causation.** To cause something is to be responsible for its occurrence. Accordingly, when we try to explain events in our world we frequently try to identify the forces that were available to bring a particular result about. Reasoning by
causation occurs when you observe that certain forces exist (or did exist in the past), and that they were capable of bringing about some subsequent situation.

What makes this form of thinking into inductive reasoning is that you observe the existence of the forces but you do not see the actual moment of causation (as you might when a cue ball strikes an object ball in billiards). Without actually seeing the moment of causation, you are speculating that the forces you did observe could in principle have produced the event you are trying to account for. Causal reasoning, then, moves from one or more antecedent conditions, which your observations show to exist (or to have existed prior to the event you are explaining), to a proposition stating that those factors were responsible for the event. Your speech would show the connections that could have allowed the causal factors to produce the results.

Broadly speaking, every election rests upon competing causal claims: “Elect me and your government will be better.” Implied in this is the notion that candidate so-and-so will be better able to cause good things to happen than the opponent will. Because no conscientious citizen would accept this causal claim without further evidence, politicians point to factors in their historical records that would be capable of causing them to be able to fulfill their claim. These causal factors might include their honesty, leadership ability as shown in analogous situations (such as in business or in previous offices), public commitment to certain policies, the degree to which they have already thought out a coherent plan of action on various problems, and so forth. Similarly, if you were to argue for longer and harsher prison sentences for drug crimes because they would act as a deterrent, you would have to identify the causal forces inherent in such sentences that would allow them to actually reduce drug crimes.

**Reasoning by Narrative Probability.** Narratives are a form of discourse in which a story is told to make a point. As we said in Chapter 6, narratives require one or more characters who are engaged in doing something (the plot). The story’s plot moves from a preparatory background situation through rising, culminating, and resolving action, and it usually features some aspect of human goals, motivations, and intentions rather than the kind of passive causality found in the nonhuman world. That is, the characters act because they are motivated to accomplish something within the prevailing situation that launches the plot; they are not seen as passively stimulated to act by that situation.

Whenever we tell a story, we try to tell it coherently, so that all the details we include seem to be necessary to the unfolding of the story. That is, they must seem to make sense within the framework of the overall story we are telling. For a detail to be narratively probable, then, means that it fits coherently within the general framework of the story being narrated. When a detail does not fit, we must either question the truth of the detail or change the nature of the story we are trying to tell.

To reason by narrative probability is to claim that certain propositions must be true (or false) simply because they would (or would not) make sense within the framework of a certain narrative story line. Although reasoning by narrative probability is used every day as we give accounts for our behaviors and decisions, it can most easily be seen in legal discourse, where opposing lawyers present competing stories to the jury and try to convince them that their retelling of the events (namely, the retelling that most favors their client’s position) is the most coherent and comprehensive (Bennett, 1978). To be coherent means that the details make sense when woven together into a unified story line; to be comprehensive means that no significant details have been omitted in order to achieve coherence and the narrative probability the story conveys.

When you use it in your persuasive speeches, reasoning by narrative probability assumes your audience has developed a repository of story forms that they use as templates to interpret and evaluate the details you are providing. The rational motion is one of matching the observations and details reported with the details of the story form used for the evaluation. When the details do not match, their truth can be rejected on no stronger grounds than that they did not seem to fit the story template that was being applied. They seem “unreasonable.” This story wouldn’t play that way.

Several examples of the power of a narrative template to cause belief or disbelief occurred during Bill Clinton’s campaign for the presidency. Reporters on Clinton’s campaign had clearly decided to use a “Slick Willie” narrative frame for interpreting Clinton’s personal behaviors over a nearly 25 year span. Thus, when he failed to volunteer that he had once received a draft notice that was set aside as soon as he notified the draft board of his continuing student deferment status, his explanation was dismissed because it didn’t fit the Slick Willie narrative they were operating under. Similarly, when Clinton admitted to puffing on but not inhaling marijuana during the 1960s, the phrase “but I didn’t inhale” was ridiculed as yet another example of Slick Willie skirting the truth.
Because I am almost exactly the same age as Bill Clinton, and lived through many of the same generationally involving conflicts from the Vietnam era, I listened to his explanations through a very different narrative template. I remember being offered a menthol cigarette on the playground when I was in tenth grade. As I drew smoke into my mouth and felt the horrible burn, I let my cheeks plump out like those of Dizzy Gillespie playing the trumpet rather than inhale. So “not inhaling” meant to me tasting the flavor (which I disliked), and blowing the smoke out before it reached my lungs. Clinton’s explanation was narratively coherent with my own experience and I believed him. Rather than believe Clinton’s story, I assumed that the reporters who ridiculed him must have inhaled a little too deeply whatever it was they were smoking—otherwise, how could they have failed to see the narrative probability of Clinton’s account?

Similarly, when I received a preinduction notice (orders to go to Knoxville, Tennessee, for a physical) in 1968, I notified my draft board that I was still in college and promptly received a continuing deferment that allowed me to finish school. My induction notice was routine for the times and was handled in an entirely routine manner, so I therefore saw no narrative improbability in Clinton’s case either. This was what draft age college students were customarily doing in that era. The details as Clinton described them fit the story form I carried around based on my own experience—so, for me, his account seemed plausible. What seemed implausible was that a cadre of reporters (were they all really too young or too old to have experienced the Vietnam era personally?) could not imagine draft boards sending out automatic notices that required only automatic (though anxiety-producing) responses? It seems that the Slick Willie narrative framework—because it makes a better story for those whose jobs is to get news scoops—blinded them to alternative story lines that seem much more coherent with the context of the times in which the events actually occurred.

**Causation Warrants**

Factors observed in the situation at the time that might have been able to produce the effect to be explained

Past, Present, or Future Effect to be Explained

**Deductive Reasoning and Validity**

What this extended example demonstrates, then, is both the power of a narrative template to color one’s interpretation of the “facts,” and the importance when using narrative probability of selecting an interpretive frame that is capable of accounting for all the plot details—and not just the ones that seem to support one’s preferred proposition.

In contrast to inductive reasoning, which moves from direct observations to the formulation of a proposition, deductive reasoning moves from the presumed truth of one or more previously formulated propositions to the truth of some other systematically related proposition. In deductive reasoning, no new empirical evidence is required from the outside world to complete the reasoning process. What is required is the careful arrangement of the previously accepted propositions into a structurally valid pattern. In arranging the already known facts into patterns, there are several strictly formal relations that exist among propositions based upon the way the language code itself operates. Properly conducted, deductive reasoning can guarantee the truth of the derived propositions if the truth of the starting propositions is certain.

Among the most important of the formal relations that exist among propositions are implication (also called entailment) and preclusion. Proposition A IMPLIES (entails) proposition B when the truth of proposition A guarantees the truth of proposition B. Statement A PRECLUDES statement B when the truth of proposition A guarantees the falsity of proposition B. Thus, for example, if it is inductively true that (A) Jack won today’s race, then you need no further empirical evidence to prove deductively that (B) Jack did not lose today’s race. This is entailed by proposition A. Furthermore, the statement C Bill won today’s race is deductively false because it is precluded by the truth of proposition A. You can deduce the latter two propositions (B and C) simply by knowing A. To say that someone won is to say by implication that the person did not lose, and by preclusion that no one else won. Similarly, but with a little more complexity, if we accept the proposition that (A) Jack’s house is bigger than Bill’s, and that (B) Bill’s house is bigger than Sam’s, then it can be deduced by implication that:

(C) Jack’s house is bigger than Sam’s.

The way the English language works, and the way the propositions were arranged to feature the information they contain, guarantees the truth of the final claim; no further direct observations are needed to confirm the truth of proposition C.

The power of deductive reasoning is that you can use whatever true propositions you already accept to generate new propositions that must also be true. You do this by systematically manipulating the information that exists—but which is hidden or latent—in the propositions you already know. By chaining together a set of apparently independent, inductively derived propositions, the deductive reasoner can often generate propositions that are not merely true, but which are often quite surprising—propositions for which no direct empirical evidence was available to establish.

To see how deduction can be used to generate non-obvious, meaningful propositions based on information contained in other propositions, try to solve the following traditional deduction puzzle. According to the information given (which may seem at first like a collection of random facts), you should be able to deduce the answer to the question involved.

Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Robinson live in Chicago, Omaha, and Detroit, but not necessarily respectively. They are passengers on a train run by a three-man crew composed of an engineer, a fireman, and a brakeman. The men on the crew are named Smith, Jones,
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and Robinson, but not necessarily respectively. The following additional facts are also
known about these six:

(1) Mr. Robinson lives in Detroit.
(2) Mr. Jones never studied algebra.
(3) Smith beats the fireman at billiards.
(4) The passenger whose name is the same as the brakeman’s lives in Chicago.
(5) The brakeman lives in Omaha.
(6) The brakeman’s nearest neighbor, one of the passengers, is a
    mathematician.
The problem: What positions do Smith, Jones, and Robinson hold on the crew?

In this puzzle you have been given six apparently random pieces of information
and asked to deduce which crew member (Smith, Jones, or Robinson) has which job
on the train. You should also be able to determine which cities the passengers (Mr. Smith,
Mr. Jones, and Mr. Robinson) hail from. To solve the puzzle you must manipulate the six
propositions in various combinations to generate new propositions that lead you to the
proper solution. Because these new propositions can themselves become premises for new
arguments that yield further true conclusions, deductive reasoning becomes a powerful
tool in arguing for your beliefs.

How, then, might you begin to deduce the answer to the puzzle? Let us work
together to determine which cities the passengers are from. You are told in (1) that “Mr.
Robinson lives in Detroit,” so you know by deduction that the following proposition is
true:

(A) Either Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones lives in Omaha.

But now which is it? Who lives in Omaha? To find out you must combine information
from three different propositions: (2), (5), and (6). When you do, the answer becomes
obvious.

Let us begin with proposition (5), “The brakeman lives in Omaha.” This does not
seem very promising by itself because it is not the brakeman’s place of residence we are
interested in, it is the passenger’s. However, when we combine this bit of knowledge with
the information from (6), “The brakeman’s nearest neighbor, one of the passengers, is a
mathematician,” we are on to something because this allows us to deductively generate the
following two propositions:

(B) The passenger who is a mathematician lives in Omaha.
(C) The passenger who is not a mathematician lives in Chicago.

By taking the information given to us in (2) “Mr. Jones never studied algebra” we can
deduce the following proposition:

(D) Mr. Jones is not the mathematician.

We deduce this based upon the following implied categorical syllogism (see the discussion
of categorical syllogisms below):

All mathematicians have studied algebra.
Mr. Jones did not study algebra.
Therefore: Mr. Jones is not the mathematician.

Once you have determined that Mr. Jones is not a mathematician, you can combine the
deductively derived proposition (D) with another deductively derived proposition (C) to
conclude that:

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(E) Mr. Smith must live in Omaha.
(F) Mr. Jones must live in Chicago.

This may be illustrated in the following manner:

(C) The passenger who is not the mathematician lives in Chicago
(D) Mr. Jones is not the mathematician.

Therefore: Mr. Jones must live in Chicago.

Now, if you put what you have just learned deductively together with other facts that
you have been given, you should be able to deduce which person has which job on the train.
(The solution is printed at the bottom of the page.) *

How, then, do you put deduction to work in your speeches? Although modern
logicians have identified no fewer than eighteen valid3 patterns of deductive reasoning
(Kahane, 1982), three traditional types of deductive movement—categorical, disjunctive,
and conditional—are easily and effectively used in persuasive speeches. These three types
of deductive movement are illustrated in figure 14-11.

Figure 14-11. Three common paths that deductive rational motion easily follows

Let us now look at how these three paths of deductive rational motion might be
incorporated into your persuasive speeches.

Categorical Deduction. The best known type of deductive reasoning—the
categorical syllogism—has exactly three parts: (a) a major premise stating a general claim
about all members of a class, (b) a minor premise stating that some person, place, or thing
is a member of the class, and (c) a conclusion stating that the person, place, or thing
exhibits the characteristic that was featured in the proposition about the class. The
standard example of the categorical syllogism runs as follows:

All men are mortal. (major premise)
Socrates is a man. (minor premise)
Therefore: Socrates is mortal. (conclusion)

This same structure was illustrated earlier to deduce part of the solution to the Smith,
Jones, and Robinson puzzle.

3Smith (engineer), Jones (brakeman), Robinson (fireman).
†Deductive reasoning is said to be valid when the arrangement of the premises (i.e., the
propositions assumed to be true) of an argument guarantee the truth of the derived
conclusion.
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The justification that guarantees the deductive truth of the conclusion is the “categorical” relationship that exists between the major premise and the minor premise. This relationship may be illustrated in a way that reveals why this form of deduction is called a categorical syllogism.

![Categorical Deduction](image)

Figure 14.12. The deductive structure of the categorical syllogism

In figure 14.12, the large circle stands for the major premise, which establishes a class or category and presents a claim about all members of that class. In this case, the category is “all men,” and the claim is that all members of the class share the property of “being mortal.” The second, smaller, circle represents the minor premise, which claims that some object (in this case, Socrates) is a member of the class. Based on these two claims, it is logical to conclude deductively that Socrates shares in the characteristic that defines the class and therefore that “Socrates is mortal.” This final proposition is new, and is not based on any direct evidence or observations of Socrates. It is merely deductively latent (implied, entailed) in the information contained in the previous two inductively derived propositions.

From this illustration, categorical deduction may seem almost silly. Who, after all, would argue in such a labored way to such an obvious conclusion? Although in its fully elaborated form, the categorical syllogism seems like a cumbersome intellectual device, it can be more subtle than the Socrates example reveals. As we saw above, it can be used to display our assumptions about the categories we use in the everyday world: Mr. Jones could not be a mathematician because, we reason, he has never studied algebra. We assume the major premise that “all mathematicians have studied algebra” from our experience with what kind of knowledge is required of mathematicians. This assumption was not made apparent until we formulated it as the major premise of a categorical syllogism, because we believe that everyone in our audience is likely to have constructed the same major premise. We do not usually bother to state it because we assume everyone knows it. H

When might you want to present the full form of the categorical syllogism in your speech? The full form is useful, of course, when you are employing a category your audience might be unfamiliar with or are unlikely to consider applying without your suggestion:

All living things on earth are carbon-based life forms.

This is categorical knowledge you could not assume a lay audience would automatically be able to draw upon as the basis for a deductive argument unless you called it to their attention.

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The full form of categorical deduction is also useful when you want to have the audience feel the obviousness or inevitability of your conclusion—that is, when your conclusion is categorically related to beliefs you know the audience already has and you want them to experience that relationship in an “Oh, How could it be otherwise?” sort of way. The Socrates example has such an air of inevitability.

**Disjunctive Deduction.** A second type of deductive reasoning involves a disjunctive path of motion from the premises to the conclusion. To be disjunctive is to be not joined. In fulfilling this characteristic, the disjunctive syllogism features an either/or framework in the major premise. In outline form, disjunctive reasoning can look like either of the following two patterns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern A</th>
<th>Pattern B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Either X or Y</td>
<td>Either X or Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore: Not X or Y

We saw this pattern exemplified above when we said:

- Either Mr. Smith lives in Omaha or Mr. Jones lives in Omaha.
- Mr. Jones does not live in Omaha (i.e., Mr. Jones lives in Chicago).

Therefore: Mr. Smith lives in Omaha.

As this example suggests, disjunctive reasoning can play a major role in your speech’s structure because a considerable amount of inductive and deductive reasoning can intervene between the statement of the major premise and the ability to establish the truth of the minor premise. Proving that Mr. Jones does not live in Omaha required, for example, a number of other steps before you could conclude that Mr. Smith lives in Omaha.

**Conditional Deduction.** A third type of deductive reasoning follows a “conditional” path of movement between the major claim and the conclusion. In conditional deduction, the major claim says that “If certain conditions are met, then a specific consequence will follow.” The minor premise states that those conditions have indeed been met, and the conclusion then claims that the predicted consequence will follow. In outline form, conditional reasoning looks like this:

If X, then Y.

Therefore: Y

The following propositions state major claims that some people would consider to have been inductively established with strong enough evidence that they could be used as the basis for conditional deductions.

1) If the democrats win in November, you will have higher taxes and more entitlement programs.
2) If Roe versus Wade is overturned, many women will lose their lives because of botched, back-alley abortions.
3) If physician-assisted suicide is permitted, doctors will try so hard to save patients having only marginal likelihood of survival.
4) If the deficit is not reduced, the American infrastructure will continue to deteriorate.
Assuming the truth of the major premise (called the ANTECEDENT), the persuader’s goal would be to prove the conditional portion of the claim (called the CONSEQUENT). Then when this proof was put together with the major premise, the conclusion would be deductively proved.

**CONCLUSION**

We have covered a large amount of ground in this chapter because the rational component of persuasive speaking is so central to your persuasive goals. Two principles have guided our discussion: (a) you must project a compelling image of the reality you want your audience to accept, and (b) you should try to create a feeling of rational motion as you structure your arguments. Your audience should feel a progressive sense of movement through a set of reasonable steps as they traverse the distance between their current beliefs and your specific proposal.

To accomplish these goals, your speech should be organized at both the macro- and the microlevels of organization. At the macrostructural level, you have at least five general paths for conceptual movement that should be easy for your audience to follow: topical reasons, problem-solution, comparative advantages, criteria-satisfaction, and elimination of alternatives. Each macrostructural plan represents a particular strategy for moving your audience’s thinking, and each plan is best suited to work in different types of persuasive circumstances.

Within any of the five macrostructural plans, you will also need to construct microstructural proofs of specific points on specific issues. You may prove your specific points by using either inductive or deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning creates rational motion by moving from observations or evidence to the formulation of a specific proposition or truth claim. Inductive rational motion may follow any of six distinctive paths: classification, signs, analogy, generalization, causation, and narrative probability. Evidence is built into inductive arguments because it provides the grounds for the type of inductive movement your reasoning is following.

Deductive reasoning takes the products of the inductive reasoning process and manipulates those conclusions to see what additional propositions can be generated. Three paths of deductive reasoning were illustrated: categorical, disjunctive, and conditional. Together with inductive reasoning, these three patterns give you the ability to formulate powerful yet easy-to-follow paths of rational motion that can help you implement whichever basic macrostructural persuasive plan you decide to try. Building a speech text that takes advantage of the various types of rational motion featured in this chapter should help make your speech worthy of your audience’s thoughtful consideration, and perhaps even their enthusiastic acceptance.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REVIEW**

1. What is the difference between macrolevel and microlevel speech organization? Why is it often useful to decide on your macrolevel strategy before you decide on your microstructural arguments?
2. What types of macrostructural organizational plans are there? What does it mean to say that each of these five types of plans represents a general path for conceptual movement?
3. How does a topical reasons speech plan differ from a problem-solution plan? From a comparative advantages plan? Under what circumstances would criteria-satisfaction be an especially appropriate macrostructural plan? What factors would lead you to choose elimination of alternatives as the macrostructural plan for your speech? As you think about these questions, try to take such factors as the type of claim you are making, your purpose, the relevant audience involvements, and the nature of the relevant issues into consideration. Based on these factors, why is there no one best pattern for all occasions?
4. How can you use transitional phrases to enhance the persuasive motion inherent in any of the five macrostructural plans?
5. What are the major defining features of deductive and inductive reasoning?

**Things To Try**

1. Select an issue relevant to a persuasive topic of your choice and develop a detailed argument to support your claim on the issue.
2. Develop and present a persuasive speech to your class that shows that you have thoughtfully matched your arguments and issues to your audience’s involvements.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SUGGESTED READINGS**


