

HOW TO OPEN AND CLOSE A TED TALK

**(or any other speech or
presentation)**

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<http://amzn.to/16bo6h0>

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The following two chapters are from my bestselling book, "[How to Deliver a Great TED Talk](#)" (which was previously titled "How to Deliver the Perfect TED Talk"). The two chapters are provided as a sample taster. If you enjoy the taster, you'll love the full book. In any case, this mini eBook can still be enjoyed without having to buy the full book because it covers the topics of how to open an end a TED talk.

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Here are the Two Most Important Parts of Your Talk...

If you've watched TED Talks (www.Ted.com), you've no doubt been inspired and enchanted by speeches by figures such as Sir Ken Robinson, Jill Bolte Taylor, Simon Sinek and Dan Pink.

In this short eBook, you will discover how to:

- **Hook your audience into your speech with your opening.** Learn five tools to capture your audience's attention within the first thirty seconds of your speech. You will be learning from the speeches of speakers such as Simon Sinek, Susan Cain and Sir Ken Robinson.
- **End your speech in a memorable manner.** What's the best way to end your TED talk? In the second section of this book, you will discover six proven techniques to close your TED talk (or any other speech or presentation) in a powerful and persuasive manner.

Arguably, the opening and closing of your presentation are two of the most important parts of the presentation. While this is a short book, it covers the essentials of how to open and close your TED talk (or any other speech or presentation).

Ready to learn how to create powerful speech openings and closings? Then let's get started...

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How to Open Your TED Talk (or any other presentation)

After having studied more than 200 TED talks, I have found that there are five ways you can open your speech that are proven to capture your audience's attention:

1. START WITH A STORY

The best speakers are master storytellers. They tell touching tales, using compelling stories as a means to solidify their message. A well-told story will always be remembered.

A story is a great way to open your speech, but it also works just as well as a closer. In fact, according to Bill Gove, the first president of the National Speakers Association, the essence of public speaking is to "tell a story, [and] make a point."

In her [popular TED talk \(http://bit.ly/10gmj3t\)](http://bit.ly/10gmj3t) on the power of introverts, Susan Cain hooked her audience into her speech by immediately diving into a personal story:

"When I was nine years old I went off to summer camp for the first time. And my mother packed me a suitcase full of books, which to me seemed like a perfectly natural thing to do. Because in my family, reading was the primary group activity. And this might sound antisocial to you, but for us it was really just a different way of being social. You have the animal warmth of your family sitting right next to you, but you are also free to go roaming around the adventureland inside your own mind. And I had this idea that camp was going to be just like this, but better..."

See, you're curious to find out more about her camping experience, aren't you?

The reason a story is a superb opening strategy is because:

- **Stories captivate people:** Everyone loves a good story, so starting with a story will capture your audience's attention. The moment you begin with a story, your audience will have no choice but to tune in.
- **Stories create connections between the listeners and the speaker:** A personal story will arouse emotions in the listeners. Studies have shown that our brains cannot tell the difference between "real" events and imagination. Therefore, when you tell a story, your audience will imagine it and "feel" the same emotions that you're describing. Your story will not be forgotten because your audience will "experience" it rather than just hear it.
- **Stories are memorable:** We are hard-wired to learn through stories. Scientific research has shown that we make sense of the world through stories. People even view their lives as a story, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and with each new experience being regarded as a "new chapter" in their lives. Because of this natural hard-wiring, we may forget statistics and fancy charts, but we will always remember the essential elements of a good story.

Since stories are such an important tool in effective communication, you will discover the essentials of great storytelling in a later chapter. These secrets will allow you to become a master storyteller and speaker, entertaining your friends as well as your audiences.

2. USE QUESTIONS TO CREATE KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Starting with a question creates a knowledge gap: *a gap between what the listeners know and what they don't know*. This gap creates curiosity because people are hard-wired with a desire to fill knowledge gaps.

For example, starting with a question such as "What's the number one reason that most people fail to advance in their careers, working harder and longer, yet never

achieving their dreams?" gets your audience thinking and starting to formulate their answers. You've got them hooked!

In his TED talk, [Simon Sinek \(http://bit.ly/12MP5v9\)](http://bit.ly/12MP5v9) began his speech with a series of powerful questions:

"How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? For example: Why is Apple so innovative? Year after year, after year, after year, they're more innovative than all their competition. And yet, they're just a computer company. They're just like everyone else. They have the same access to the same talent, the same agencies, the same consultants, the same media. Then why is it that they seem to have something different? Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement? He wasn't the only man who suffered a pre-civil rights America. And he certainly wasn't the only great orator of the day. Why him? And why is it that the Wright brothers were able to figure out control-powered, manned flight when there were certainly other teams who were better qualified, better funded, and they achieve powered man flight, and the Wright brothers beat them to it. There's something else at play here."

One important thing to note about asking questions is you must make sure that you *pause after your question* so that the audience has enough time to reflect on your question. If you don't pause after your questions, you'll be trampling over their thoughts and they won't pay attention to what you're saying.

The final benefit of opening with a question is that it allows you to create a connection with the audience. For example, in his winning speech at the Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking, Darren LaCroix opened with the following question:

"Can you remember a moment when a brilliant idea flashed into your head?"
– Darren LaCroix, 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

If you were in this audience, you would naturally think to yourself, "Yes! I know what you're talking about!"

When your audience can relate to a question you've asked, you've successfully created a connection.

In your next presentation, open with a question that the audience can relate to or with a question that creates a knowledge gap and creates curiosity in your listeners. Once you do this, your listeners will be hooked onto your every word!

You can deliver the perfect opening by first starting with a question that builds curiosity, and then filling that knowledge gap by telling a story that illustrates the main point of your speech.

For example, let us say that you opened with the following question:

"What's the number one reason that most people fail to advance in their careers, working harder and longer, yet never achieving their dreams?"

At this point, you could immediately reveal your answer and tell the audience, *"The number one reason most people fail is because they do not set goals for themselves."*

However, as a reader of this book, you can let the listeners *discover* the answer rather than simply handing it to them. You can prolong their curiosity by diving into a story that illustrates your point. For example, after asking your opening question, you could tell the story of your friend Jerry, who worked long hours each night at the office but never achieved any success. You can then reveal how Jerry discovered the power of goal-setting and went on to become vice president of his company.

In this way, instead of simply handing your answer to your audience, you've let them discover it for themselves through Jerry's story. You've successfully captured your audience's interest, and you've made an impact because they'll remember Jerry's story.

So, create a knowledge gap using a question and then fill the gap using a compelling story.

3. QUOTABLE QUOTES

Would you like to add credibility to your speech?

Would you build the credibility of your message by borrowing credibility from a third-party source?

Consider opening with a quote.

A short quote that illustrates your main point will create support for your speech. For example, if you are giving a speech about the need to keep things simple, then you could borrow Einstein's credibility by starting like this:

Einstein said, "Imagination is more important ... than knowledge!"

However, here are a few pointers to keep in mind when choosing your quotes:

- **Shorter is sweeter:** The shorter your quote, the greater the impact. A long quote will end up boring your audience.
- **Make sure it's relevant:** Make sure the quote is relevant to your main point, and relevant for the atmosphere. A playful quotation from Homer Simpson may not be appropriate during a tear-filled funeral.
- **Check the source!** Check the source's credibility. Don't quote Hitler if you're delivering a speech about the importance of ethics!
- **Quote a well-known authority:** Quoting your high school friend may please your friend, but it's not going to earn you extra points from the audience. Quote someone who is familiar to everyone in the audience.
- **Choose a quote that hasn't been overused.** Some quotes have been overused so much that audience members are tired of listening to them. Try to use a quote that audience members may not have heard before.

For example, in his speech for the 2003 Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking, when he talked about the importance of dreaming, Jim Key used a quote by Martin Luther King. However, instead of going with Dr. King's overused "I have a dream" quote, Jim Key used another one which also fit perfectly into his speech:

Martin Luther King, one of the greatest dreamers of our age said, "The time is always right to do what is right!", which means that if it was right for us to dream as children, it's also right for us to dream as adults.

4. INTERESTING/STARTLING STATEMENT

Dale Carnegie said, "Begin with something interesting in your first sentence. Not the second. Not the third. The First! F-I-R-S-T! First!"

You can immediately differentiate yourself and your topic from most other speakers by shocking your listeners with a startling statement. For example, if you're talking about the importance of avoiding fast food, you could start with the following statement:

"If you eat a McDonald's quarter pounder with cheese, you'll instantly gain almost half a pound of weight!"

For a statement to be shocking, it has to be something that is not common knowledge. When you provide a fact that most people are unaware of, you've instantly added value to their lives and made a positive impression on them.

You don't necessarily have to use shocking statements to get people to listen. An intriguing statement can do an equally good job. For example:

"In 1989, when I was graduating from college, my professor told me something which changed my life ... and it could change yours too."

The above statement intrigues the listeners, who want to know more. It causes them to wonder, "What did your professor say? How did it change your life? And how can it change my life?"

Intriguing statements create a mystery. They create knowledge gaps that the audience feels compelled to fill.

If you can find an interesting or startling statement that backs up your speech's core message, be sure to open with it and you'll have your listeners wrapped up in your presentation.

5. CALL-BACK

A call-back is when you refer back to something that happened before or during the event. For example, in his TED talk, [Sir Ken Robinson \(http://bit.ly/12MPEFx\)](http://bit.ly/12MPEFx) called back to the presentations that had taken place before his. He said:

There have been three themes, haven't there, running through the conference, which are relevant to what I want to talk about. One is the extraordinary evidence of human creativity in all of the presentations that we've had and in all of the people here. Just the variety of it and the range of it. The second is that it's put us in a place where we have no idea what's going to happen, in terms of the future...

Later in the speech, he called back to an event that had taken place the night before:

And the third part of this is that we've all agreed, nonetheless, on the really extraordinary capacities that children have -- their capacities for innovation. I mean, Sirena last night was a marvel, wasn't she? Just seeing what she could do. And she's exceptional, but I think she's not, so to speak, exceptional in the whole of childhood. What you have there is a person of extraordinary dedication who found a talent. And my contention is, all kids have tremendous talents.

Calling back to earlier presentations gives Ken Robinson's speech a personalized feel. It lets the audience members know that the speech is customized for them, as opposed to being an off-the-shelf speech.

In your speeches and presentations, you can call back to previous speakers or to events that took place before you spoke.

How to Close Your TED Talk (or any other presentation)

THE RECENCY EFFECT

Recency Effect: "Given a list of items to remember, we will tend to remember the last few things more than those things in the middle. We also tend to assume that items at the end of the list are of greater importance or significance" – ChangingMinds.org

Because of the recency effect, the ending of your speech is just as important as the beginning. People will remember the last thing that you say, so you want to make sure that you spend ample time crafting a great ending to your speech/presentation. Here are a couple of techniques that will help you craft a compelling and memorable closing.

SIGNAL THAT YOU'RE CLOSING

Studies show that when presenters use the words, "in conclusion," people become more alert. This is because the words "in conclusion" signal that the speech is coming to an end. Audience members know that the presenter will summarize the speech and that there may be some important follow-up tasks, so they start paying more attention to what's being said.

You don't necessarily have to use the phrase "in conclusion" to grab your audience's attention. You can use any other phrase to signal that you are coming to the end of your presentation. You can use phrases such as: "Let's wrap up," "To summarize" and "Before I leave the stage, let me leave you with this." Feel free to get creative with your closing signals as long as you make it obvious that you

are closing.

SUMMARIZE YOUR MAIN POINTS

Use your closing to reemphasize your main points. The closing of your speech is your opportunity to call-back to your major points throughout the speech in order to reinforce them. The summary of your points should take, at most, two to three minutes. Here's an example from [Dan Pink's TED talk \(http://bit.ly/10gmo70\)](http://bit.ly/10gmo70):

"Let me wrap up.

There is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does. And here is what science knows. One: Those 20th century rewards, those motivators we think are a natural part of business, do work, but only in a surprisingly narrow band of circumstances. Two: Those if-then rewards often destroy creativity. Three: The secret to high performance isn't rewards and punishments, but that unseen intrinsic drive -- the drive to do things for their own sake. The drive to do things cause they matter"

PROVIDE HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Not only should you summarize your main points, you also should provide hope for a better future. If you've presented a problem that needs to be conquered, you need to give your audience hope that it is possible to conquer it. End your speech on an uplifting note and leave your audience feeling empowered. To continue using our previous example, after Dan Pink summarized his main points, he ended his speech with the following:

"And here's the best part. Here's the best part. We already know this. The science confirms what we know in our hearts. So, if we repair this mismatch between what science knows and what business does, if we bring our motivation, notions of motivation into the 21st century, if we get past this lazy, dangerous, ideology of carrots and sticks, we can strengthen our businesses, we can solve a lot of those candle problems, and maybe, maybe, maybe we can change the world. I rest my case."

Here's another example. [Leslie Morgan Steiner \(http://bit.ly/10gmo70\)](http://bit.ly/10gmo70) ended her TED talk on domestic violence by providing hope that they could solve the

problem:

"Recognize the early signs of violence and conscientiously intervene, deescalate it, show victims a safe way out. Together we can make our beds, our dinner tables and our families the safe and peaceful oases they should be. Thank you"

LINK YOUR CONCLUSION TO THE CONFERENCE

Sir Ken Robinson not only ended his speech by providing hope for a better future, he also linked his conclusion to the TED conference. He said:

"What TED celebrates is the gift of the human imagination. We have to be careful that we use this gift wisely and that we avert some of the scenarios we've talked about. And the only way we'll do it is by seeing our creative capacities for the richness they are and seeing our children for the hope that they are. And our task is to educate their whole being, so they can face the future. By the way - we may not see this future, but they will. And our job is to help them make something of it. Thank you very much."

Robinson not only manages to summarize the main arguments of his speech during his conclusion, he also manages to link it to the TED conference where he is speaking. This gives his speech a personalized feel and grabs audience attention.

During her TED talk, [Dr. Jill Taylor \(http://bit.ly/14VuyZ3\)](http://bit.ly/14VuyZ3) also managed to end her speech by including TED's mission statement ("ideas worth spreading") in her closing. She said:

"I believe that the more time we spend choosing to run the deep inner-peace circuitry of our right hemispheres, the more peace we will project into the world, and the more peaceful our planet will be. And I thought that was an idea worth spreading."

If you can find a way to link your conclusion to the event where you are speaking, you will be miles ahead of most speakers. You can be assured that you'll have left a lasting impression on your audience.

CALL TO ACTION

What do you want your audience members to do differently as a result of listening to your speech?

Include a clear and compelling call to action in the closing of your speech. Tell your audience members exactly what you want them to do. If you're presenting a business proposal to a group of senior managers and you want them to set up a second meeting with you, tell them:

"As we've seen, this untapped market about is worth \$40 million every year. We've seen that the rewards far outweigh the costs and that the best time to start catering to this market is now. Having discussed this, I would like to request a second meeting so that we can discuss how to go forward from here."

What action do you want your audience to take after listening to your presentation?

Here are a couple of things to keep in mind when crafting your call to action:

- **Be realistic about what you can expect from them.** If you're pitching a business idea to a group of potential investors, then it's unrealistic to expect that they will invest a million dollars into your business immediately. Perhaps a more realistic call to action might be to ask them to set up a second meeting so you can talk about funding. Or you might ask them to invest in 10% of your company so that your company can get off the ground and they can monitor the progress before they decide to fully invest in you. In any case, make sure you have a realistic call to action.
- **Include only one call to action.** Don't paralyze your audience by giving them too many choices. Include only one clear and compelling call to action. For example, at the end of my workshops, instead of burdening my audience with a list of 20 things I want them to do, I just give them call to action, which is to head over to my website so that they can subscribe to my free newsletter. I can then keep in constant

contact with them via my [newsletter](#).

Normally, the first presentation is part of a series of more emails, meetings and presentations. For example, your sales presentation might lead to a second and third meeting before the client eventually buys from you. However, instead of burdening your prospects with a huge list of next steps, give them only one next step they can take so that you can lead them to the next phase of the process.

In her [TED talk on body language \(http://bit.ly/13KIm7h\)](http://bit.ly/13KIm7h), Amy Cuddy wraps up her speech by encouraging her audience to try power-pausing. She also gives her audience a clear next step, which is to “spread the science”:

“So I want to ask you first, you know, both to try power posing, and also I want to ask you to share the science, because this is simple. I don't have ego involved in this. (Laughter) Give it away. Share it with people, because the people who can use it the most are the ones with no resources and no technology and no status and no power. Give it to them because they can do it in private. They need their bodies, privacy and two minutes, and it can significantly change the outcomes of their life. Thank you.”

What's the clear next step of your speech?

SELL THE BENEFITS

What benefits do audience members get as a result of acting on the wisdom received from your speech?

In his TED talk, [Andy Puddicombe \(http://bit.ly/10m1wzn\)](http://bit.ly/10m1wzn) encourages audience members to practice 10 minutes of mindfulness. He ends his talk by reinforcing the benefits audience members will receive if they take just 10 minutes to focus on the present moment:

“All you need to do is to take ten minutes out a day to step back, to familiarize yourself with the present moment so that you get to experience a greater sense of focus, calm and clarity in your life.”

Consider closing your speech by summarizing the benefits your audience will get if they act on what they have learned in your speech.

Let's Wrap Up...

You've studied the openings and closings of the two most important parts of the presentation. By now, you should have a very good idea of how to open and close your speeches and presentations.

Let's recap the techniques to open your TED talk. Open your talk with a:

- Story
- Question
- Quotation
- Interesting/Startling statement
- Callback

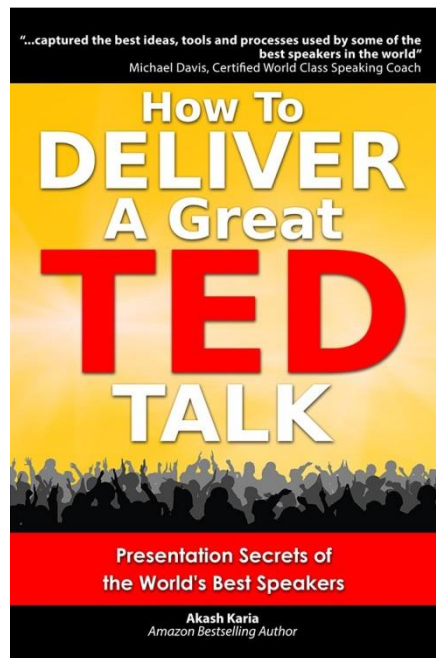
Let's recap the techniques to close your TED talk:

Close your talk with an impact by:

- Signaling you are closing
- Summarizing your main points
- Linking it to the conference
- Providing hope for a better future
- Providing a clear call to action
- Selling the benefits

Want More?

The two chapters contained in this book are short samples from my detailed, 206 page book, "How to Deliver a Great TED Talk": <http://amzn.to/18fD1Tn>



If you enjoyed this sample, you will love the book. In this book, I've covered only the basics (the opening and closing of a speech or presentation). If you would like more advanced tools and techniques on how to develop, design and deliver a powerful TED talk, I suggest you check out "[How to Deliver a Great TED Talk](http://amzn.to/18fD1Tn)". In the book, you will learn:

- **Craft a repeatable power phrase**
- Utilize the ABC-C speech structure for powerful presentations
- **Use rhetorical devices to spice up your speech**
- Create an attention-grabbing opening
- **Build the body of your presentation/speech**
- Craft a compelling closing
- **Use statistics to grab attention**
- Create a wow-moment
- **Bring your characters to life**
- Use analogies, metaphors and similes
- **Turn your stories into mental movies**

- Build your credibility with the speech introduction
- **Add internal credibility to your presentation**
- Build an emotional connection with your audience
- **Use compelling visuals**
- Use the body language secrets of confident speakers
- **Use PowerPoint the right way**
- Arouse your audience's curiosity
- **Use Sir Ken Robinson and Dan Pink's techniques for adding humor**
- Use rhetorical questions to hook your audience into your presentation
- **Use the five C's of storytelling to create spell-binding stories**
- Deliver a dynamic TED talk (or any other presentation or speech)

Whether you are scheduled to deliver a TED talk, a business presentation or a motivational or inspiring speech, this book will teach you the techniques used by some of the world's most powerful public speakers. Buy the Kindle/paperback version of the book here: <http://amzn.to/18fD1Tn>

Here's what people are saying about the book:

"Akash has captured the best ideas, tools, and processes used by some of the best speakers and presenters in the world. He has distilled them in to a step-by-step, easy-to-read guide that will help you discover, develop, and deliver presentations which help you stand out from the crowd."

- Michael Davis, Speaking CPR, Certified World Class Speaking Coach

"Maybe one of the clearest books on presentations I've ever read. Incredibly simple and easy to read but covering up a broad range of subjects. Full of practical tips, actual examples as well as personal experiences."

- Javier, Verified Amazon Reviewer

"Hands on book to craft a mind-blowing memorable speech"

- Tania de Winnie

Yes, there is also a two star review (and twenty-one four and five star reviews at the time of this writing). Check the book out here and decide for yourself if it's the something you will get value from: <http://amzn.to/13NRHtc>

Thanks for reading.

[Akash Karia](#)

BOOKS BY AKASH:

[How to Deliver a Great TED Talk](#)

[Storytelling Techniques for Powerful Presentations](#)

[Public Speaking Mastery](#)

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