

End your speech with an attitude, not a tired expression.

Instead of firing off a perfunctory “thank you,” consider launching fireworks of final passionate thoughts from the podium.

With the flair of a fireworks finale, you’ll trigger spontaneous applause to a well-rehearsed, well-timed, and well-executed performance — a performance that reflects all the anticipation of a logger’s cry: Timbeerrrrrrrrrr!

This article shows you how to close your speech with a bang.

Call Attention to the Close of Your Speech

Contrary to the prevailing practice of too many politicians and business and community leaders, the most influential speakers don’t end their speeches with a perfunctory and mundane “Thank you.” That’s too easy. And too lazy.

It takes creative thinking and a compelling delivery to end your speech with a mighty climax that relegates the perfunctory “thank you” as superfluous. No wonder that only seven of the 217 speeches listed in William Safire’s anthology *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History* conclude with “thank you.”

Examples of How to End a Speech

Consider these examples of resounding speech conclusions from Patrick Henry, William Jennings Bryant and Winston Churchill. You can learn from these to spark your creative energy and capture the spirit of ending with a bang.

On the brink of the American Revolution, the colonists were debating the war. Patrick Henry concluded a stirring speech on March 23, 1775 with this:

“Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take but as for me give me liberty or give me death.”

At the Democratic National Convention in 1896, William Jennings Bryan concluded his stirring speech against the gold standard in national currency with the words that have become the title of his speech:

“Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”

In the face of a German threat of an invasion upon England in World War II, Winston Churchill on June 18, 1940 called upon all of the British to brace themselves. He concluded his speech with the words that have become the title of the speech:

“Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Commonwealth and Empire lasts for thousands of years, men will say: ‘This was their finest hour.’”

Leading speakers end their speeches like the opera star—on a high note, vocally and intellectually. Just as the comedian should leave ‘em laughing, the speaker should leave ‘em thinking. Last words linger. Last words crystallize your thoughts, galvanize your message, and mobilize your audience.

Study the following 10 templates and adapt your speech to end your speech with a bang:

- 1.Bookend Close
- 2.Challenge Close
- 3.Echo Close
- 4.Repetitive Close
- 5.Title Close
- 6.Sing Song Close
- 7.Callback Close
- 8.Movie Close
- 9.Quotation Close
- 10.Third Party Close

#1 – Bookend Close

For a bookend speech closing, refer back to your opening anecdote or quote and say, “We have arrived, now, where we began.”

Then reiterate the message you want your audience to remember. This will achieve symmetry in the classic 3-part speech outline: Tell ‘em what you are going to tell ‘em; tell ‘em, then tell ‘em what you just told ‘em.’

#2 – Challenge Close

Challenge your audience to apply what you have told them in the speech.

If you were concluding a speech on the importance of taking action, you could say:

“Let’s turn from spectators into participants. Let’s recall the inspiring words of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt who said:

‘Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to remain with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.’

We have too much to do to sit on the sidelines. We need you to step out of the gray twilight into the bright sunshine so that we can all see the dawn of a new day.”

#3 – Echo Close

Focus on one word in a quotation and emphasize that word to echo your final point.

For example, consider the five echoes of the word “do” in this ending to a speech on the importance of getting involved in the education process:

“More than 450 years before the birth of Christ, Confucius said: ‘What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand.’

Let’s do it together. We’ve heard what we have to do. We’ve seen what we need to do. Now is the time to do it, and, together, we can do it.”

#4 – Repetitive Close

Find a phrase and structure it in a repetitive format that strikes the cadence of a drummer, building to a crescendo ending of a motivational speech:

“Architects cannot renovate it.

Businesses cannot incorporate it.

Churches cannot inculcate it.

Developers cannot innovate it.

Engineers cannot calculate it.

Governments cannot legislate it.

Judges cannot adjudicate it.

Lawyers cannot litigate it.

Manufacturers cannot fabricate it.

Politicians cannot appropriate it.

Scientist cannot formulate it.

Technicians cannot generate it.

Only you can orchestrate it.”

#5 – Title Close

Give your speech a provocative title that encapsulates your message memorably. Then, use the title of your speech as your closing words to stir your audience to think more fully about what they just heard, reinforcing the title of the speech that you referenced earlier.

Hint: Try writing the ending of your speech first to better construct the title.

#6 – Sing Song Close

Ask the audience to repeat a phrase that you used several times in your speech.

Let say your phrase is: “Together, we can win.” You repeat that phrase over and over again. Then just before your close, you say: “I know that all of you are talented, all of you are driven. I know that none of us can do this alone, but (pause) Together (pause) we can (pause until the audience responds.)

#7 – Callback Close

Refer back to a story you told where some activity was not fully completed. Then pick up the story and close it around your theme.

For example:

“Remember those bubbles that four year old held so gently in his hands? Well now those same gentle hands are now poised skillfully around the hearts of hundreds of people. Today he is a heart surgeon.”

#8 – Movie Close

Make a reference to a well-known movie or book.

For example, in concluding a speech on the maturity of a product line and the need to leave the past behind and create new and different products, an executive concluded a speech with a reference to growing pangs. The speaker alluded to the final scene in the movie *Summer of '42*. The main character is Hermie. Now an adult he is reminiscing about his lost adolescence.

“ ‘Life is made up of small comings and goings. And for everything we take with us, there is something that we leave behind. In the summer of '42, we raided the Coast Guard Station 4 times. We saw 5 movies. And we had 9 days of rain. Benji broke his watch. Oskie gave up the harmonica. And in a very special way, I lost Hermie, forever.’

So too this year, in a very special way, we have lost our old company in a very special way. Now we are moving on to a stronger, more mature company.”

#9 – Quotation Close

Use a famous quotation to harness the audience’s attention, much like turning on a spotlight.

For example, if you were concluding a speech on the importance of maintaining self confidence in the face of adversity, you could say:

“We have to be like the bird –the bird that author Victor Hugo one observed – the bird that pauses in its flight awhile, on boughs too light, – on a branch that is likely to break– feels that branch break, yet sings, knowing she hath wings.”

#10 – Third Party Close

Take the use of a quotation up a notch with the Third Party Close. Leverage the use of a quotation in context of your message. Use the premise of that quotation to frame your finale so that it serves as a launching pad to lift your message high for the audience to more fully appreciate.

If you were concluding a speech on the importance of embracing change, you could say:

“Change has become a way of life to a better life. We have to recall the insight of President Abraham Lincoln, on the brink of Civil War and fighting the near 100-year long tradition of slavery in the United States dating back to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who owned slaves. Lincoln looked change directly in the eye and said:

‘The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present and future. As our circumstances are new, we must think anew and act anew’

“And so must we. We need to look at this old issue in a new way, not simply for today but to make our tomorrows more rewarding, more fulfilling, and more compelling because of the change we make today. With your help, we can think anew and act anew on the issue before us today.”

Your Speech Ending Challenge

May you think anew about ending your speeches. Try one of these 10 techniques and turn the podium into your personal fireworks platform.

Fire off spectacular ideas with blazing after thoughts. Light up your audience with insight. Fire your most poignant salvos in the fleeting seconds of your speech. And make sure your message resounds in your audience’s ears... with a bang!