Organizing Your Ideas

Good organization is essential anytime you need to communicate your ideas to another person or group of people. It helps them follow you, understand how ideas are related, and retain the information. Regardless of your audience, purpose, or content, the following outline format will help you determine the best placement of the information you need to convey. You should start with the body – first decide how to group your ideas into your main points – and then proceed to develop an introduction and conclusion. All decisions about content and organization should be made with your overarching thesis in mind. The number of main points and subpoints depend on your particular topic and the content you need to convey; this outline is just a generic example.

I.   Introduction
- A.   Attention-getter (How will you make the audience interested and want to listen?)
- B.   Establish credibility (Why are you qualified to speak on this topic?)
- C.   Thesis (What is the main focus of your presentation?)
- D.   Preview (What will your main points be in this presentation?)

II.   Body
- A.   First main point
    1.   First subpoint (related to your first main point)
        - a.   Supporting materials, examples, information, etc…
        - b.   Additional information about this subpoint
    2.   Second subpoint (related to your first main point)
        - a.   Supporting materials, examples, information, etc…
        - b.   Additional information about this subpoint
- B.   Second main point
    1.   First subpoint (related to your second main point)
        - a.   Supporting materials, etc.
        - b.   Supporting materials, etc.
    2.   Second subpoint (related to your second main point)
        - a.   Supporting materials, etc.
        - b.   Supporting materials, etc.
- C.   Third main point …
        - a.   …
        - b.   …

III.   Conclusion
- A.   Signal to the audience that you've finished with your main points
- B.   Review your main points
- C.   Provide closure