

# THREE REASONS TO USE THE RULE OF THREE IN YOUR SPEECHES



Prepared by:  
Melanie Hope  
Hope Speaking LLC

**LORMAN**<sup>®</sup>

Published on [www.lorman.com](http://www.lorman.com) - August 2017

Three Reasons to Use the Rule of Three in Your Speeches, ©2017 Lorman Education Services. All Rights Reserved.

## INTRODUCING

Lorman's New Approach to Continuing Education

# ALL-ACCESS PASS

The All-Access Pass grants you **UNLIMITED** access to Lorman's ever-growing library of training resources:

- ✓ Unlimited Live Webinars - 120 live webinars added every month
- ✓ Unlimited OnDemand and MP3 Downloads - Over 1,500 courses available
- ✓ Videos - More than 700 available
- ✓ Slide Decks - More than 1700 available
- ✓ White Papers
- ✓ Reports
- ✓ Articles
- ✓ ... and much more!

Join the thousands of other pass-holders that have already trusted us for their professional development by choosing the All-Access Pass.



**Get Your All-Access Pass Today!**

# SAVE 20%

Learn more: [www.lorman.com/pass/?s=special20](http://www.lorman.com/pass/?s=special20)

Use Discount Code Q7014393 and Priority Code 18536 to receive the 20% AAP discount.

\*Discount cannot be combined with any other discounts.

# Three Reasons to Use the Rule of Three in Your Speeches

By Melanie Hope

A person can survive only three minutes without air, three days without water, and three weeks without food. When you give cheerfully, you get back three times as much. Knock three times on the ceiling if you want me. Three, it seems, is a magical number.

Many studies have shown that things coming in threes are more satisfying, more humorous, and easier to remember. Most comics have three panels. There were three bears, three pigs, three Billy Goats Gruff. We buy houses because of location, location, location. We want life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

From Shakespeare to Cosmo magazine, the magic rule of three is used to embed ideas into our brains because it works.

## **#1 Stronger speech writing**

Your speech should have only three main points. Any more, and your audience's brains fall out. I believe that the whole zombie phenomenon started during a presentation with 10 points. Yes, those top 10 lists are fun – but no one remembers numbers 4 through 10. That's why there are only three medals in the Olympics.

Yes, there are several examples of effective usage of twos and fours – but how effective? Often quoted is Churchill's ditty about "blood, toil, tears, and sweat," but what do we remember, and what part of that quote became the name of a classic rock band? Blood, Sweat & Tears. If you try to look up the history of this phrase, you'll toil to find the



toil. It seems the rule of three forces its nature even on the best-known phrases.

If you are giving an informational speech, Dale Carnegie's suggestion of, "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them" reigns supreme. Introduction, Body, Conclusion. Rule of three.

If you are giving a motivational speech, this pattern changes to Opening, Points (or stories), Takeaway (or call to action). Rule of three.

If you are telling a story or giving a speech based on a story (or stories), keep in mind that the most effective and memorable stories use the Three Act Structure. From Star Wars to any fairy tale, you'll find the pattern: Setup-Confrontation-Resolution.

When selling a product, use Pros-Cons-Recommendations.

The more you structure, rewrite, and practice your speech, the more you'll find it naturally falls into a pattern of threes. Even if you're giving an all-day workshop, section it out into groups of three and see if it isn't more effective, engaging, and easy to remember.

## **#2 Funnier punchlines**

Three is also the magic number in comedy, and definitely a tool you want to use to keep your audience engaged in your presentations. Improv actors use this without even thinking. In fact, we joke about how a scene is undone – and the audience will egg us – unless an anomaly repeats the third time. If someone complains about too many farm animals, you better believe that the rooster and the cow will be followed by a third, annoying animal.

Using the rule of three, you can set up two normal statements and a twist to get a laugh almost every time. In my speech, *The Snuggie Debacle*, I talk about the exotic locations from which we lure our spouses: Madrid, Sydney, Los Angeles. Gets a laugh every time. Not because LA is funny, but because it's unexpected.

### **#3 More effective PowerPoint**

Three is also a good rule to stick to when creating your slides. No more than three bullet points on a slide. I would take it further and say no more than three words on a slide (but I'd also say no words at all, if you can get away with it). When it comes to PowerPoint, less is more, and three is your most.

### **To finish, sum up, and conclude**

When writing your speech, remember your goal is to invite audiences to think, feel, or act. There's that three again! To most effectively move them to do anything, make your speech memorable and easy to follow by employing the rule (often declared law) of three.

The material appearing in this website is for informational purposes only and is not legal advice. Transmission of this information is not intended to create, and receipt does not constitute, an attorney-client relationship. The information provided herein is intended only as general information which may or may not reflect the most current developments. Although these materials may be prepared by professionals, they should not be used as a substitute for professional services. If legal or other professional advice is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

The opinions or viewpoints expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Lorman Education Services. All materials and content were prepared by persons and/or entities other than Lorman Education Services, and said other persons and/or entities are solely responsible for their content.

Any links to other websites are not intended to be referrals or endorsements of these sites. The links provided are maintained by the respective organizations, and they are solely responsible for the content of their own sites.