



Photo Credit: TED

# CRAFT YOUR THROUGHLINE

CHRIS ANDERSON ON PUBLIC SPEAKING



30 MINUTES

# Find Your Powerful Idea



*“Since your goal is to construct something wondrous inside your listeners’ minds, you can think of the throughline as a strong cord or rope, onto which you will attach all the elements that are part of the idea you’re building.”*

*-Chris Anderson,  
TED Talks: The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking*

Chris Anderson says that all powerful talks are structured around a **throughline**, or a connecting theme that ties together each narrative element. Why is this important? Without a throughline, a talk might end up never saying anything meaningful. The speaker might cite anecdotes and statistics and make provocative statements, but if all of these elements never tie together, the audience will leave the talk scratching their heads and saying, “What’s your point?”

To avoid this, complete the exercise on the next two pages. At this point in the course, you should have identified an idea that you want to speak about in your talk. You also should have conducted some preliminary research and made some notes on the types of issues, riddles, controversies, and concepts that surround your idea. Now is your opportunity to make sure that all of those elements are connected to a central theme.

Spend a few minutes capturing the throughline of your talk in 1-2 sentences. We’ve included some sample throughlines from well-known TED Talks below. Keep in mind that it might take you multiple iterations to get your throughline right—that’s ok. Then, write your throughline at the top of the next two pages. In the boxes underneath, summarize all of the other narrative elements that you want to include in your talk. The key is to make sure that they all have an explicit connection to your central throughline. Don’t worry too much about the order that you list these elements yet. We’ll focus on crafting the sequence of your talk in the next Resource Guide.

## *Sample Throughlines from Popular Talks*

- *More choice actually makes us less happy.*
- *With body language, you can fake it till you make it.*
- *Terrible city flags can reveal surprising design secrets.*
- *Let’s bring on a quiet revolution—a world redesigned for introverts.*

# Find Your Throughline

## Your Throughline

Summarize the connecting theme of your talk in 1-2 sentences.

Then, look over your research notes and list all of the other elements you want to include in your talk in the boxes with arrows below. Make sure they all clearly connect to your central throughline. Don't worry about the order yet. We'll work on that in the next exercise.

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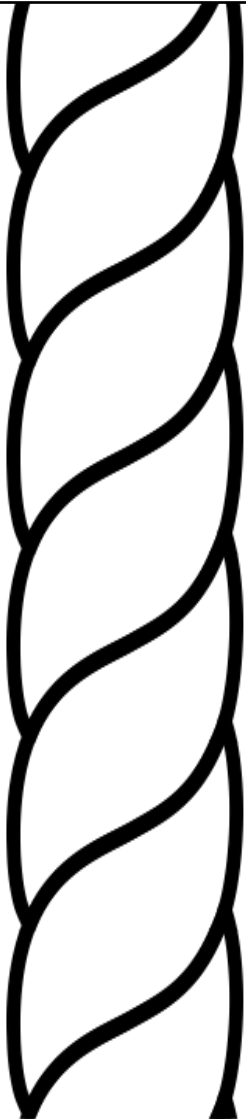
Sub-Idea 1	How It Connects
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Sub-Idea 2	How It Connects
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Sub-Idea3	How It Connects
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# Find Your Throughline

<p><b>Your Throughline</b> <i>Summarize the connecting theme of your talk in 1-2 sentences and then add any additional elements you want to include in your talk in the boxes below. Make their connection to the throughline explicit.</i></p>	
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Sub-Idea 4	How It Connects
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Sub-Idea 5	How It Connects
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Sub-Idea 6	How It Connects
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