

## Turning Attention into Interest

It takes more than a clever opening to keep an audience listening. People are easily distracted, unless reengaged, their thoughts may stray every half-minute or so.

- **Activity or movement**—appropriate physical mobility of the speaker and a lively treatment of the content that creates a feeling of something happening

Example: change attracts attention, give a speech a sense of motion by using active verbs. Point out parts of equipment by describing it in use such as “fingers flying over the keyboard”, “gears turning”, or “electrons crackling”

- **Reality**—reference to actual people, events, and places; being specific and concrete rather than abstract

- **Proximity**—reference to what is close at hand: people in the room, current events, local references, and so on

Example: use the immediate setting- “all of this atom smashing took place in a room about the size of this one we are in now” or “Imagine a hurricane the size of this room, the eye would be here and a third away would be the ...” At rock concerts the musicians always mention the name of the town or sing a song about something unique to the area- this is proximity in action.

- **Familiarity**—the use of recognized examples, well-known phrases, and commonplace events

Example: Comedians speak of famous people because all can relate and imagine that person in the humorous situation. Relate complex information to more familiar and simple objects or events.

- **Novelty**—the opposite of the familiar: startling facts, odd turns of phrase, surprising images, and unusual combinations

Example: like human interest stories on news

- **Suspense**—stimulation of curiosity about what will happen next through puzzles or provocative questions
- **Conflict**—pros and cons, opposing viewpoints, competing schools of thought
- **Humor**—playful remarks, silly or exaggerated images, amusing plays on words, ironic twists of fate, entertaining stories, and the like
- **The vital**-- reference to something that is important to listeners, ranging from matters of survival to anything that saves them time, earns them money, or makes their life more pleasant

Example: spell out rewards of listening to your topic

People are intrigued by things that are unusual, that spark their curiosity. They also respond to the well-known, everyday references. Most of all people, people pay attention to material they see as connected to their own self interest.