

8 Steps to a Winning Speech

PICK A TOPIC

When you are asked to write and give a speech, you should begin by picking a good topic. Here are some questions you can ask:

- ✿ What do I know a lot about?
- ✿ What would I like to know more about?
- ✿ What do I do for fun?
- ✿ What do I read about?
- ✿ What do I talk about with my friends?

PURPOSE OF YOUR SPEECH

What are you trying to accomplish with your speech? Here are some reasons people have for giving speeches:

- ✿ To inform (explains, teaches, gives facts)
- ✿ To persuade (gain support, convince)
- ✿ To inspire (stirs emotions, emotional impact)
- ✿ To entertain (humorous, makes you laugh)

NARROW YOUR TOPIC

Once you have found a possible topic and decided whether you want to inform, persuade, inspire, or entertain, ask yourself these questions:

- ✿ Does it fit my interests, capability, and experience?
- ✿ Will the audience be interested?
- ✿ Does the topic fit the occasion?
- ✿ Can the topic be covered properly within the time allotted?

If you answer yes to these questions, you should now have a specific topic that will interest your audience and fit your purpose in the time limit you have been given.

Practice, if possible, on a stage in an auditorium. Get the feel of standing on a stage.

Pretend you are introduced and you walk to the speaker's stand or microphone. You look around and smile at the audience, pause, take a deep breath and begin.

GATHER INFORMATION

Now you can start gathering information about your topic. As you get your information make notes to help you remember. Some people will write notes on 3x5 index cards. The advantage

of note cards is that if each contains only one idea or fact, the cards can be shifted and placed in proper order when the speech is being organized. Remember, the web is not the only source of information!

- ✿ Talk or write to experts in your school, family, or neighborhood.
- ✿ Observe and take notes on people, places, and events.
- ✿ Watch videos, movies, and T programs.
- ✿ Read books and newspapers.
- ✿ Remember things from your own thoughts and experiences.

WRITE AN OUTLINE

After you have collected enough information for your speech, you are ready to arrange it in a logical order by writing a brief outline. Remember you don't have to include everything you have collected. Decide upon three or four main points to be covered. List these as your outline headings.

WRITING THE SPEECH

Now that your speech is outlined, you are ready to write. By writing your speech out you will gain a more complete picture of your presentation. Writing a speech is much the same as writing a paragraph or an essay. You must write in a clear, natural way so that your speech moves smoothly from one point to the next; however, remember a speech is written to be heard rather than read. It must, therefore, sound good as well as look good on paper. It must be written using vivid, concrete words which create a clear, colorful picture for the audience. It must also be written with words that bounce and glide rather than plod along. Your information should be arranged into a beginning (**introduction**), a middle (**body**), and an end (**conclusion**). The following are tips to help you write each section:

The Body

The **body** is the longest part of your speech, and it gives the important facts. It contains the heart of your information. Plan this part of your speech first, and then you can develop an introduction and a conclusion that are appropriate. Group your notes according to your outline headings. Follow your outline and write it the same way you would any other piece of writing. Arrange your details in the best possible order—order of importance, chronological order, comparison, cause, and effect. And so on. Explain or describe each part of your topic clearly so that your audience can follow along easily and enjoy what you have to say. You should move smoothly from one point to the next. You should cover the topic in an easy, natural way. Remember to use words and sentences that will sound good to your audience. If you are giving

your opinion about something, make sure you support your point of view with enough reason and facts to convince your audience.

The Introduction

Your **introduction** should do the following:

1. Gain the attention of your audience.
2. Make it clear what your talk is going to be about.
3. Get your audience to want to hear more about your topic.
4. Lead into the main part of your speech. You may use one of these ideas in your introduction:
 - ✿ Use a famous quote
 - ✿ Ask an interesting question
 - ✿ Tell a story
 - ✿ Make a striking statement
 - ✿ Refer to a recent incident

The Conclusion

End your speech by reminding your audience what the purpose of your speech is. You might tell them why you feel your topic is important or why it may be important in the future. You may invite them to “get involved,” “learn more,” or “try it sometime.” However, you end your speech, always know exactly what your final two or three sentences are going to be word for word. Plan your conclusion so that you will finish forcefully and leave the listener thinking about what you have said. This is the “final touch,” the high point and your last chance to impress the audience.

PRACTICE YOUR SPEECH

Now it's time to learn your speech. This may not be as difficult as you might imagine because you already have a good idea of the content. Concentrate on your main ideas-not on specific words, and then if you forget a phrase, you can choose another way to express the same thought. You won't get stuck!

Your speech need not be learned all at once. Learn it in parts. Don't memorize it. Remember, you want it to sound like a conversation-not like a recitation. After you have practiced the speech in part, put it all together and rehearse it just the way you will give it. This will involve going through all the steps you will follow in your actual presentation.

You may want to transfer the main ideas to note cards. Use keywords and short phrases. It may be a good idea to write out your introduction and conclusion “word for word” so you don’t stumble and can make the impact you want.

Practice giving your speech so that you need only look at your note cards now and then to make sure you include the main points you wanted to cover. If you have access to a video or audio recorder, tape your speech and listen for spots where improvement can be made.

At first, you may feel more at ease practicing in privacy. Later you will want someone to listen as you practice. Your family is a good audience.

GIVING YOUR SPEECH

If you have practiced often and well, giving the actual speech should be easy. You may still feel a little nervous at first, but soon you will relax and enjoy sharing your “story” with your audience. Keep the following suggestions in mind as you give your speech:

- ✿ Speak naturally
- ✿ Speak clearly and loud enough for everyone to hear.
- ✿ Vary your voice tone and volume for emphasis.
- ✿ Use good eye contact looking at various people in the audience.
- ✿ Use gestures when appropriate to add interest and emphasize your message.
- ✿ Have comfortable posture with feet fairly close together. Do not rock, weave, or twist.
- ✿ Dress neatly. If you look your best you’ll feel more confident and this can influence your presentation.