

How to prepare speeches

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Introduction

The thought of giving a speech really frightens the living heck out of people...only because they don't know the principles that need to be applied.

These principles can be learned however, and with the polish of practise, a speech can really be made to shine.

These tutorial notes are written to provide an understanding of these principles, the solid foundation from which to practise.

Preparation and Research

When we are asked to speak on a particular topic, it is usually up to us how we treat that topic. Imagination and creativity are important, as is a strong sense of purpose.

When you are about to write a speech or prepare a presentation, ask yourself these questions:

- Who are my audience?
- Do I wish to persuade, inform or entertain the audience?
- How long is the speech presentation meant to be?
- What do I know about the topic?
- Can I use personal experience?
- Is it purely from the imagination?
- What research is necessary?
- Can I use humour?
- What gestures can I use?

If you do not readily have the necessary knowledge to write your speech, there are many avenues open to you for researching the topic.

Tips for Researching a Topic

Ask the experts. Seek out someone who you know to be an authority on the subject and "pick his/her brains". Most people are flattered when you seek their assistance and are very willing to share their knowledge. Do make sure, however, that the information you receive is accurate.

Your local library can usually provide you with reference material on most general subjects. Technical reference libraries exist for more specific subjects.

If you are a regular speaker, start your own reference library - books on humour, famous quotations, etc. always come in handy.

Newspapers and magazines are a great source of current, general information on a topic. If you are asked to speak regularly, keep your eyes peeled for articles that might be of use at a later date and file them away for future reference.

Radio and television, particularly news programs and documentaries can be very helpful.

Our world is now opening up with the use of the Internet. You will be surprised at the amount of reference material available on it. Even if the material you seek is not readily available, you can often receive advice on where to find it. If you do not have access to the Internet at your home or workplace, many libraries have a service available.

Points to remember when preparing your speech/presentation

Decide the purpose of your speech before you start your preparation. Are you going to persuade, inform or entertain your audience? (Hopefully, if you choose to persuade or inform, you will be entertaining as well.) Once deciding your purpose, don't lose track of it!

Having decided the general thrust of your speech, think of the things you can offer your audience on the topic and what they will gain from listening to you.

Be really aware of who the members of your audience are. Consider their ages, sex, level of knowledge, expectations. What might they be seeking from you?

Write down everything and anything that comes into your mind about the topic. If possible, do this in point form over a period of time, as new ideas will occur to you continually, often at the most unexpected time.

Choose the main points from your list, reminding yourself of your speech's purpose and the message you want to leave with your audience.

Remove any items from your list that seem remote or unimportant.

Put your list of points in the sequence you wish to use them. This is not necessarily in chronological order, although it is often the simplest method to use and can make it easy for your audience to follow the speech.

Once your preparation is complete, you will have a firm base from which to work. To ensure your delivery is first-class, be sure to rehearse your speech well.

Preparing a Speech

For a speech to be successful there first needs to be an idea.

The ideas are gained from a quick brainstorming session etc.

From the ideas you decide what the plan of attack is for delivering the speech: i.e. to inform, persuade, entertain, motivate etc.

After this you then prepare the speech itself.

Put simply a speech consists of three parts. The beginning, middle and end. This is what we call the speech structure.

The Beginning

This is where you outline the subject of the speech and where you will be taking the audience.

An important part of the beginning is that it must capture the attention of the audience quickly. It has been said that you have only a few seconds to capture the audience's attention. If you haven't done it by then, they will start wandering and stop listening to what you are going to say.

The Middle

This is where the justification for the speech is outlined. The evidence for your statements and the position that you gave in your opening.

The End

This is where you tell people what your speech was about.

Here it is good to remind people what you said at the opening, by having a reference to your opening statement.

Preparing the Speech

1) The first part of the speech that is prepared is the ending. This is written bearing in mind the idea for your speech and the purpose of the speech.

Like going on a road trip. This is done so that you know where you want to end up. If you don't know where you want to go you might end up in Perth when you would be better off in Brisbane.

2) The next part that is prepared is the opening. This is because you need to know from where you are starting. It is a very different route to get to the city if you are starting from Geelong compared to Sale.

3) Finally the middle section is prepared. This is made easier because you now know where you are beginning from and where you want to end up. Here you present the reasoning for the points that you are making in your speech.

Planning a Speech

Effective planning is important for any form of communication - reports, submissions, assignments, technical papers etc. - and speeches. There are a number of ways of planning a speech. This is one way which works. Assuming that the speech topic is known, there are six steps.

Distant Preparation

This first step involves collecting material and will occupy 50 - 75% of preparation time, depending upon the complexity of the topic and how much we already know about it. Write down ideas which you think might be of value in dealing with the topic.

Middle Preparation

Having collected a range of material and ideas and developed some of your own ideas which might be included, we must now define our purpose. Write it down it down in this form : The purpose of this speech is

Remember, there are four kinds of purpose - to inform, to convince, to entertain or amuse, and to arouse to action. It is important to have a clear written statement of purpose before moving to the next stage.

Close Preparation

Develop the form of the speech. Remember, it must have a Beginning, Middle (body, development), and Conclusion.

Consider the body. Select three main points to make them interesting to this audience.

Prepare Conclusion

This should contain a message which will achieve the purpose. Remember that an audience will tend to remember the final part of the speech, so try to make it worth remembering.

Prepare Opening

Grasp the attention of this audience. Introduce the topic in a way that you think will be interesting to them.

Revise and Integrate the speech

You should now have created a speech worthy of yourself and of your audience.