

Speaking exercises to practise

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Editorials

A thoughtful comment on a topical matter, such as a recent headline. (Rather like what the Editor of a newspaper writes). The essentials of an Editorial are to have one and only one viewpoint, express it clearly and strongly, and get out.

You need to:

- outline the background. eg quote the headline,
- fill the audience in with what transpired to cause that to be a headline,
- then give the audience your view.

You do not need to be passionate, but what you say should hopefully stimulate two or three members of the audience to rise to their feet and give their views.

Time 3 to 4 minutes.

I Feel Strongly!

This exercise is designed to give members the chance to practise using more passion in their speeches. Developing this skill can greatly increase the impact of a speech on an audience.

This can be achieved by using a combination of techniques that includes using carefully chosen adjectives, a deliberate pitch, measured pace and a controlled volume.

It is suggested that speakers choose a topic on something they genuinely have feeling about, ie use the fire in your belly to ignite your feelings!

Having chosen a topic, think about what words best describe what you feel. Spend a bit of time using a thesaurus to zero in on the precise words.

The delivery pace, pitch and volume required to convey passion is very individualistic and is best determined by practise with specific feedback from the coach.

A couple of points to note are;

- the pace, pitch and volume should be outside your normal speaking range/style.
- just complaining about something does not convey passion!
- you may speak for up to two or three minutes, any longer and you risk losing audience attention by smothering punchy sentences with verbosity.

The Pertinent Question

The object of the exercise is to give people experience in short notice responses that are likely to be encountered in the work environment.

The circumstances are likely to occur when there is some preamble from the questioner, and then the second person is asked to respond with their opinion.

The following is a guide to how this exercise is conducted at Club 6.

The Pertinent Question

A speaker is rostered to ask a pertinent question. The subject should be topical, preferably contentious, and posed as an open question. This gives the person answering the opportunity to answer in the negative or in the affirmative.

A short preamble is necessary before posing the question. The time taken should not exceed two minutes.

The Pertinent Answer

This should obviously be in response to the question. The response should be to only one side of the subject.

Responding to both sides of the topic confuses the audience as to your opinion on the subject.

The response should not exceed three minutes with a reasoned argument and one example to support your point of view.

Points to add polish to your response.

Commence your response with a short sentence (maximum 8 words) which clearly states your view, then support your view with one or two examples.

Don't use the phrases "I like ", "I'd like to" and "I think". This diminishes the impact of your response by suggesting you are not sure of your facts.

The coach will then assess both how the question was posed and how it was answered.

How to Sell Well

For this exercise, we would be looking at a 6 minute speech, with the evident purpose to "persuade". The speaker can choose whether to persuade the audience to attend an event, join in a project, take part in an activity (eg. a protest march??), subscribe to a charity, or even attend a working bee.

A typical format would be:

Beginning

- Gain the audience's attention.
- Build rapport with the audience (so that they trust you)
- Summarise the theme in terms of their needs.

Middle

- Present your ideas, plans or proposals one point at a time. (in 6 mins, only three of them)
- For each, point out the benefits for each member of this audience.
- Illustrate with successful examples, visuals, testimonials?
- Involve the audience, eg. pose a rhetorical question, ask them for queries.
- Cover the likely snags in your presentation.

End

- Summarise in terms of the audience's needs (not yours)
- Summarise your main points

- Call for commitment (don't be shy. this is the whole reason for your sales pitch)

Questions from the audience

It is better in a sales pitch to ask for and deal with questions during the middle of the presentation. Then you can end the sales pitch on a high note under your own control, thus minimising the negative attitudes which can arise in questioning.

When answering questions - take your time. For example repeat the question in a loud voice (ostensibly for the benefit of the people who may not have heard it, but it gives you time to think of the best answer). Or ask the questioner to rephrase it.

If you don't know the answer, admit it but say you will look into it.

Don't enter into an argument. You will never win it. You can say "That's a good point, can we go into it in detail after the meeting?"

A question may be covered later in your presentation.. it's up to you to decide whether to answer it there and then, or defer it to the appropriate time.

A rambling question gives you the opportunity to jump in and both ask it and answer it to suit yourself, but always thank the questioner for a 'good question'.

Finally: never embarrass a questioner.

Word of the Week

This exercise originated to expand the vocabulary of members. It is suggested that words selected should not be obscure or unknown but words that have been in the media, or heard in conversation, for which the definition is unknown. It could also be a word which is often misused.

The suggested format is as follows.

- Select the word.
- Explain why you have chosen the word.
- Have the word written out on a large sheet of paper so that it can be held up to see.
- Explain the origin of the word.
- Tell us the definition.
- Give the audience two examples of how the word is used.
- Finally, encourage speakers to use this word during the meeting.

Impromptu or short notice speeches

Short Notice Speeches are presented with minimal notice. The length of preparation time can be anything from seconds (an Impromptu Speech) to about ten minutes or so.

The same principles apply to that of Prepared Speeches with the added discipline of organising your thoughts quickly.

While some people may consider this impossible for them to accomplish, it actually is achievable with practise. Many new speakers are amazed at what they have achieved after practising for only a few months. "I wouldn't have done this three months ago" is often said!

As with Prepared Speeches, a number of notes are presented here that cover similar aspects differently. This is to accommodate for individual learning preferences.

It cannot be stressed enough: practise is the secret, the more the better!

Other tips

People often become worried about giving short notice speeches. To ease their minds they should remember that the basic requirements of a short notice speech are the same as for prepared speeches.

With any speech there is time for some preparation. It is just that with prepared speeches you have more time than for short notice speeches.

However, even in a couple of minutes it is possible to prepare the basic structure of a speech. It may not be possible to polish it to your satisfaction, but it is still possible to give a good speech because:

The secret to any speech is to have a clear purpose and a sound structure.

With both of these you will get your message across regardless of how little time you have to prepare the speech.

The initial idea

The first point in preparing a speech is to develop an initial idea.

For example: Topic of the speech is Bodyline.

With any speech there is an underlying idea or message. This message should be very clear so the audience can understand. With a prepared speech you have plenty of time to think of your 'perfect' idea or message. With a short notice speech you do not have time to develop the perfect idea. It is best to quickly think of a few ideas and then choose the best of these.

Often the first idea noted is the strongest one, enabling you to develop it more quickly.

The use of personal experience can assist you with coming up with an idea.

For example: Ideas - Cricket, People's body shape, Fashion. The idea selected is the second one - ie people's body shape.

Purpose

From the idea you are able to determine the purpose of the speech. You set out what you want to tell people about your idea. This is related to the idea, it is just taken a little bit further.

It is at this point you decide if you are going to inform, entertain, persuade or stir to action with your speech.

For example: Purpose – People's body shape: To persuade people – That no one has the same shape. Everyone should be happy with their own shape.

Once the purpose has been decided then the speech can be worked out.

Finish

At this point it is appropriate to work out the ending. For example, when using a map it is easier if you know where you want to finish.

The ending will let people know what you wanted to tell them.

For example: Ending - There is much publicity given to the perfect body. It is not possible for everyone to have one. We are not the same. Everyone is different and we should accept that.

Start

Once you know where you want to finish, the start of the speech should be developed. Using a road map analogy again, you and your audience need to know the point you want to make.

A good opening will let people know the purpose of your speech.

For example: Start - We live in a world where there is much publicity given to a persons appearance. This concentration on people achieving an ideal bodyline has had a detrimental effect on society.

Middle

Once you know where you want to finish and the point you want to make, then the middle is the route connecting the two ends. Like most map routes the best one is the most direct (few deviations). The middle part of a speech should have a clear and logical flow from one point to another.

For a short notice speech (of 3 minutes) only two or three points need to be covered in the middle section.

For longer prepared speeches it is possible to have more points as there is more time available to explain them.

For example: Middle:

- Point 1 - Thin, tanned, muscular bodies are used in advertising. People are always being told to strive for this ideal.
- Point 2 - It is not possible for everyone to achieve this look easily. I have difficulty in losing weight (note: personal experience). Others cannot put on weight. Everyone has different body shapes.
- Point 3 - Many people have developed psychiatric problems by being over concerned with their body shape - e.g. Anorexia or Bulimia).

Once you have the beginning, middle and end prepared, you have a speech. This, combined with a clear purpose, means that people will understand what you are telling them.

Some other hints

In preparing a short notice speech you often do not have time to write the preparation in full sentences. So, use points instead. Points will jog your memory as to where you are in the speech.

In delivering a short notice speech, do not be worried if the speech is short. It is better to give a short speech that has impact and gets the message across, than one that takes up time and everyone wonders what was said.

To put it another way: Don't waffle. Short and sweet is nice, so say what you've got to say and then sit down.

Focus on what you are going to talk about.

Don't worry if you get nervous. When you get nervous, the adrenaline levels in the body rise. From this your mind starts acting more quickly, you think more clearly and you have more energy. As a result, you end up giving a better performance.

Remember the audience does not know what you are going to say and cannot tell how nervous you feel.

Don't worry if the speech is not perfect. For most short notice speeches you are not expected to develop a speech and polish it as well as a prepared speech. You do not have time to finesse it.

These are some points that will assist with giving short notice speeches. They do not mean that you will give a perfect speech every time. But they will assist you with getting your message across. Now go and take every opportunity to speak, so you can practise and improve your skills.

Short Notice Speaking... for Chickens

What are the benefits of doing short notice speeches?

- Teaches you to order your thoughts.
- Helps you in conversation, discussion, informal presentation of thoughts.
- Helps you in prepared presentations and debates and
- Helps you overcome nervousness and gain confidence.
- Helps you practise gesture, eye contact, structure, etc , etc....

How?

1. Volunteer
2. Select a topic - and stick to it
3. Decide on purpose and theme
 - Purpose: entertain, convince of...,inform about...
 - Theme: achieve purpose through personal experience, your or others opinions, media reports
4. Work out :
 - an opening (attention grabbing)
 - an ending (memorable)
5. Jot down 3 points to support purpose
 - arrange logically and link them together
 - expand on these while on your feet
6. Relax, focus on your purpose.
7. Sit down when you are finished.
8. Practice and more practice.