

The Travel Speech

Speeches about travel are among the most difficult to deliver effectively. The following notes are prepared as a guide to assist speakers when preparing such a speech.

These notes should be read in conjunction with the notes on general preparation and delivery of speeches. If an aid such as a slide projector is to be used, notes on how to use such equipment can be found in the appropriate topic areas of the Tutorial notes on this website.

One reason travel speeches are very difficult is the overwhelming lure to tell all, the trap of attempting to condense weeks jam-packed with experiences into a very short space of time; namely, the minutes available for a speech!

Also, considerable care is required to effectively convey experiences (which are very real and powerful to you) to an audience that can only experience them second-hand through your effective and precise use of language.

It is courting disaster to use the format, "we went here, did this, went there, did that and went there and did the other."

So what to do?

First of all you must decide on the purpose of your speech. To tell the audience about "My trip to Whoop Whoop" is not sufficient purpose! In order to retain the interest of your audience it is necessary to narrate your travel experiences within a context that will enable each member of the audience to personally relate to the experiences you have had. Some examples of purposes that can be used in order to provide a suitable structure for your speech are given below.

Make comparisons between here and the destination.

This is possibly the simplest purpose to use as contrasting the territory familiar to the audience in comparison to the locations you encountered in your travels provides a reference point that all members of the audience can easily relate to and understand. Comparisons might be made on the topic of food, dwellings, transport, the political system etc. One of these topics alone could easily make a speech of ten minutes. Only select one or two at the most.

Describe the impact on your emotions.

Answer questions like: the most memorable event, the most difficult time etc. If you decide to take this approach, then take the time to reflect on the precise words that are required to express your feelings at the time. This is important so that the audience can relate to your experience. Then tell us why you felt the way you did.

Explain how your personal attributes have changed.

Tell us how travel has changed you: altered your patience, resourcefulness etc. Again, you will be only able to concentrate on one or two aspects for a 6 to 10 minute speech. Having selected an attribute, tell us about the events you experienced that caused this change. Choosing the right words to convey the emotions that have caused the changes is important and requires precision.

Describe the physical environment of the country in question.

This is an opportunity to really let fly with word pictures. It may seem a simple purpose, but it requires careful construction. For example, don't settle for "The Grand Canyon was really spectacular". Tell us why it was spectacular. Was it the colours of the environment?...describe

those colours! Was it the grandeur of the location?...then describe that grandeur! And don't forget to include the sounds and smells of the location in your description!

You must be very diligent to stick to the purpose that you have decided on. Be absolutely ruthless with culling material.

It is quite likely that some members of your audience won't be familiar with the exact location of the places you are talking about. Have a map of the world available on which you can indicate where in the world you are talking about! Also have available a map of the country visited so that you can indicate the location of the places mentioned in your speech. This may be a copy of a map that is handed out to members of the audience prior to the speech, or simply a line drawing on butcher's paper that is displayed next to the speaker's podium.

This often gets overlooked but is important. Using a map to explain the location of places will help your audience to keep concentrating on what you are saying - rather than wondering about the location of the places you mention.

Finally, as with all speeches, practice improves delivery!