

Tips on Public Speaking

Preparing and delivering a speech can be a rewarding experience for students of all age and skill levels. Sadly, however, many people are frightened by the prospect of addressing a large audience, and others have trouble deciding what to say and how to say it. While it's true that some folks are "naturals" at speech-making, the good news is that, with just a little preparation, any speech can be successful and memorable. The following tips will help reluctant writers and nervous speakers get behind the podium...and get with the program!

Occasion

The nature of the occasion should dictate the content of your speech, but it also helps determine what tone to use, how long the speech will be, and what expectations the audience holds. For example, humor may not go over well for a business presentation, but it would be a welcome opener for the Best Man's speech at a wedding.

Audience

You must know and target your audience in order to be effective. If the audience is unfamiliar, an early goal of your speech should be to gain the trust and respect of your listeners.

Preparation

Set clear goals before you begin writing the speech. For example, at an awards presentation you may score points with a teasing roast of the recipient, but you risk offending members of your audience if you neglect to pay due tribute. Also, the goals you set will help you judge and evaluate the success of your speech.

Writing the Speech

Like most other written projects, the speech must have a beginning, middle, and an end.

The Opening

The first 30 to 60 seconds are crucial. You must engage the audience and grab its attention while establishing your purpose. Some proven methods include:

- ✧ A thought-provoking, rhetorical question
- ✧ A lively, even controversial, statement
- ✧ A relevant quotation from an expert source
- ✧ And, if appropriate, a joke or amusing anecdote

The Body

The largest part of your speech, the body contains all the points or statements you are attempting to make. Some tips for building a successful body to your speech are:

- ✧ List out all the statements you can make, then carefully choose only the most effective ones; it's better to make a few strong points than have a bunch of weak "fillers"
- ✧ Organize the points into a logical progression, and allow each point to build upon the previous ones

The Closing

The closing has to be part summary, part opportunity. You want one more chance to influence your audience and leave a lasting impression. It may help to close with any or all of the following:

- ✧ A summary of your main points, with emphasis on the ones that "worked" well
- ✧ A final thought about the topic, phrased in a powerful way
- ✧ An emotionally charged appeal to the audience