

# **SPEAKER'S FIRST AID KIT**

## **TIPS ON DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF SPEAKERS**

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## Tips on Purpose/Strategy

1. Decide on the PURPOSE of your speech – to persuade, to inform, to explain, to demonstrate, to entertain.
2. Consider your audience – age, gender, knowledge level. What is of interest to them?
3. Decide on the message you want to convey to your audience. This is your AIM and everything in your speech should be relevant to it.
4. Brainstorm the topic and choose an angle that interests you. If you care about your topic so will your audience.
5. Write down any points that come to mind in the days prior to your speech presentation.
6. Compose your ending first – the last sentence, the conclusion, the thing you are setting out to prove, the message you want to leave them with. This gives you a goal.
7. Pick out the main points from your list ensuring that they are essential stepping stones to your destination. Three main points are sufficient in a short speech.
8. Choose a speech structure that is conducive to transmitting your message and suited to your material. Chronological order is the simplest for beginners and the easiest for an audience to follow.
9. Arrange your points sequentially ensuring that they are presented and developed in an interesting manner remembering that extensive detail is for lectures, not speeches.
10. Devise an interesting opening that will captivate your audience and gain their attention.
11. Plan a dynamic closing at the end of your peroration. This is the final impression the audience is left with.
12. To be persuasive you must maintain interest. Try the proven motto **Select, Simplify, Specify**. Select your major points carefully, develop simple and colourful means of presenting them, check that your examples are really specific to your conclusion.

## **Tips on Content**

- Collect your material from a wide variety of sources - recollections of personal experiences, information from observations and discussion with family and friends, research from books, magazines, media and other reference sources.
- Ensure that all your material is relevant to the aim of your speech.
- Order your material so that the speech develops in a logical sequence – introduction [approx 10%], argument [approx 80%], conclusion [approx 10%].
- Things we already know are not very interesting unless they are presented in an original manner. Use some lateral thinking.
- Facts become meaningless unless they are used to illustrate a point. Avoid using too many.
- Remember that statistics are abstract and should be kept to a minimum unless delivering a business speech to a group of fellow professionals. Try always to relate them to concrete examples: e.g. 110,000 = the number of spectators in Stadium Australia at the height of the Olympic Games.
- To make sure your audience is interested in your material choose examples that everyone can relate to.
- Persuasion is the basic element of your speech. Woo the audience with touches of humour – self-deprecation, wit, satire, wordplays etc. Word pictures and personal anecdotes also help to lighten the load.
- Signposting is another important speechmaking element. The audience will better identify with your material if they can anticipate the next sequence. The simple technique of numbering your points can prove effective.
- Devise a captivating opening (your first impact on the audience) and a memorable closure (the impression you leave them with).

## Tips on Structure

1. Introduction [approx 10%] - telling the audience about the direction you are taking and making them want to come with you. Firstly, command attention and arouse interest:
  - make a controversial statement
  - paint a descriptive word picture
  - recount a brief story
  - recite a well known quotation
  - pose a question
  - simply outline your intention
  
2. Body [approx 80%] - developing your argument building in links to keep the audience aware of its development. Confine the main body of your speech to no more than three salient points – an audience cannot digest too many details and facts. Each point must be introduced, developed and linked to every other point and to your announced goal. These points should:
  - Explain or illustrate your theme through concrete examples
  - Be distinct (black or white or colourful – not shades of grey)
  - Follow logically, with clear links between points so as to maintain focus on the main message.
  
3. Conclusion [approx 10%] - drawing the threads together to repeat and re-emphasise your original intention. The most important part of your speech. This is the message that the audience takes away with them. It should therefore be strong, thought provoking and memorable. Make it so by clearly emphasising the main point of your speech in language that affects the audience in a way you consider appropriate to your views on the subject. A strong finish is the vital element of a good speech:
  - A recapitulation and summary
  - A conclusion from the points you have made
  - An exhortation for thought or action
  - A question which has been raised by your speech
  - A short illustrative story
  - A quotation
  
4. Some **Speech Plans** for you to try:
  - Narrative – usually from personal experience
  - Explanatory – a hobby or special interest
  - Time pattern – Past-Present-Future etc
  - Space pattern – International-National –Local etc.
  - Sequence of events-chronological development
  - Cause and effect
  - Compare and contrast

Remember - logical structure helps you to remember your speech and helps your audience to follow it. Choose the structure that best suits your purpose.

## Tips on Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speeches should follow the basic rules of prepared speeches – an opening that makes the audience want to listen, a body in which the main idea is developed and expanded upon, a dynamic conclusion which encapsulates your point of view.

- Do not waste time trying to make up your mind what to speak about. Decide quickly on one point and set out to develop it.
- Select a key word and build it into a theme.
- Tell the audience exactly where you stand on the subject.
- Draw on personal experiences to increase audience interest and give credibility to content.
- As you need to think on your feet, slow your delivery slightly to allow yourself extra time to crystallise your ideas.
- Use simple and direct language to avoid the risk of losing the thread of your argument.
- Keep abreast of current affairs – have an opinion.
- Keep the title of your speech at the back of your mind. Try to include key words in your conclusion.
- Practice making speeches on everyday topics and develop the knack of being able to speak at short notice. This can never replace a well-prepared speech but there are many circumstances when an impromptu response is required – including pleading or rebutting a case in business meetings.
- Have some basic themes ready to build up your confidence and make it easier to respond when called upon at social functions. A relevant personal anecdote is an excellent way to gain audience interest and focus attention on the subject.
- Impromptus are often 2-3 minutes duration. Don't feel obliged to fill the allotted time. Say what you have to say then sit down. [The exception to this rule is competitive speaking where you will lose marks for being more than 30 seconds under or over time.]
- Presentation is very important if you are to sell your speech as content may not be as substantial as you would like due to lack of opportunity to research the topic. Pay extra attention to vocal variation and enthusiasm of delivery.
- Keep Smiling – if you behave in a relaxed manner you will feel relaxed and your nerves will be dissipated.

If all else fails try the Who? What? Where? Why? How? starter questions.

## **Tips on Vocal Skills**

### **1. Audibility**

Practise breathing exercises to produce the extra air needed for prolonged speaking:

- Breathe in deeply and slowly, hands on lower ribs;
- Exhale slowly counting evenly one, two, three, four, five, six...
- Breathe in to top up lungs and count from one to seven on outgoing breath, and continue exercise increasing number each time.
- Read a prose passage aloud pausing to top up breath at full stops.
- Practice reciting a piece of poetry in a slow and measured voice letting out breath slowly.

### **2. Projection**

Concentrate on delivering your speech to an audience member in the back row.

- Open your mouth wide to ensure that vowels are well rounded.
- Practice singing and humming, especially resonant sounds m, n, and ng.

### **3. Enunciation**

- Articulation is most important. Practise this exercise:

In this month of February I particularly want him to give each student new literary concepts. Introduce new facts on Tuesday and ask the tutor to let you know whether any section of the library has reproduced his excerpts from the English texts. At the same time, during this year, we will go on with the various projects in language education. Has the secretary been asked for some films?

- Speak consonants crisply. Practise this Gilbert and Sullivan passage:

I am the very model of a modern Major-General,  
I've information vegetable, animal and mineral,  
I know the kings of England and I quote the fights historical,  
From Marathon to Waterloo in order categorical;  
I'm very well acquainted too with matters mathematical,  
I understand equations both simple and quadrilateral,  
About binomial theorem I'm teeming with a lot of news –  
With many cheerful facts about the square on the hypoteneuse.  
I'm very good at integral and differential calculus,  
I know the scientific names of beings animalculus;  
In short, in matters vegetable, animal and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

- Give each syllable full value. Examples: Australia (not Austraya), Secretary (not sec'try), February (not Febr'y), Government (not gummunt) etc.
- Practise tongue twisters and limericks (for rhythm), reading children's stories aloud (for colour and phrasing), Shakespearean speeches (for modulation), newspaper articles (for emphasis)

## **Tips on the use of Language**

*"Words are the most powerful drugs used by mankind" Rudyard Kipling.*

1. **Vocabulary**: pay special attention to precise meanings, connotations and pronunciations of words.
2. **Synonyms and antonyms** : build up a stock of these to express metaphorical meanings.
3. **Quotations** : should be short enough to be memorised and have relevance. Use sparingly to create impact.
4. **Humour** : beware of jokes and funny stories. Concentrate on subtlety, self-deprecation, irony and satire to gain audience empathy.
5. **Statistics** : in presenting facts, figures are often dry and meaningless. Use wordpower to make them interesting; e.g. instead of saying "It would cost \$700 billion dollars to supply the service." Substitute "The cost of supplying a particular service is the equivalent of each man, woman and child in the country paying \$700 a year for the next 50 years".
6. **Description** : use adjectives and adverbs to enhance your examples and provide 'word pictures' for the audience.
7. **Personal Anecdotes** : short stories about yourself and those you know help to endear you to an audience.
8. **Alliteration and assonance** : use these for added interest and colour.
9. **Word Power** : Simple words are best, technical words should be explained.
10. **Definitions** : Use a thesaurus which is better than a dictionary because It gives a choice of different shades of meaning allowing you to inject your personality into the speech.
11. **Colloquialisms** : Slang words and phrases are acceptable and can add just the right touch of colour or nuance but swearing should be avoided.
12. **Analogies, opposites, euphemisms, metaphors, contradictions** – all these can be used to great effect so long as you are perfectly clear about their meaning.
13. **Poetry** : the highest form of language. Use it sparingly to highlight a point you wish to make.
14. **Cliches, dogma – to be avoided at all costs!**

### **Research Material**

Newspapers, magazines, poetry, joke books, books of quotations, record books, autobiographies, dictionaries, thesauruses, larousses, wordfinders.

## **Tips on Eye Contact**

*The eyes of a speaker provide more than vision.*

- Promote eye contact communication with your whole audience by scanning across them and focussing now and then on an individual.
- Staring at the floor, the ceiling or a particular section of the audience is to be avoided as members of the audience can 'turn off' if they feel they are not being included in proceedings.
- Make your audience feel involved through individual visual engagement which also gives invaluable feedback on how your speech is being received.
- If more than one audience member appears uninterested and likely to fall asleep, introduce something to recapture the attention of the whole – a raised voice, a clap of hands to emphasise a point, a change of delivery from slow and measured to short, sharp and explosive.
- As your eyes scan across the audience make sure that their sweeping motion does not become too regular as this will act as a distraction to your audience.
- Use your eyes to communicate with your audience – exaggeratedly open and staring eyes to highlight a surprise statement in a speech, narrowed to slits with tight lips to show determination or dislike.
- During your speech avoid fixing your eyes upon one person such as the chairman or critic/adjudicator. When responding to a question there is a tendency to look at the person asking the question and no one else. Always include the whole audience.

## **Tips on Body Language**

- Body Language is an integral part of getting your message across to an audience – part of the complete package on which they and (in the case of competition speaking) the adjudicators will judge your speech.
- Choose clothes appropriate for the audience and the occasion. A well presented appearance imbues the speaker with an air of authority and confidence.
- The position recommended for the opening of a speech is one where you are standing upright with little body movement and weight evenly distributed on both feet. Hands should be in a neutral position – by your side or slightly extended in front.
- Once you have commenced speaking, body, arm and hand movements appropriate to the text of the speech are in order. Such movements should not be forced as they will look artificial – natural spontaneity of movement is the key.
- Gesture, facial expression and other body language should flow naturally prompted by the words and circumstances being described in the speech.
- Avoid fixed positions for your hands – e.g. the ‘fig-leaf’ posture or clasped behind your back. These make the speaker look tense and lacking in confidence. Hands in pockets denote a ‘don’t care’ attitude towards the audience.
- Avoid repetitive movements of the hands and arms. If a gesture does not naturally complement a point made in a speech it is inappropriate.
- Some body movement is desirable to avoid the appearance of a wooden stance. However, body swaying can be a distraction for the audience. Try standing with your feet just slightly apart.

## **Tips on Overcoming Nerves**

1. It is natural to be nervous when you stand before an audience. Think positively and act deliberately. Accept your feeling of nerves and use the energy being released to your advantage.
  - Take some deep breaths prior to your name being called.
  - Walk slowly to the podium and pause to run your eyes over the audience before commencing.
  - Gain strength from the sympathy being extended towards you by the audience. They want to hear what you have to say.
  
2. Lessen your worries about speaking.
  - Good preparation and practise of your speech in front of a mirror, friend or tape recorder will build confidence.
  - Memorise the opening passage of your speech and start in a measured voice at a slower-than-usual pace allowing yourself to calm down and master the 'butterflies'.
  
3. Choose material that is interesting to you.
  - Introduce personal experiences to lighten the material and provide you with an opportunity to reveal something of yourself to the audience thus creating empathy.
  - Strongly held opinions also provide 'comfort zones' in your speech because things with which you are very familiar and help you to relax.
  
4. Don't be thrown if you make an error or forget what comes next.
  - Pause and repeat the previous phrase or sentence and often the words will fall back into place.
  - Proceed to your next point – your audience has no idea about the content of your speech so they will remain unaware of any glitches.
  
5. Practice diminishes your fears.
  - After the first couple of times your nerves will decrease and be replaced by the challenge to do things better.
  - Most speakers agree that they need a nervous edge in order to be on their mettle and perform at their best.

## **Tips on Enthusiasm and Originality**

1. When preparing your speech
  - Always choose an aspect of the topic that is of interest to you – if you feel strongly about it so will your audience.
  - Select material that holds appeal for you. Lack of interest in your content will soon be transmitted to an audience.
  - Familiarise yourself with your speech to instill self-confidence. Practise and refine it whilst walking, in bed at night, driving the car.
  - Gain some knowledge of your audience so that you can ascertain the appeal of your material for them.
  
2. When delivering your speech
  - Speak with authority and passion to infect your audience with an interest in the topic.
  - Use persuasion and empathy – these are the strongest emotional links between speaker and audience.
  - Create impact - inject something of yourself into your speech to add immediacy and drama.
  - Be imaginative with your structure and word usage to challenge your audience and motivate yourself.
  
4. Try something innovative
  - Look for a novel approach towards the topic.
  - Devise an arresting opening to catch attention, provoke and arouse curiosity and appeal to self-interest.
  - Try a different speech construction and technique – be someone else, a bad guy, a good guy, adopt a particular bias.
  - View the topic from another time, place, person, group.
  - Choose vivid examples to dazzle the audience. Describe sights, sounds, smells, colours and the feel of things.
  - Challenge yourself to present a humorous speech using whimsy, exaggeration, incongruity to introduce an absurd element.
  
5. Present your speech with style
  - Confront your audience in a friendly but challenging manner.
  - Keep the tone conversational and inclusive – don't lecture.
  - Be enthusiastic about your material and show this in your facial expressions and gesture.
  - Maintain audience attention through your sincerity.
  - Don't waffle – oral communication should be brief and pertinent.

A speech is a journey with a purpose – to impact on an audience. Give it focus, interest and a climax and deliver it with style and it will be memorable.

## **Tips on Delivery**

1. When you reach your speaking position pause look at the audience and wait for them to pay attention before commencing.
2. Ensure that you can see the whole audience from where you stand so that they can see you.
3. Stance should be firm but comfortable and hands by your sides or with elbows bent ready for gesture.
4. Use vocal variation to guard against a monotonous voice – alter the pitch, use light and shade, increase and decrease speed.
5. Employ the pause for effect and emphasis. It is particularly effective when used before making your most important points in order to highlight them.
6. Pay particular attention to your speed of delivery. Speak at a pace in sympathy with both your audience and your material.
7. Make sure your gesture is natural-looking – broad sweeping gestures for dramatic effect, smaller closed gestures for more intimate effect.
8. Avoid mannerisms – fiddling with a watch or pen, playing with jewellery. These distract the audience from what you are saying.  
[Ask a colleague to tell you in private if you are developing any bad habits.]
9. Notes – if needed – should be small enough to discreetly fit into the palm of one hand.
10. Make sure that your speech ending is definite so that the audience knows when you have finished.
11. Pause at the end of your speech before leaving the rostrum.

## **Tips on Persuasion**

### **Approach**

- Follow the **Attention, Interest, Conviction, Action** formula. Avoid confrontation and aggravation.
- Be assertive not aggressive.

### **Attention**

- Get the audience on side at the outset. Establish common ground. Reduce tension and build trust and rapport in the early stages of the speech.
- Be friendly, confident and composed. Avoid sounding arrogant.
- Describe the situation that needs to be improved. Let them know that you are competent. State your purpose in a way that appeals to a variety of viewpoints.
- Tell them how they have a stake in the outcome.
- Show that you share their concerns and understand their viewpoint.

### **Interest**

- Continue with the process of building trust and reducing tension.
- Present facts from the past with which everyone will agree.
- Get them interested through examples, cases or stories.
- If you once held a contrary view and changed your mind, tell them how this happened.
- Get the audience emotionally involved in the subject. Appeal to their personal goals (self-preservation, possessions, power, peace of mind, reputation, care for others, convention)
- Avoid controversial material in the early stages of your case.

### **Conviction**

- Move the focus from the past to the present.
- Introduce ideas or facts that the audience may have been reluctant to accept earlier.
- Demonstrate the need to improve things and why this will benefit the listener.
- Build gradually on your emotional commitment to the issues.
- Use a variety of appeals to reach different segments of the audience.

### **Action**

- Be convincingly committed to action as you approach your conclusion.
- Press the audience's emotional buttons.
- Recommend solutions as a response to their deep felt and better instincts.
- Involve the audience in the solution.