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## Successful Speaking Made Easy

Almost everyone has to make a speech at one time or another. This unfortunate fact of life has caused many a chewed fingernail, but it is not necessarily a thing to be feared. A good speech can inform or persuade, win you friends and influence, and generally help people to understand and sympathize with your point of view.

You may never have given a speech before, but if you do your homework and follow a few simple rules, your audience will never know the difference.

The first step is to learn as much as you can about your audience. What you say must be of interest to the people you address. The things you tell your local garden club may be of little interest to a commercial farmer. Retail merchants' interests are different from those of a mothers' club.

Nothing will make you lose your listeners faster than a speech aimed at the wrong audience or one full of misconceptions about the group you are addressing. A little advance questioning can arm you with a few key facts and issues of special interest. If you work these into the first part of your speech, the audience will be yours until you walk off the podium.

On the other hand, you are an expert in your business, not theirs so don't overdo it. Your audience wants to hear a different point of view, not someone telling them how to run their business.

Next, you must decide how you can be helpful and interesting to your audience. Ask yourself why you have been invited to speak to this group of people. What can you tell them that they don't already know? What information about your subject can they put to use? If you can't contribute something useful, you might as well go home.

Make sure you have a clear purpose in addressing this group. What can you accomplish for your profession? Persuasion is one of the most important motives in public speaking.

Now that you have a goal in mind, start gathering facts. Make a list of all the facts, points, examples, quotations, and statistics you can put together. Allow yourself enough time to research, write and edit your speech. Don't get off your subject and

don't try to cover too much ground in one talk. Keep a notebook or file for your excess material so you can use it another time.

Make sure all your data are correct and up to date. If you talk about legislation and regulations, check for recent changes. You must speak with certainty and authority if you are to be convincing. If you have doubts about some of your information, don't use it. Incorrect information can do more harm than good.

After you have gathered all the information you need, it's time to start writing. If you are not an experienced writer, it might be best to write the entire speech out word for word. Start by arranging all of your various points in logical order. As you shuffle them around, one will seem to naturally follow another. If the order seems logical to you, then it will seem logical when you deliver it.

Remember that every member of your audience is an individual. When you are writing your speech, pretend that you are talking to just one of those individuals.

Next, read your speech through several times. If you have a tape recorder, read the speech into it and then play it back to see what further changes you want to make. Be picky. Cut out dull or superfluous remarks. Use only a few adjectives. Tone down exaggerations. Use short, simple words and sentences. Do not use slang. If you are not sure about grammar, look it up or go to someone who does know and ask for help.

Time your speech. Make sure it is under your allotted time. If you are to speak for 30 minutes, make sure you do it in 25. No matter how good, informative, or entertaining you are, your audience will love you more for finishing earlier than they had expected.

Finally, have your speech typed so it is easy to read without losing your place.

As you look back, you will find you have invested a good amount of time and effort on this speech, but you can get a lot more mileage out of it in the future by updating and modifying it for other assignments.

Don't think you won't get those assignments. Good speakers are always in demand, and, as an expert on the subject, you are the man people want to hear.



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