

HOW TO WRITE A SPEECH

Writing a speech is very similar to writing an essay, a report, a letter or any type of writing. You want to **share information or ideas or thoughts**. But the one difference is that your **words are being HEARD not READ**, the audience is a **listener not a reader** so you only have one chance to get your message across.

This means you need to make sure the audience is listening. So you need to grab their attention, engage them and keep them interested in what you have to say.

There are ways to deliver or present your speech to help keep the audience interested. These are described later in the section *Presenting your speech*. But as you write your draft speech you need to remember that you are **talking** so your sentences need to be shorter and have more casual, informal, ordinary words. This will also be described later in the section *Writing your draft speech*.

You also need to know what sort of speech you are writing because this will **help you prepare notes as you research** for the speech and decide on the points.

There are different types of speeches, although some can be both.

1. an **INFORMATIVE** speech, where you want to inform or tell your audience about a topic, an event, an area of knowledge.
For example: Climate Change is happening; the school bake sale; Coral reefs are rainforests of the ocean.
2. an **INSTRUCTIONAL** speech, where you are explaining how to do something.
For example: how to play soccer, how to give first aid,
3. a **PERSUASIVE** speech, where you want to convince your audience.
For example: a candidate for SRC, racism-no way, homework should be banned.
4. a **SPECIAL OCCASION** speech, where you are entertaining or informing the audience for a specific purpose.
For example: a farewell speech to a teacher retiring, a 21st birthday speech, a graduation speech.

The **time** you have to give your speech needs to be noted. This is important so you know how many words your speech should be.

Here are some general guidelines (although it depends on how fast you are speaking and how long your pauses are):



2 minute speech	230 words
4 minute speech	650 words
5 minute speech	770 words
10 minute speech	1500 words



GETTING STARTED



STEP 1. CHOOSE THE SPEECH TOPIC

Often there are is a selection of speech topics to choose from. If there are options, you should select a topic that:

- * interests you, or
- * you are passionate about, or
- * you know some knowledge of, or
- * you have have had some experience with, or
- * you have some immediate ideas about.

It is always best to write about something you know or have an interest in, because then you can bring in real examples and you can talk more “from the heart”.



STEP 2. THE PURPOSE AND THE AUDIENCE

Before you start researching your topic, you need to think about what you want the audience to “get” from your speech. What is the purpose of your speech? What response do you want from the audience?

Most speeches get a response from the audience. The speakers hopes the audience will either

- * feel
 - * think, or
 - * act on
- the speech.

For example, a speech at a funeral would make people feel emotional as they think about the person who had died. A speech given at a protest would inspire people to take action. A speech given by the Nobel Peace prize winner would stimulate people to think about peace from a different perspective.

So, what is the purpose of your speech? You should jot down answers to these questions you ask yourself.

1. Do you want the audience to learn something? if yes, what do you want them to learn?
2. Do you want the audience to act or do something? If yes, what is it you want them to do?
3. Do you want to convince the audience of anything? If yes, what is it?
4. Do you want the audience to leave thinking about the speech? if yes, what do you want them to be thinking?

These points will give you a direction as you research and map out the points for your speech.



STEP 3. RESEARCH AND MAKE POINTS - BRAINSTORM ideas

You should spend about **2 to 3 hours** planning your points.

Ideally this would be done **over a couple of sessions** so you have time to:

- * digest what you are researching
- * bounce your ideas off with a parent, a friend, a teacher
- * let your mind wander around the topic because you might come up with other ideas.

[A]

Write down the speech topic.

Then, add some points to expand on the topic.

For example:

A speech topic on the environment is “It’s not our fault, but it’s our responsibility”

Expand on this topic with

- * *the generation before use began destroying the environment*
- * *it’s up to us, the next generation, to repair and stop the damage*
- * *we want to live sustainably with the natural environment, and not eliminate it.*

[B]

Once you have expanded the topic, **write down key questions, or areas to research** and get more knowledge and examples.

For example:

What does "natural environment" mean?

What's happened to the environment in the last 50 years?

How is the environment being destroyed now?

Who is destroying it?

Why is it being destroyed?

What is wrong with using the natural environment?

Is anyone trying to stop it? Who? WHY?

Examples of environments being damaged.

What does sustainable use of the environment mean?

What should the next generation be doing to protect the environment?

[C]

You are now ready to create points to consider for your speech.

To do this, you could

- * create a mind-map on a large sheet of paper or on the computer
- * make a table and add to the boxes
- * write headings and add points

[D]

First write down what you KNOW already.

Research to find new information.

Find relevant **current issues** about the points - real **EXAMPLES** will keep the audience interested.

Look for **quotes** that you could refer to, again making your points relevant and convincing.

AND, importantly, if you find other good points - **ADD THEM IN.**

You need to do this research so people believe that you know what you're talking about,

Don't forget the purpose of your speech.

[E]

After you have finished the initial research and brainstorming - talk to people about your ideas.

When you share the information, they might have other ideas **AND** you will find yourself realising that some points are better than others.





WRITING YOUR SPEECH



STEP 4. PLANNING YOUR NOTES

CHOOSE THE MAIN THEMES OR POINTS

You will probably find that you have a lot of information at this stage. BUT AS you have a time limit, you will need to decide which ideas or points

- * are most important to get your message across
- * can be linked to the other points

Don't put in too many ideas.

People usually only remember a few ideas from a speech, so aim to have only 2 or 3 main points.

Now you should now decide on the **MAIN POINTS**.

Then see which bits of information link to the main points. [SEE THE DIAGRAM below]

For example, the main points for the environment topic could be:

- Earlier generations did not have the knowledge, education or awareness of the fragile environment.*
- Natural environment was used without thought for living things and damage increased. Examples.*
- Action to protect the environment needs to happen now. It's beginning to but more needs to be done.*

Examples

Then, go through your notes and add to these three main points to build your speech.

As you do this, know that people listen to, and remember:

- * points that relate to them
- * stories or images where a picture is "painted in words" - use examples.
- * rhetorical questions, where they could be challenged to think of a response.

A tip: put yourself in the audience's shoes - think what would capture your attention and keep you interested. You should spend up to **1 hour** deciding on the main points.



STEP 5. START WRITING YOUR DRAFT SPEECH

Remember that writing a speech is similar to other forms of writing. You need to have:

- * an introduction
- * a body
- * a conclusion

INTRODUCTION

Your introduction should be brief, but have two parts. They can be integrated or combined.

First part

The audience may be hearing a number of speeches as well as yours. You will have their attention when you first get up to speak, and it's important you KEEP their attention. So starting with something to grab their attention, like a hook when you are fishing, is more likely going to keep them interested.

There are a number of ways to do this. Here are a few approaches:

- * share something on a personal level that the audience can relate to
- * start with an anecdote, such as a story or an incident
- * ask the audience a question

i) Earlier generations did not have the knowledge, education or awareness of the fragile environment.

add information related to this point

add information related to this point

add information related to this point

* give some statistics that might be shocking

Natural environment was used without thought for living things and damage increased. Examples.

add information related to this point

add information related to this point

add information related to this point

Second part
You should tell your audience briefly what you will be speaking about. Let them know what to expect in your speech.

i) Action to protect the environment needs to happen now. It's beginning to but more needs to be done. Examples

add information related to this point

add information related to this point

add information related to this point

Explain quickly what your main point is going to be, and why your topic is important. This will help them focus on what you are saying. The audience isn't reading your speech, so they can't go back and re-read the points. They need to get your main message immediately and clearly.

BODY

This is when you explain your main points or themes. Remember to have only a few, such as 3 (as in the example). Not all points need to be the same length. You need to decide which ones need more time, perhaps when you have examples to refer to.

The points need to be logical, and be related to the purpose and message of the speech.

Make sure you keep reminding the audience of the message. Your points could be wrapped together, or have a transition link, or you could say something like "I mentioned before that ...", or "I spoke earlier about ...".

This will let the audience put the pieces of your speech together and know you are still giving the same message.

Tips when writing the body of the speech

- * use short sentences. It's easier to hear simple sentences than a long one.
- * use contractions. Say "I'm" instead of "I am", or "can't" instead of "cannot".
- * don't use big words that you normally wouldn't use when talking to someone.
- * write as if you are chatting, you don't need to use formal grammar. You could say: "You know what I'm getting at?", or "I bet you've never thought about ...". Write like people talk.
- * include personal references, talk using experiences where you can use the first person, such as "Last week I was driving with my mum through ..." or "I was listening to the radio yesterday and I heard that ..."
- * only include statistics and quotations that will have an impact. Use things that are going to be remembered because they are striking.
- * be original - use your own individuality. Don't just follow a template - you have your own unique ideas - use them!
- * be specific if you want the audience to take action. Make suggestions on what they could do, or give them a direction to think themselves.
- * think about who the audience is. Why are they there? If they are forced to be there, (such as a school public speaking competition), your speech needs to be exciting/unusual/interesting enough to engage them. Think about the times you have had to listen to speeches. Which ones interested you, and why?

Part of getting the audience's attention is also to do with how you present the speech. This is described in the section *Presenting your speech*.

CONCLUSION

Aim to give a memorable conclusion. Don't just summarise what you have said in the speech because the audience has just heard this. Try make a "bang" at the end, so the audience is left thinking about what you've said. The conclusion does not have to be long. It could be just a few lines of text. The important thing is that you use your "bang" so the audience is left feeling excited and with something they will remember about your speech.



STEP 6. WRITING THE FINAL SPEECH

After you've written your first draft, read it through (it's a good idea to read it to a friend, a parent, a teacher, or video it). Then ask yourself the following questions:

1. Where might the audience lose interest?
2. What parts of the speech are clearest?
3. Where might the audience relate to what I'm saying?
4. Where might the audience not understand what I'm saying?
5. Where did a stumble on sentences? Are they too long, or using words that aren't usually spoken?
6. Did I stay in my time limit?

You will most likely find that you will then need to make some changes and modifications.

This is when you write a second draft, and repeat by reading it through again, and asking the same questions.

The final speech

Now you need to either format your speech so it can be referred to easily when you are presenting it.

This is when you move on to the final preparation for your speech. **DELIVERING THE SPEECH** - which is described in the next section.



STEP 7. DELIVERING THE SPEECH

Firstly, you need to **mark up** your speech so help you deliver it effectively.

- * Some words might need to be emphasised, so **bold**, highlight, or underline them in your speech. These you might want to say more loudly, with more emotion or more quietly.
- * A pause in your delivery could add greater meaning to the sentence or give a dramatic effect. So here, add a stroke / to remind yourself to pause.
- * It could be easier to read the speech more naturally if you break up sentences into separate lines so you can read it more fluidly rather than reading an unbroken paragraph
- * highlight key words that will prompt you to speak to the audience and not read (because by this stage you should have memorised parts of the speech).

The mark up should be done as you are reading your speech (best with a friend or parent), because then you will notice where pauses, emphasis or re-formatting your speech works better.

Secondly, you need to practice, practice, practice. You should have at least **3 days** to practice.

Ideally you want to be able to look at the audience and not just read your speech. This will come from practice.

TIPS when delivering your speech

- i. Slow it down. Many people get nervous when they speak in public and can tend to race through their speech too quickly. It's important to speak slowly, with a clear voice and to remember delivering a speech is not a performance. You are just speaking to people, not putting on a stage production. Speaking to people will make your message more real because the audience will feel you are talking to them.
- ii. Deliver your speech with genuine emotion. You should be sharing your message and ideas, which have come from you, so you need to think what you are saying and not just memorising a script. Use natural gestures, facial expressions and modify your tone with variation in pitch, pace, volume and tone.

- iii. Make eye contact. Don't keep your eyes on the written script. You should have rehearsed it enough times to be able to look up, engage the audience so they feel you are talking to them. If you are nervous, focus on someone at the back of the room.
- iv. Appear confident (even if you aren't). You should look as if you are in control because this will make the audience believe you have the knowledge and know what you are talking about.
- v. Enjoy the opportunity to speak in public. If you are well-prepared, well-rehearsed and have the knowledge - it can be very enjoyable being on stage, at the lectern or with the microphone with the audience listening just to you.



Public speaking is a highly valuable skill to have, and if you have the opportunity to do it whilst you are at school you will have such an advantage later in life.