

Speech Construction Kit

There are many ways to write a speech. Most of us just pick a corner, dive in and find our way to the end. This brute-force approach can make speechwriting something you don't look forward to.

What we have here is a technique that will help you learn how to quickly construct a great speech with minimal effort. And it's fun.

Follow this approach a few times and try it on for size. It is a sequence that's out of sequence! Just follow the numbers and you'll see!

The general strategy is that you use the first page of the worksheet to **collect your thoughts**. Then you **organize your thoughts** into a structured outline on second page by *following the order of the numbers*. Then use this outline to **write your speech on your computer**. Here's each step explained...

1

Use this part to **collect together everything you can think of** so that you can then get the "lay of the land" of your topic. Start as many days in advance as possible. You might immediately discover that it's already too much for the allotted time, but at least you can see the big picture and you'll have lots of content to choose from.

You can also collect cool phrases and sentences that you'd like to use in your speech, and note things you may want to research.

2

Write the closing of your speech first. This is the place where your speech will have a big impact and leave the listener educated, touched, moved, and inspired.

The body of your speech will be funneling into this closing. Keep your eye on the prize.

You can summarize and remind them of what you just said to reinforce your message.

The types of things you can end with include a quote, something to ponder, a call to action, some advice, a warning, something funny, a "zinger," a lesson learned, and going full circle with your opening ("callback"). You can have more than one of these if you'd like.

To quote Maya Angelou, "They won't remember what you said, or what you did, but they **will** remember how you made them feel."

Be sure to memorize this or read it a zillion times so you can make full eye contact.

3

Write the opening where you will immediately capture the listener's attention. This can be things like "Imagine for a moment..." or "How many of you have..." or "MLK once said..." or "I want to tell a story about what happened to me..."

Always let the listener know what you will be talking about right off the bat.

Memorize this also, or read it a zillion times so you can make full eye contact.

4

Outline body of your speech. It should include a STORY. Story, story, story, story! Never forget the story!

Also try to include a description of a smell, a sound, texture, surroundings, an emotion.

Include a scene, a dialog between two people, a quote, social proof, or someone's experience that highlights your point. Talk about different points of view.

If you talk about multiple elements, try very hard not to include more than three things.

Also, never leave the listener with an unanswered question or something that's unresolved. If you DO leave something unresolved, at least acknowledge it.

Pay attention to your transitions between points or sections. You can use vocal variety, gestures, and movement on stage to sharpen the separation between your points.

5

Lastly, pick the title for your speech. If you have a title already you can pencil that in, but you'll want to revisit your title choice after you've written out your speech because there might be something you said in your speech that can become a catchy or intriguing title that's even better and more fun.

Now that you've outlined the speech, **time it**. Just start the timer and read the outline. If it takes two minutes just to do that much, you'll now have a great sense of how much more you can add, or how much you'll have to trim.

The worst thing we can do is to write out a big speech and discover that it's 11 minutes long and then have to shave off 4 minutes. But when we go chopping things out, we run the giant risk that we'll "cut an artery" and confuse the listener because we cut out something that the next thing depends on. Start small and grow your speech outward to fill the time limit you have.

Also consider the **thread the listener can pull to remember your speech**. Do you leave them with one memorable event, a saying, a point, a catchy phrase, an alliteration, or a visual that will allow them to remember the rest of your speech? There can be more than one thread, but we want to stop and double-check that there's at least one memorable thing in the speech people can use to then remember the rest.

Many, if not most of us come to Toastmasters to get over our nervousness. But ultimately we learn that in speechwriting - the skill to capture and keep the listener's interest has the most benefit.

The more fun we can make the process of writing a speech, the more speeches we'll look forward to giving. And the more speeches we give, the faster our confidence will come!

Speech Construction Kit Worksheet

1 Topic:

Collect Notes / Ideas / Phrases:

5

Title:

3

Opening:

4

Body that funnels into the closing:

2

Closing: