

# Speeches

Are you looking for a way to have your ideas heard? Do you want to persuade someone to look at an issue from your point of view? Or perhaps you want to inform people about a topic you think they'd find interesting. A good speech can be all these things—entertaining, informative, and persuasive.

Speeches can be such powerful, persuasive, and inspirational tools, and some have helped to change history. Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech, for example, opened people's eyes to social injustice and inspired them to try to make their country a better place.

## Writing Goals

As you develop your speech, ensure that you

- identify and model the features of speeches
- use an outline to develop and organize your argument
- include "narrative hooks" such as famous quotations, anecdotes, and jokes
- experiment with sentence lengths and style, and punctuation

Set one or two additional writing goals (skills you want to work on) for yourself.

Examine this excerpt of the speech Joel wrote for his school's speech competition.

I am a businessman. I make tough decisions, plan for the future, and try to make my customers happy. Now, you won't find my company in the "Fortune 500" or even in the Yellow Pages. You see, I am the co-owner of J and J Lawn Service of Berthwell, Ontario.

Chairperson, honourable judges, and friends: to the unfamiliar it's just grass, but to my brother and me it's growing money. Since 1994 Jordan and I have been cutting grass, raking and bagging leaves, cleaning flower beds, and the like for some of the most wonderful people on the face of the earth.

Our many experiences in the tough world of business have taught us many valuable lessons about life and about ourselves.

I don't want this to sound like an infomercial, but my brother and I do pretty good work. I've seen a lot of those professional landscapers around with their hi-tech, heavy duty machines. You know the kind, they have the biggest and most expensive equipment on the market. They charge their customers an arm and a leg and I don't think they do as good a job as we do. From this I've learned that bigger is not always better.

Our equipment is pretty fair. We have a John Deere STX 38 garden tractor and a lawn sweeper for raking up grass clippings and leaves. We have a home-made wooden trailer that carries our push mower and smaller equipment. When we were cutting on the other side of town, the draw pin that holds our trailer onto the tractor got lost. It looked like we were in an impossible situation until we managed to find a stick to replace the pin that holds our trailer on. We pulled everything home in one piece. You see we've learned to become very resourceful at times.

Now, Jordan and I are brothers so we don't always get along. There has been the odd argument on the job that has sometimes led to labour unrest. One sticky summer day Jordan and I were stuck in a backyard pulling weeds. One to the point where Jordan said he couldn't take it anymore. He sat and wouldn't work. Noticing that I was now doing all of the work, I went on strike. Negotiations lasted several minutes until we both agreed to return to the job. From the incident I learned that working with a partner is not always easy.

anecdotes are one type of "narrative hook" used for effect and to add interest.

main argument is clearly stated at the beginning

a metaphor compares grass to growing money

using your own words makes the speech sound natural when it is presented

emotional language is used to persuade the audience

# Features of Speeches

- A speech is spoken, but it is written first.
- A main argument or opinion is clearly stated at the beginning.
- The body of the speech tries to convince the listener.
- The main argument is supported by reasons and supporting facts.
- The opposite viewpoint is sometimes mentioned to point out its weaknesses and to show that the speaker has considered all viewpoints.
- Jokes, stories, anecdotes, famous quotations, song lyrics, or excerpts from literature may be used for added effect and to interest the audience.
- Speeches use emotional language to excite, inform, or persuade the audience.

## Choose an Idea

- Write a speech about an issue that you care about or would like to learn more about. The issue might be environmental, global, or social.
- Write a speech about a famous person in history; for example, Terry Fox or Madame Curie.
- Write a speech about a topic that interests you, such as the role of technology in the classroom.
- Write a speech that a famous politician or historical figure might give to an audience. Be sure to check your facts so that your information is correct.
- Write a speech that you would give if you were running for the student council at your school or for the leader of your youth group.

## Writing a Speech

### Planning

FOR MORE ABOUT THE WORDS IN BOLD, SEE THE STYLE FILE.

- 1 Choose an issue or topic that would make an interesting speech. Narrow the focus of your issue or topic. It is easier to deal with a small part of a larger issue.

- 2 Think about your audience and your purpose. Do you want to persuade, to entertain, to explain, or to inform? Or do you want to accomplish all of these goals?

- How large is your audience? A speech written in **informal language** may be more appropriate for a smaller group.
- What age is your audience? If your speech is for younger students, you'll have to keep it short. You might also consider using music, puppets, or props to make it more interesting for younger children.

- 3 Once you know your topic and audience, it's time to gather your information. List the questions you want answers to and gather information from all the available sources. Make notes on any important or interesting information that you find. (For more about conducting research, see pages 154–159 of the Tool Kit.)

- 4 Organize your information by choosing five or six main points to talk about. Then write an outline by listing points (accurate facts and clear examples) for each main point.

### Speech Outline

**TOPIC** - what I've learned about business  
**OPINION** - making money can be hard work and working for myself means being responsible

**POINT 1** - I'm a businessman.

- co-owner of business
- make decisions and plan for the future

**POINT 2** - Bigger isn't always better.

- we do good work
- professional landscapers charge a lot of money but we do a better job

**POINT 3** - We're resourceful.

- have our own equipment
- tell about when we lost the pin to hold the trailer on

**POINT 4** - Working with a partner isn't always easy.

- we have some problems
- we have the odd argument but we work it out
- tell about when Jordan stopped working and I went on strike

**POINT 5** - Advertising helps to make a business successful.

- for the last three summers we have joined the parade
- small float and decorate tractor
- tell about the high winds last year

#### CONCLUSION

- I've learned that making money can be very hard work
- I have to be responsible
- hopefully I can put everything I've learned about business to good use in the future

## Drafting

FOR MORE ABOUT THE WORDS IN BOLD, SEE THE STYLE FILE

- 1 Write an exciting introduction to your speech. Writing the introduction first will help you to focus on what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. You could begin by asking an interesting question, telling a famous quotation or a funny story, or making a surprising or unusual comment. Your introduction should grab your listener's attention and clearly state your argument or opinion.
- 2 Now use your outline to help you plan what you're going to say in the body of your speech.
  - Add facts and examples to the outline that will help your audience understand your points and to convince them of your viewpoint. You can use **anecdotes**, **similes** and **metaphors**, and details about *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how*. (See the Skill Focus for more about similes and metaphors.)
  - Use your own words so your speech will sound natural when you present it.

- 3 Write your conclusion. Recall the main points you have made and end with a line that sums up your main argument, or encourages your audience to take action.

- 4 Look for sections in your speech where you can use visuals or audio segments. Visuals can include charts, diagrams, maps, photographs, or posters. Audio can include music, sound effects, or the sound portion of a video.

## Revising

As you revise your speech, consider the following suggestions.

- Read your speech to classmates or family members. Do they find it convincing?
- Does your speech make sense? Is it well organized?
- Have you used an interesting or exciting opening to grab your listener's attention?
- Have you stated your argument clearly in the introduction?
- Have you included facts and examples to support your argument?
- Does your conclusion sum up the main points?
- Have you thought about the questions your audience might ask? Make sure you have included information to answer these questions.
- Time your speech to make sure you have enough material for the time you have been given.
- Have you used a variety of sentence styles and proper punctuation for clarity? (See the Skill Focus.)

## Editing

FOR MORE ABOUT THE WORDS IN BOLD, SEE THE TOOL KIT

- Check your writing for
- **sentence variety**
  - **well-developed paragraphs**
  - **proper punctuation and spelling**

## Skill Focus

When revising your

speech, ensure that the punctuation helps to clarify meaning and look at your sentence styles and lengths. Read your speech out loud. If you stumble over a word, a sentence, or punctuation, revise it to make it easier to read.

Avoid overly long sentences because they are difficult to read. Use commas properly in longer sentences so that you will know when to pause. Vary the style of your sentences by asking a question and then answering it by following a long sentence with a short one, and by inverting some sentences. For more about sentences and punctuation, see pages 167-171 and 175-180 of the Tool Kit.

Here are a few suggestions to help you present the best speech that you can.

## BEFORE YOUR SPEECH

- Make cue cards. Use a separate recipe card for each main point.
- Highlight words that you want to emphasize as you speak.
- Memorize your opening line and your conclusion.
- Practise giving your speech in front of a mirror.
- Tape-record your speech and then listen to it.

## DURING YOUR SPEECH

- Make eye contact with your audience.
- Speak loudly enough to be heard clearly.
- Be sure that you appear relaxed in the way you are standing or sitting while presenting your speech.
- If you are giving a formal speech, dress for the part.
- Smile!

## Publishing

- Present your speech to an audience.
- Publish your speech in a class collection of speeches.
- If your speech is about an issue, send a copy to someone involved in the issue; for example, the head of an organization or your Member of Parliament.
- Present your speech on a local television or radio program, if possible.
- Videotape or audiotape your speech and choose appropriate music and sound effects for the background.

## Reflecting

- What new techniques did you learn from writing a speech?
- What did you learn about developing an argument and giving an opinion?
- What advice would you give to someone who is writing and presenting a speech?
- Does it make a difference to write a speech for different audiences? Which age groups do you like to speak to? Why?