

# Speech Construction

**There are many things to consider when writing a speech. They include establishing a purpose, gathering information about your audience, seeking subject matter and prioritising it, and deciding what technique to use in your delivery.**

All of the above are extremely important, but if your speech is to succeed it must be built on a firm foundation. The parable about the foolish man who built his house upon the sand and the wise man who built his house upon the rock comes to mind. Unless you build your speech on a solid foundation it is not likely to succeed.

Foundations can be of many types depending on the type of house you wish to build. Your foundation may vary depending on the type of speech you wish to give.

Let's keep it simple and start on a home unit with a living room, a bedroom and a services block. This will require a relatively simple foundation.

Most speeches, especially those we give in our early days as a public speaker, should have a simple foundation. They should consist of an:

- OPENING
- BODY
- CONCLUSION



*Good construction is essential in preparing any speech*

Before we examine each individual part we need to think about the reasons why we should have a good foundation, or structure, to our speech.

Here are a few good reasons :-

- It will make your speech easier for your audience to follow.
- It will stop you from getting side-tracked.
- It will encourage you to adopt a chronological approach.
- It will encourage you to link the three sections.
- It encourages logical thinking by the speaker and the audience.

The size of each speech section needs to be considered, just as you would consider the size of each room in any house you were about to build. People generally like to see what is being built. If they can see the foundation you are working from they will be reassured that you know what you are doing.

Having established the need for an opening, body and conclusion we need to consider the approximate amount of time we should spend in each area. One can't be too hard and fast about this, but as a general rule it is recommended that in a five-minute speech your opening should be no more than about 30 to 45 seconds, with a similar amount of time being devoted to your conclusion.

This would leave us with three to four minutes for the body of the speech. Work on a similar ratio for longer speeches. It is important that the transition between the parts of your speech is smooth and that we do not end up with 3 individual speeches. The speech must be viewed as a whole. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that some speakers work on the basis of *telling the audience what they are going to tell them, telling them, and then concluding by telling them what they have told them*. This ensures that the message is reinforced, but beware it can become boring, especially in a short speech.

**Let's take a look at the construction of a full speech in depth.**

## **OPENING**

- This is where you have the opportunity to grab your audience's attention. You need to make them want to listen to your entire speech.
- Keep it short and uncomplicated.
- Be different and innovative.
- Consider using a telling but easily understood statistic.
- Try injecting some drama.
- Set the scene for the main body. Use your opening as a bridge.

## **MAIN BODY**

*Consider these ideas*

- Develop your main points chronologically.
- Use the points you wish to cover in decreasing level of importance.
- Work from minor to major points.
- Offer both sides of an argument, either offering a for and against argument on a point by point basis, or all for, followed by all against.
- Draw on your personal experiences and relate them to your audience.

*It may help to remember these tips*

- Keep the construction style you choose consistent throughout your speech.
- Don't give conflicting messages.
- Support your speech with opinions, quotations, facts, figures and examples.
- Keep it simple.
- Don't try to cover too many points.
- Aim to have your audience remember at least one central idea or message
- Lead smoothly to your conclusion.

## **CONCLUSION**

- Make your conclusion brief and to the point.
- Use it to encapsulate your speech, referring back to your opening if possible.
- Know it by heart so you can deliver it with conviction.
- Consider using it to summarise your speech.
- Try using it to urge your audience to take a particular course of action.
- Use it to leave your audience with a word picture.
- Leave the audience in no doubt as to your opinion.
- Tell them where they can go to get further information.
- Don't thank the audience for listening; they will, by their applause thank you.

**Experiment with various types of construction in future speeches, but make sure you can handle the basics first.**