

Public Speaking:

Choosing a Topic:

The topic that you choose for your Public Speech depends on a number of factors; Your personal interests, Availability of information, How a topic can be dealt with in the Public Speaking format.

Some suggestions are; A Hobby, Sport, Music, Film, Books, Fashion, Topics of particular interest to Teenagers, Topics with Local Interest, A Social or Community Issue.

Public Speeches may be Fact Based or Opinion Based. In either case there should be evidence of research and elements of your personality within the Talk.

Constructing A Talk:

The structure of your talk is designed to make the information contained in the talk easy to understand and to absorb. The listener must be able to follow the speaker's information and the listener's interest must be maintained. "The speaker takes the listener from the known to the unknown."

A Talk has; **A Beginning, A Middle and A Conclusion.**

The Beginning: The introduction to your talk sets out the tone of the talk. The speaker may tell the listeners why he/she chose the topic and what will be contained in the main body of the talk. A good beginning is very important but need not be very long.

The Middle: The main body of the talk is made up of clearly defined points. Two or three good points are ideal. One point should be finished with before going on to the next. Your research will be evident in this section of your talk. A fact based talk will contain a lot of research while an opinion based talk must be based on a foundation of well researched information. Quotes, facts and statistics should be used but should not be allowed to overpower the content.

The Conclusion: Briefly round up the information contained in the main body of your talk. Return to the tone used in the introduction. The listener should be clear on the message of your talk and be sure that the talk is finished by the use of a well thought through finishing line. A strong ending leaves a strong lasting impression.

Delivery Style:

Effective Speech is slow, clear, well projected, pleasing to the ear and easy to understand. The speaker must transmit his/ her interest in the topic to the listener.

One of the main advantages of the practice of Public Speaking at Second Level Schools is to learn how to verbally present information in a formal fashion. This skill is becoming more necessary in College and The Workplace.

The speaker must appear confident and relaxed. A formal stance is desirable with no slouching or swaying. At the same time the speaker may adopt a style in harmony with his/her personality and the topic of the talk. A talk on a serious subject will require a more formal stance than a talk on a subject such as fashion or sport. Movement is allowed but must blend into the general delivery style.

Anything that distracts from the information being presented must be avoided; dangly jewellery for instance.

The formality of delivery extends to the speaking voice also. Slow, clear speech is a must. The listeners will not be familiar with your tone and accent and so it is essential that you begin your speech at a slow pace. The rate may increase a little but not too much. Remember that your talk is important and that it therefore must be understood.

Limit the number of times you say “eh, like, you know, etc” in the speech as this is irritating and reduces the appearance of confidence. You should not sound like you have swallowed a dictionary either. Use words and language structures that you are comfortable with.

Initially you will practice your speech with the use of your notes but the speaker should depend less and less on notes as he/she comes closer to the time when the speech will be delivered to the listeners. “If you can not be bothered to learn the talk why should I be bothered to listen to it.” This is a quote from George Bernard Shaw. The more you practice your talk the more confident you will be when the time comes to present it. Of course you will be nervous but the well rehearsed speaker can hide his/her nerves.

Remember; Practice, Practise, Practice.

Useful Tips and Exercises:

Group work is useful in tackling problems with fluency and confidence. The candidate gets used to having his/her voice heard.

One exercise is to gather the group in a circle and ask each person to say his/her name. Then go around the circle again and each person introduces him/herself again giving one piece of information about him/herself.(ie. My name is Alison and I have a dog called Cooper.) This exercise can be used as a warm up exercise throughout the year and developed to include; introducing the person next to them, with an added piece of information, introducing a friend, introducing themselves with a piece of false information, etc. The idea of these exercises is to get the candidate used to the sound of their own voice and to create an atmosphere of fun.

Say A Few Words:

This exercise is useful in encouraging candidates to use the structure of a talk to help them to think of "something to say".

Use the initials **S.A.F.W.** to structure a simple talk.

S: State the subject of the talk, why you want to talk about it, what you are going to say about it and/or why you are qualified to talk about it. (ie. I went to France on my holidays and so I can tell you about my holiday in France.)

A: Accentuate. Give all the information you wish to give in point form. (Two or three points.) Each point developed and completed before starting the next.

F: Give a "for instance" an example or incident which adds a personal element to the talk. This adds colour and interest to the talk.

W: Wind up. Complete the talk by briefly repeating what you have said and showing that the talk is ended. ie. "Thank you for listening".

Advise the candidates to keep things simple. The object of this exercise is to achieve fluency not to impress. The content is less important at this stage. The idea is that they keep talking.

Divide the class into pairs; A and B. A gives a simple talk to B then B gives a simple talk to A. All pairs should work at the same time. The teacher moves around the room encouraging the students to "keep talking". Initially the teacher can suggest topics; holidays, school uniforms, fashion, sport, favourite T.V. show/book/film/band, the simpler the better. To add an element of fun the candidates can come up with their own topics. Keep to a time limit, one minute for each talk, and don't give too much time to think, ten seconds possibly. The more time to think that they have the more self-conscious they can get.

As the candidates gain in confidence the teacher can call on one to give their talk to the whole class. Begin with a more able candidate but encourage the less confident candidates to "show off" also.