

Speech Writing



**Levels 4, 5,
7, and 9**

Introduction

The week, we begin a multi-week writing project that will end in your giving an oral presentation of some kind before a live audience. Your teacher will tell you what you need to know to prepare this speech; you will do so over a number of weeks. Here is a basic outline of the tasks before you.

- * Week 1: Receive an introduction to oratory.
 - You will choose a topic with your teacher’s help and begin to research facts on the topic.
 - Plan to spend the week gathering and reading resources for this purpose.
- * Week 2: Learn about audiences and the overall structure of speeches.
 - Learn about organizing speeches for the needs of audiences in general.
 - Complete an outline and a draft of the speech you are writing for your specific audience.
- * Week 3: Add interest to your speech.
 - Good stories, strong pictures, and “dynamite facts” add strength to a speech.
 - With your teacher, discuss where to find stories.
 - Add some of these to your speech draft.
 - Include humor in speeches.
 - Discuss when to use it, what’s funny, and what’s appropriate for a Christian speaker.
 - Add appropriate humor to your speech draft.
 - Craft an interesting speech opening.
 - Learn about various possibilities for the opening of your speech.
 - Study the importance of rhetoric; learn to appeal to people’s best side.
 - Polish your speech opening.
- * Week 4: Deliver your speech.
 - Make final adjustments: beef up facts, keep language simple, and time the speech.
 - Create a final draft copy.
 - Learn how to deliver a speech and how to be an engaging speaker.
 - Present your speech at an appropriate group meeting.

Week 1

After talking with your teacher, fill in this information about your speech for future reference:

When: _____

Where: _____

To whom: _____

Overall purpose of this speech: _____

Working title: _____

Week 2

This week, we’re going to begin hammering out a rough draft of your speech, starting in outline form. The first thing to think about in organizing your speech is not its structure, but its purpose. All speeches are given to audiences, and a good speech should serve the audience in some way. The most common purposes for speeches are to inform and to persuade. On the following page are some things to consider about audiences:



- * All Christian speakers should be more concerned about the audience's needs than their own importance as the speaker. It's natural to be nervous about speaking in front of people. This feeling can be a product of normal shyness or sinful fear of man (which is a form of self-focused pride). Nervousness can be greatly diminished if you focus on the job you've been given to do: serving the people who will listen to what you say and saying it to the glory of God.
- * Because we are always representing God when we speak and because we are aware that He is listening to our every word, we want our speech to reflect His graciousness and its content to please Him. Try never to be rude or inaccurate or to pressure your audience when you speak. Remember your primary audience is God! Seek to please Him first, and watch your nervousness take a back seat. Then, remember that you represent Him to your secondary audience, the people who are listening to you.
- * Audiences have a tough job. They have to take in all you want to communicate primarily with their ears, unless you provide visual aids for them. So, when organizing your speech, make it easy for them by sticking to three or four main points, which you clearly announce and review as you speak. Think about things that make it easier for you to listen attentively.
- * Take some time to think about your audience. In this case, if you're studying alone, it will be your parents and siblings and possibly some friends. If you have a co-op setting to deliver your speech to, it will be peers and parents, and you'll want to be sure to serve both groups.
- * Think about your speech. What is your primary goal? Is it to inform, persuade, admonish, exhort, or just make people enthusiastic? How much does your audience know about your subject? Will you need to persuade, or are you speaking to those who already believe in your cause? (You don't want to bore them by "preaching to the choir"!)
- * How can you make your speech relevant to your audience? Will there be an application from your speech? If so, you will need to suggest ways of applying your message. What examples or stories would relate your material to their everyday lives so they remember it better? Can you find some humorous stories that will draw their attention to your point? NOTE: These are preliminary thoughts. We will focus on application and humor in later weeks, but you need to think about these elements in relation to your audience this week.
- * Can you use visual aids to make listening easier or to communicate more effectively? Many speaking contexts offer the opportunity for overhead or video projectors. You might also consider a flip chart or posters. If you want to use visuals with your speech, make plans this week to develop your visual aids as you organize your rough draft. (We won't be referring to these again, so include thoughts about them as we discuss your written script in future weeks.)

General organization of a speech: time to start putting pencil to paper!

- * Speakers need to use simple language and short sentences.
 - Your audience will be following you primarily with their ears; they can easily get lost in complex sentence structures and long words.
 - You will need to have a strong, simple outline and stick to it.
 - You should plan to alert your audience to major points and major conclusions as you go through your speech.
- * You need to decide this week how to present your speech.
 - For learning purposes, it is preferable that you write the speech out completely and polish it on paper, but the delivery style is up to you.
 - You can speak from note cards or an outline, can memorize it or read it—with flair.
 - Think ahead about the best style to adopt for your intended audience.
- * A ten-minute speech should have the following elements:
 - A strong opening statement or story and appropriate emotional appeal to the audience



- A verbal outline of the speech for the audience's sake: communicate what you are going to talk about and give your major points.
- A body that contains the information the audience needs and the points you want to make: depending on the length of the speech, you should give a strong signal whenever you wrap up a main point and start a new one. (It is also good to pepper a longer speech with stories and humor.)
- A concluding summary of the points you have made
- A closing application (if appropriate) or strong final statement

Week 3

One thing we talked about last week was that it's easier for audiences to listen to and remember a speech that is packed with good stories, strong pictures, and "dynamite facts." This week, we'll learn about these elements, and you'll spend time searching for great ones for your speech.

- * **Good stories:** Who doesn't love them? All good speeches contain at least one story or strong word picture. It is often this illustration that audience members remember, not your explanations. Stories in speeches should have the following elements:
 - They should directly illustrate a specific point. If you find a great story that has nothing to do with your topic, don't use it! Put it in a file for a later speech or tell it to your family instead. The story you do use doesn't have to be directly related to your topic, but it must be directly related to the point you are trying to make if it is to serve your audience.
 - Stories should be fairly short and simple, not long, complex, or hard to follow. If you find the perfect story but it's too long, summarize and simplify it using direct, concrete words and simple, straightforward sentences. You may need to cut out extraneous aspects of the story—minor characters or events that don't serve the purpose.
 - Be sure the story is one that will in no way offend your listeners. Coarse jesting or silly talk is always unacceptable.
 - Be sure it's a story that you have permission to tell. Generally speaking, you should always reference your story (tell where you got it), unless a person in the tale would rather remain anonymous. If this is the case, you should *always* get permission to share "private" stories publicly.
- * **Strong images:** Think about the filmed speeches you watched last week. What strong images did speakers use to motivate people to do great things? Strong images should be used less often than stories, but when they are used, they should provide central images on which the speech hangs. Notice the following:
 - Martin Luther King's strong images of harmony as he describes his dream: white and black children living life together in peace and friendship
 - In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Marc Antony's use of the image of Caesar's wounds
 - In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, King Henry's stirring image of the heroic name his men will earn for their bravery on St. Crispin's Day
 - In *Return of the King*, Aragorn encourages his followers with an "anti-image." He repeatedly says, "There may come a day when [bad things occur], but *this* is not that day!"
- * **Dynamite facts** are short, powerful facts that prove your point. In a speech about ancient Rome, you might share how many Christians suffered or summarize the various ways they were martyred. For an example of effective dynamite facts, read Hebrews 11, especially verses 32-38. This whole chapter is made up of "dynamite facts" which crescendo in these later verses. Read this chapter aloud as if it were a speech. See the power of short facts piled on top of one another. NOTE: Some cautions are necessary in using dynamite facts.
 - Be completely accurate and scrupulously honest. Don't be tempted to fake these.



- Don't overdo it. Not every speech needs a lot of dynamite facts.
 - Don't rely on dynamite facts alone. Like dynamite, facts can blow away your audience so much that they become overloaded and can't listen to or absorb any more.
- * **Humor** is a great servant and a bad master. Here are do's and don'ts about adding humor to your speech:

Be careful not to...

- Use humor that might hurt someone's feelings or offend them. Bad jokes make fun of things people can't help, such as their looks or nationality.
- Tell any "coarse" jokes—those that would not please the Lord because of bad language or attitudes.
- Lean too hard on humor. It's great to insert three or four "laugh lines" or funny stories, but don't become lazy and let all your expressions be joking ones.

Be just as careful to...

- Try your joke or story out on someone who loves you enough to give you a mature opinion of it before you use it in public.
- Relate your joke to the subject. Ask the test listener if it relates to your point and helps him remember it.
- Serve your audience when telling funnies. Don't just put it in because you rolled on the floor when you heard it. For instance, here is an amusing joke from the Internet: "Somewhere in the world, a woman is giving birth every ten seconds. She must be found and she must be stopped!" This is tremendously funny the first time you hear it. It is, of course, a play on meaning. What you usually think of when you hear the first sentence is that somewhere in the world different women give birth to children every ten seconds. The thought of one woman giving birth every ten seconds till she fills the world with children is absurd and funny! However, it's doubtful that there is an audience that would be served by this joke.
 - First of all, some women might take offense at the idea that "she must be stopped."
 - Then, some women might think the speaker is making light of having children.
 - Finally, it's difficult to think of a subject this joke would relate to. It doesn't really make a point, except, perhaps, that you should always listen to the end of people's thoughts.
- Tell the joke a few times before you use it. Nothing kills a good joke faster than a bad delivery. Avoid having to read it off the page or messing up the order of events so that the punch line is delivered awkwardly or too early.
- Find a new joke. Don't tell the same old ones every time. There are books for speakers in your library with quotes and stories galore.

Weeks 4-5

This week (and/or the next, depending on your assignment), you should produce a final draft of your speech. When you have it fairly complete, read it aloud to your teacher for her helpful critique.

After you receive her evaluation, correct your work. Then read it aloud one final time and print a polished draft.

- * Again, depending on delivery style, you may wish to memorize your speech.
- * Or, you may wish to print a copy in a very large font to read from.
- * Another option is to transfer the essence of the speech onto cue cards.



Delivering a speech

Remember that a speech is always a performance, and, as such, the speaker serves his audience yet again by looking respectable. Go over the following information with your teacher:

- * Fashion rules change all the time. Find out how to dress appropriately (and don't fuss).
- * You should learn to stand still and straight. Many beginning speakers slouch, twist, or engage in other nervous habits as they talk. Practice your delivery in front of a mirror or video camera, identify your quirks, and work to eliminate them.
- * Many students rush through their speeches. Polished speakers control their cadence (speed of delivery), causing their words to speed up or slow down according to the mood they are trying to create. Try not to just read the speech—be expressive and engage your audience.
- * Learn to make eye contact with the audience. You can look at various members as you talk or fix your gaze on one person, but resist the urge to look at your draft or your shoes the whole time.
- * Ask your teacher for her advice on how many times you should practice your delivery. Practice really does help. Try to practice in front of people. Failing that, be sure to practice in front of a mirror.
- * Finally, if you will undergo a question-and-answer session, learn to repeat each audience question before you answer. One reason always to repeat a question before answering is to give yourself time to collect your thoughts. Also, the repetition gives everyone in the audience a chance to hear the question. Though this probably won't be the case for you in a homeschool setting, when you grow up, you will find that such repetition is especially important when speeches are being taped.