Speechwriting Tips
for Successful Presentations

Do you get that feeling of dread in the pit of your stomach when you're asked to write a speech or presentation? You have plenty of company; there are thousands of others just like you who hate everything about public speaking.   But with these few professional tips, you can write a speech that is more interesting, more memorable, and easier to present.

1. Get their attention.

Think for a moment about talk show interviews with celebrities. They don't start out by saying, "I'm here to spend the next fifteen minutes talking about my new movie." If they did, you'd turn off the television. Instead, they start out by telling a great story, something that people can relate to. It catches your attention and keeps your interest.

To start the speech, maybe you have a story or a personal experience about your topic you can share. Another option is to find an interesting quote that relates to the topic and start the speech with that. The website www.quotegarden.com has a wide range of quotes on all kinds of topics. Some people like to start with a joke—but this is only good advice if you're already good at telling jokes.

For all stories, quotes, and jokes, make sure that they are appropriate for your audience. Keep it relevant and interesting, and your speech will be off to a great start.

2. Narrow your topic.

Most people are too ambitious when they select a speech topic. It's not practical to try to cover the history of the Roman Empire in ten minutes. You need to narrow your topic down to something more manageable, like an overview of Roman toga styles.

When you narrow your topic to something more limited, you make it easier to write and present your speech. You can focus on a few main points, the things that are most important about your topic. This makes the speech more memorable, and it gives you time to weave interesting facts and details into your speech.

3. Use a conversational tone.

People speak much differently than they write. A common error is to write a speech out word for word, using the same type of jargon you'd use in a report. That makes for a very dull presentation.

Remember that a speech is a chance to talk to your audience, to share information with them. Instead of saying, "The annual production goal for widgets was a 25% net increase over the previous year's production," try something more like, "Last year's production was 17,000 widgets, but this year we were able to increase that total by an amazing 25%. Good job, production team!"

4. Make each point memorable.

Another common error is to use the old formula, "Tell them what you're going to say, say it, then tell them what you said." The idea is that repeating the information makes it stick. With all due respect to the old school, in today's digital age of fast information delivery, you're going to bore your audience to tears.

Instead, keep your points simple and easy to understand. Think sound bites: tight phrases that sum up the whole point. For each point you make, tell a story or relate some information to illustrate that point. Then recap your points at the end. That's plenty. If you really feel the need to repeat it again, then hand out a sheet that summarizes your main points—but only <u>after</u> the speech is over.

Experienced speechwriters use these simple tips to build incredibly successful and memorable presentations. You don't have to be afraid to write a speech. With this information, you're ready to present like a pro.

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