

Speaking in Public

info

Scout
Information
Centre

0845 300 1818

Making an announcement

Write out the announcement and underline the essential facts of reference should your memory fail at the last moment, e.g.

'Next Tuesday at our Leaders' meeting, the demonstration "Using fibreglass" will begin at 7.30pm and not 7.15 PM to allow the demonstrator time to get here from a previous appointment. Please bring some old clothes with you if you wish to try your hand, and remember that Venture Scouts are welcome to join us on this occasion if they wish'.

Do not begin to speak until there is silence and everyone appears to be listening.

Make the announcement slowly and then make it again stressing the important points.

Ask if anyone wishes to ask any questions about the announcement. If there is a question, answer it briefly and clearly. Ideally pin up the announcement on a noticeboard afterwards.

Introducing a speaker

The manner in which you introduce a speaker often determines the way in which the speaker is received, therefore, it is important that the introductory remarks should be carefully prepared and suited to the occasion.

Find out, before the meeting, the speaker's name and title (if any), the subject of the speech, the qualifications of the speaker and the object of the meeting. Write these down, so that if your memory fails you at the last moment you can refer to your notes.

Remember that the audience has come to hear the speaker, not you, so be brief. Arrive in good time before the meeting to welcome the speaker on arrival, check that anything requested beforehand is available.

Ask the speaker beforehand whether questions can be taken at the end of the talk.

When the time has come to begin the meeting, accompany the speaker to the platform and sit next to each other. Rise to your feet and welcome the audience. Explain the purpose of the meeting. State clearly the name of the speaker and the subject of the talk. Mention any qualifications for dealing with the subject. Refer to the interest of this particular audience in the subject of the speaker. Express pleasure in introducing the speaker and call on them to speak. Put the name last in your remarks so that it is clear to the speaker that the introduction is completed e.g. 'and now Mr. Smith'.

If the speaker who was announced is unable to come at the last moment and a substitute has come instead, do not be apologetic to the audience or stress your disappointment or say that Mrs. X has come at the last moment completely unprepared. Your attitude and your words should make the speaker feel how pleased you are that she has come and the audience feel how fortunate they are to have such a good speaker. In your introduction it is important to state whether the speaker will take questions at the end.

If the questioner is indistinct, it is often advisable to repeat the question before calling on the speaker to reply, so that the whole audience is able to appreciate the answer. Keep your eye on the time, approximately ten minutes before the meeting is due to finish, announce that you can take no more questions and call on the person who has been asked beforehand to propose a vote of thanks. If you are asked to propose a vote of thanks, listen carefully to the speaker and make note of one or two points which strike you. Frame your vote of thanks round these points, thus underlining what the speaker has said. Remember, your job is to thank the speaker, so avoid talking about other subjects.

Conclude with 'I have much pleasure in proposing a vote of thanks to Mrs. X for a stimulating talk', or something similar, and then

lead the applause. When the speaker has acknowledged the vote of thanks, announce 'The meeting is now closed'. This gives a formal and definite signal to the audience that the meeting is ended.

Addressing a meeting

First of all think out a general plan:

1. Consider your audience

- what do they know already about the subject?
- what is their attitude likely to be?
- how fast or how slowly should you put over ideas to them?

2. Consider the purpose of your talk

- to give information
- to introduce change, to outline a proposed course of action
- to motivate towards a particular goal.

3. Consider the subject matter

The architecture of a speech is important. It should have:

- an introduction
- some main points
- a conclusion.

Preparing your speech

Collect as much information and as many ideas on the subject as you can. Sort them out under various headings. Decide which points will form your main arguments, retaining the important issues and discarding any material which now seems irrelevant or superfluous. Take control of the meeting from the start. First impressions are important, so never be apologetic and say that you know very little about the subject, that you do not know why you have been asked to speak, or that you can't think who chose the title of your address.

Put some expression into what you say, making effective use of pauses, the speed of delivery, the pitch of your voice and gestures if they help. But be sure they are gestures which help, and not mannerisms which will distract your audience. Stand facing your audience, don't walk up and down. Try to remain still and move only with a purpose. Do not fiddle with coins in your pocket, your notes, or spectacles. Don't

lean on the table, or adopt any other awkward posture. Keep your head up and speak to all parts of the audience, not just one part of it. Eye contact can play an important part. If you want to read an extract from a book of any facts or statistics, hold the book or paper low, so that it does not hide your face and glance up from time to time from the page to your audience, to maintain the link between them and you. Wait till any intermittent noise, such as applause or laughter has subsided before proceeding.

Speaking through a microphone

If the microphone is a standard one, keep a distance of from 8-24cm away from it according to the type of microphone. Keep still, so that the distance between your lips and the microphone does not vary. Do not use gestures, as any movement tends to alter the strength with which your voice is relayed. Look at your audience, you are talking to them and not to the microphone. Do not shout; speak slowly and clearly; pitch your voice low as though speaking into a telephone. If there is more than one loud speaker in the hall or arena you may hear your own words, after you have spoken them, giving the effect of an echo. This is distracting at first, but try not to let it disconcert you.

Overcoming nervousness

Even the most seasoned speakers are often nervous, but they will readily admit that this slight tension is a help rather than a hindrance to giving a good talk. What beginners worry about is the nervousness which can seize a speaker just before being called upon to speak. The best antidote is thorough preparation.

If you are well prepared it will help you feel at ease. If your first paragraph is written out in full, it will ensure that you don't 'dry up' completely at the start. A few deep, steady breaths will help physically to calm your nerves, and if you smile it may help you to relax. Find a friendly face in the audience and direct your remarks to that person for a while.

Remember that if you look and sound enthusiastic and have taken the trouble to get to know your subject well, the audience will put up with a lot, and you'll probably find that you are actually enjoying speaking to them.

Decide how you will introduce the subject to capture the attention of your audience - by an appropriate joke, a local illustration, or by coming straight to the point of interest.

Develop the main theme so that each stage is clear in your mind and can be followed easily by the audience. One point should lead on naturally to the next; this association of ideas will lessen the risk of forgetting what comes next. Sometimes the use of a mnemonic may help.

Decide which points of your talk your audience must remember and which are not quite so important and use any examples, illustrations, analogies or visual aids to give emphasis to the important issues. Visual aids are a vital device to help understanding, and should be used whenever possible.

In your conclusion, sum up your main points, briefly, but try to use exactly the same words as before. It should be clear from your final sentence that you have finished - a quotation may make a suitable ending.

From the outline of your speech, write clearly a series of brief headings and sub-headings on postcards, (these can be easily held in one hand, and do not distract as rustling sheets of paper do). Underline the main points.

It does help to write out the first and last paragraphs in full, as a well-prepared beginning and ending will give you confidence.

Try out your speech on a sympathetic listener who will be constructively critical, or else tape record it and play it back. Try and rehearse your final draft a few times.

Before you speak

Get there in plenty of time. Find out who is to introduce you and get to know them. Are you expected to answer questions? Have a look at the layout of the room. How far will your audience be seated, will they be able to see and hear easily? Check that any aids you are to use are in position and in working order. Try and estimate the mood of your audience. Don't rely on this time for a last look through your notes - someone is sure to want to talk to you - you must have your last check before you get there. If the speech is to be given out of doors, arrange to stand so that the sun is neither in your eyes nor in those of the audience. Your voice will not

carry so well in the open air, and the attention of the audience is more easily distracted, so your speech should be short and delivery slow. Try not to speak against the wind.

On the platform

Speak in a style suited to yourself and your audience. Be courteous, sincere, natural and friendly - a smile will help and keep to the point.