

Making a Speech

1) Choose the Topic

- Choose a topic that *you* are interested in and feel strongly about. If you aren't interested in your topic, then you won't be able to make your audience interested.
- Choose a topic that you know something about. If you know nothing about the topic you won't know where to start.
- Choose a topic that is of importance *today* and of importance *to the audience*. Don't just talk about your personal history. You have to make the audience feel involved.
- Try to avoid topics that are often chosen and sound 'tired'. For example, *Waribashi* has been a popular topic for speech contests for the past 20 years.

Here are the titles of the speeches from the final of the 2012 Kobe Shoin Speech Contest:

1. *Happiness*
2. *A Pet is Not a Doll*
3. *The Potential Energy of the Japanese*
4. *The Functions of Food*
5. *Respecting the Preciousness of Life*
6. *How Much for a Dog's Life?*
7. *Clean Water Can Change Lives*
8. *Kobe Through My Eyes*
9. *To Kill or Not to Kill?*
10. *When I'm 64*
11. *Climbing Over the Wall*

You can see that the subjects of last year's finalists were very varied and interesting.

2) Writing the Speech

Your speech should consist of the following parts:

- **Introduction.** Introduce the topic. This part is the most important. Your introduction has to catch the attention of your audience and make them want to listen to the rest of your speech. If you have a boring introduction, your audience will not listen to you. It must be clear immediately what your speech is about. It should also be clear what your opinion on the subject is: in general, it is better not to present two sides of an argument in a speech. A persuasive speech in which you strongly give your opinion will usually be more interesting.
- **Body.** The main part of your speech will give examples, evidence, details or tell a story to support your topic.
- **Conclusion.** Finally, you should end your speech with a summary – a chance to remind the audience of the main points of your speech. The last sentence of your speech is also very important. It should be strong and leave your audience with something to think about.

A few points to remember:

- Your opinion needs to be supported with facts. You must give evidence. For example, if the title of your speech is ‘*Smoking Kills*’, you must find statistics: how many people die from smoking every year? Facts must be from a reliable source – if you get them from the internet, check the source. Blogs are *not* reliable sources.
- If your speech is about a problem, look at the possible causes. You will need to do some research for this.
- Give examples to make your speech interesting and more easily understood.
- If possible, give some personal connection to your argument or speech. For example, if your speech is about *breast cancer*, you can show why you are concerned with the topic by explaining that your mother, grandmother, best friend etc has/had the disease.
- As explained above, it is best to present an argument, not both sides of an argument. For example, if your speech is about ‘*Living Alone*’ it will be a stronger speech if you say whether you think living alone is good or not, rather than showing the advantages and disadvantages.

3) A Few Tricks

There are several strategies that can help to make a good speech. We call these *rhetorical devices*.

- **Rhetorical Question**

This is a question you ask the audience. You don’t expect anyone to shout back an answer! However, by asking a question you are making the audience think of an answer – what is *their* opinion? So they become involved. A rhetorical question is sometimes a good way to start a speech. It can also be used as a strong ending. An example is in the model speech ‘Let’s Do It – Or not!’ The speech begins: “Can you do *everything* by yourself?”

- **The Magic of Three**

There is something very powerful about *things in threes* in a speech. Your audience will probably only remember 3 points. So it is good to make 3 strong points.

3 x repetition is also strong:

Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be.

(Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain during the 2nd World War)

Here you can see the word ‘victory’ has been repeated 3 x.

Veni, vidi, vici (I came, I saw, I conquered): Julius Caesar’s famous boast is even better in Latin because the three actions all begin with ‘v’ and are two syllables.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

(The Bible)

Fairest Cordelia, thou art most rich, being poor; most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd.
(Shakespeare, 'King Lear')

- **Humour**

The use of humour depends on the topic of your speech. If your speech is about a very sad or serious topic, then it would not be appropriate to make a joke. However, if it is appropriate, the audience will enjoy your speech if you tell them something funny and make them laugh.

One year a student gave a speech on laughter and how it was good for our health. So she ended with a joke which she wrote on a banner to show the audience:

Seven days without laughter make one weak (week)!

- **Quotations**

A quotation can be a very good way to start or end a speech or to support your argument in the body. You may quote an expert on the subject you are talking about. Or you may want to quote a famous person – perhaps in a saying that the audience will easily recognize:

I have a dream. (Martin Luther King)

You could also quote a well-known saying or proverb to illustrate your point:

When the cat's away, the mice will play.

4) Giving your speech

You've chosen a good topic, you've written your speech, you've had it corrected. Now you have to prepare to give your speech in public.

- **Memorization**

The speakers who are successful in speech contests are those who know their speeches. You can use notes and look at them occasionally but if you have not memorized your speech you will be nervous, lose your place and not communicate properly.

There is only one way you can do this: practice, practice, practice.

- **Pronunciation**

It is important that you speak clearly and can pronounce all the words in your speech correctly. If there are words you have difficulty with, even after practising, change them to easier words.

- **Appearance**

You are going to speak in public. It is important that you should dress appropriately. You don't have to wear a black suit but if you are badly dressed, you will not make a good impression. Don't wear jeans or sneakers. Equally important, don't wear anything too sexy.

One year a student gave a speech on cosmetics and animal testing. All the other contestants wore black suits but she wore pink! However, this was a good choice because it suited the subject of her speech. You may want to choose clothes, like her, that are appropriate for the subject of your speech.

It is important that the audience can see your face. If your hair keeps falling across your face, tie it back, wear a hair-band, or have a hair cut!

The way you stand – posture – is equally important. If you do not stand straight, your presentation will look messy.

- **Body Language and Audience Contact**

Don't forget eye contact with your audience, smile at the beginning and where appropriate and use gestures if they suit your speech. Don't overdo the gestures – no gestures are better than the wrong ones. If you don't feel comfortable with gestures, don't worry too much.

- **Voice**

You need to keep your audience listening so don't speak too softly or too loudly. Don't say everything at the same speed or the same pitch. Vary your tone, pace, pitch, volume. Remember appropriate emotions. If you are excited about something, don't sound as if you are bored!

Let's Do It – Or Not!

by

Hiroko Takahashi

(Kinki and Osaka Private Junior Colleges Speech Contest 2000)

Can you do *everything* by yourself? Most of us need our friends to do something with us. We say 'Let's do it' and if everyone agrees, then we do. We can't just do it by ourselves, even something as simple as going to the bathroom.

When I was a high school student, I couldn't do *anything* or go *anywhere* without friends. Somehow I was not confident to act alone and I didn't want to appear to be alone or to have no friends. That was a *big* problem.

At the beginning of my college life, however, I got into trouble with my friends and I became an outcast. Suddenly I was alone. I was so depressed. And I thought I needed to test myself in order to change. So I decided to go to California for homestay by myself. I visited my American friends and enjoyed sightseeing. Staying with them, I discovered one thing: Americans *don't* stay in the same group all day long; they act according to their own wishes. That was what *I* wanted to be like in Japan.

After that I began to seek my own identity. But then it became time to start job-hunting and I faced another big problem. I thought I had nothing to present of myself to a company. I hadn't found *who* I was, or *what* I wanted to do in the company so, of course, I failed again and again. However, I kept seeking my own identity.

One day I called my best friend to ask her to help me solve the problem. And she said to me, "Hiroko, every time you need a solution, you ask someone for advice and you just try to follow it. Why don't you follow your *own* ideas?"

I thought about her advice and decided to act upon it. And little by little, I found I was able to solve every problem that happened to me by myself!

Finally, I found the answer I had been seeking. I had been afraid to follow my own ideas. I cared *too* much about how I appeared to others. My over-dependence on others was an obstacle to developing my own personality and to realizing my own dreams.

"Let's do it together" can prevent us from *ever* becoming independent. So let's *not* do it together, then we can discover who we really are!

SPEECH OUTLINE

Speech topic:

Speech title:

Thesis statement:

These three things are NOT the same.

Example:

Speech topic: Euthanasia (mercy killing)

Speech title: Euthanasia in Japan's Future

Thesis statement: While society is not ready to accept euthanasia in 2012, the day will come when euthanasia is accepted as an ethical and humane way of ending our time on earth.

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

Opening sentence to get the audience's attention

A statement of your topic, the extent and limit of your speech, and your thesis statement

Explanation, as necessary

II. Your first main point

Support for this point (experience, observation, quotation, statistic, or other fact)

Expansion

Restate point

III. Your second main point (experience, observation, quotation, statistic, or other fact)

Support for this point

Expansion

Restate point

IV. Your second main point (experience, observation, quotation, statistic, or other fact)

Support for this point

Expansion

Restate point

V. Conclusion

Summary of speech, restating three main points

Repeat of your thesis statement

Final statement