

## **Secrets to Making a Speech**

You've probably heard it before - making a speech is the number one fear in the world. Something about standing up in front of an audience and - gulp! - having everyone's eyes upon you as you try to say something intelligent and interesting makes most people's knees turn to water. But fear not - here are some top public speaking tips to help you enjoy making a speech.

### **Speech preparation**

Begin by brainstorming all your ideas for your speech on a large sheet of paper. Think carefully about the occasion and the mood you wish to create with your words and your voice. Research if necessary. Then organise your ideas so your speech follows a simple, clear structure - introduction, middle and conclusion. Make your introduction stand out - your audience needs to sit up and take notice! Begin with a question, an interesting quote, an astounding statement, a funny story or even a riddle. The middle of your speech should contain no more than three to five main points. You want to keep your audience listening and any more than that may induce boredom! Finally, make your speech end on a strong note. You can refer to the introduction, use another quote, describe a relevant movie or book scene or ask the audience a question. This helps people to reflect on what you have been talking about.

### **Making your speech shine**

Once you have written your speech, reduce it down to key phrases or notes on palm cards. This will help your speech seem more natural as you won't be reading it off the page - a sure way to lose your audience's interest. Then practice making your speech - and timing it - as often as you can before the big day. Gather together three or four people to use as your audience if possible.

Before you begin, make sure you are standing comfortably and naturally, with your cards held up high enough so you are not looking down. Take a few deep breaths before you start to help you relax. Remember this - half the trick to a great speech is pretending to be confident, even if you are not. There are two keys to this: vocal control and eye contact. Pretend your voice is an arrow and 'shoot' it to the back of the room in which you are speaking. Speak a little more slowly than sounds normal to you - it will be about the correct pace. Eye contact is also important. Try to look people in the eye - scan the room. It is impressive to your audience if you can do this and people will listen much more attentively.

Public speaking is an art, and you will get better at it with every speech you do. Just bear in mind that most of your audience will be thinking 'Wow - I wish I could do that!' and your speech-making will be just fine. Relax and enjoy making a speech!