

## Writing a speech

### Overview

The purpose of a speech is often to inform or persuade an audience. Speeches are usually written to be spoken directly to an audience and can be used to entertain, influencing the listeners that the viewpoint of the speaker is correct. Speeches can also be used to encourage the audience to take action or to change their behaviour in some way; for example, to join a particular school club or society, or to recycle more. The ways you use language and vocabulary when writing the words of a speech will depend on the audience and the purpose you are writing for; for example, in a speech to a group of teachers and parents giving your views on a recent proposal, formal language is most appropriate.

### Tips for writing a speech

#### Language – think about:

- **the audience that the speech is for** – are you giving your speech to a group of people you know, or do not know, or a mixture of both? If you know your audience well, you may be able to relax a little, but a speech is still a formal kind of talk and would usually not include slang.
- **whether your audience are likely to disagree with what you say** – you will need to consider any possible objections and deal with them. Use language carefully to make objections seem less significant; for example, using phrases like ‘A few people may still think, however’.
- **the reason you are giving this speech and how you feel about this topic** – try to imagine the words of your speech as you would speak them out loud. Your tone of voice must match your message, so choose words that appeal to the emotions of your listeners. Focus on what you want your audience to know and feel by the end of your speech.
- **how to engage your listeners** – for example, you might use inclusive words or phrases like ‘we’, ‘all of us’ and ‘our’ to make your listeners feel that you are all on the same side.

#### Organisation:

- **Plan where you want to finish your speech and how you will get there before you start writing.** The structure of a speech is often in three parts. For example:
  1. **an opening that grabs your audience’s attention and makes the overall topic of your speech clear** – for example, pose a question to the audience where you can predict the answer.
  2. **a well-structured, supported and developed argument** – for example, to support your argument you might use real life examples or anecdotes.
  3. **a powerful conclusion** – for example, group your final words or ideas in threes to help make them memorable or end with a thought-provoking question or image and thank your audience for listening.
- **Organise your ideas into paragraphs as appropriate** – this will help you to develop and support your points convincingly, to build your argument and/or offer a full explanation of a particular point of view.
- **Show the connections between ideas in sentences and paragraphs** – where a new point or idea follows on from what you have already said you might use linking words or phrases such as, ‘in addition’, ‘likewise’ or ‘similarly’.

## Example of a speech

### Comments

Good morning everyone. How did you all spend your weekend? Did you go hiking perhaps or climb the mountains? <sup>1</sup> Guess what I did. Not hiking, not climbing, no – <sup>2</sup> I spent the whole of yesterday afternoon learning vocab with my best friend Tony! That sounds a bit weird and boring, <sup>3</sup> doesn't it? But in fact it was quite the opposite so keep listening and I'll tell you more...

Let me think, it was probably a Friday afternoon when Tony and I were on our way home after school and both noticed a giant poster placed just at the entrance of subway line 1 'Volunteers wanted – £50 awards to be won.' £50 – it's a lot right? <sup>4</sup> Obviously, Tony and I stopped to read this poster in more detail.

<sup>5</sup> This poster says: 'A test about computer-based vocab learning method needs volunteers'. Specifically, 'volunteers are divided to two groups. The first group will learn with computers, while the second group will learn the same words with traditional printed books.' Fellow classmates, you know how torturing it is to memorise English vocabulary, don't you? <sup>6</sup> But as Tony and I both wanted the £50 award, we still decided to apply to be volunteers and luckily we ended up in the first group.

It was fun because it was designed like a game. First of all, the screen shows you 5 words and their meanings, and then a teacher pops up and reads each word aloud and explains its usage in sentences and context. You then have to read these words as correctly as possible so that the computer can identify the words and give you a score. Then you enter a battle part – yes, that's right, the fun part is you get a chance to test your skills and beat others.

Although Tony and I didn't get the £50, this computer-based learning experience completely changed our attitudes to lexical learning and was a great way to spend our weekend. <sup>7</sup>

Thank you Miss Stanley for asking me to deliver this speech and thank you all for listening.

<sup>1</sup> The learner poses a question to involve the audience.

<sup>2</sup> The learner is showing that they are thinking about how these words would be spoken – varying the pace and using a dramatic pause to engage their audience.

<sup>3</sup> The learner is taking account of the audience reactions.

<sup>4</sup> The learner uses appropriate linking words and phrases to connect their ideas together, maintaining a semi-formal but relaxed tone.

<sup>5</sup> The learner makes a few attempts at more complex structures.

<sup>6</sup> The learner uses rhetorical devices appropriately to keep their audience engaged and make sure they are on the same side.

<sup>7</sup> The learner has organised their anecdote into clear paragraphs and offers some detail and development in each, finishing back full circle where the speech began with the observation that they had had a fun weekend.