

*Helpful Hints for 4-H Public Speaking**

The most effective speech is one that presents most clearly and impressively what the speaker has in mind. It is a learning experience for the audience. It helps the speaker put into words and actions what he believes, helps him think on his feet and gives him confidence from experience in effectively reaching an audience.

Speeches may be a variety of lengths and types. 4-Hers who want to excel in speech should begin as young as possible and speak as often as possible. Nothing takes the place of experience and practice. Dive in and learn by doing!!

Selecting a topic. A topic is the first hurdle after deciding to give a talk. The first rule is to select something that interests you. A subject that is interesting to you and currently important to society is a good one.

The topic should not be too large or general. Narrow it down to something you can cover in the amount of time you have to speak.

Gathering material. After choosing and narrowing your topic. Gather material. Books on the topic, general quotation books and speaker's handbooks are good. A speech is not a report. It consists of information found in resources but it is put together by you and shares your feelings on the subject. Make a speech personal by relating your experiences, suggestions, or perhaps survey or interview results.

Choosing a method of delivery. After gathering material, you must choose a method of delivery. Writing a speech and reading it is the very least effective method. Memorizing a written speech can be dangerous.

The most satisfactory method is to outline areas to cover, learn the sequence of ideas and speak extemporaneously. This method works with a memorized presentation by giving the introduction and conclusion word-for-word but expressing the body of the presentation in an extemporaneous manner. Even the written-and-read method is acceptable if used only for a long quotation or to give statistics which must be exactly correct. A good delivery should be spontaneous and natural, as if the speaker is talking on a subject he knows very well.

Building a speech around a quote, poem or creative idea gives the presentation unity. This "theme" will help listeners or judges remember your speech and will give it personality.

Preparing the speech. Speeches should have three parts: introduction, body, conclusion. The introduction gets the attention of the audience and tells the scope or what you hope to show or accomplish. Begin with a question so the audience becomes involved by thinking of an answer or say something that makes a difference or paint a verbal picture of a situation. Be original. Hook the audience so they simply cannot turn you off! Then let them know the direction your heading and what you hope to accomplish. Speeches can inform, entertain or move people to act.

Body. The body of a presentation explores the topic and covers three or four main points. Group thoughts around only a few main points so when you're finished the audience can recall the points made.

Conclusion. The conclusion of a presentation may be a summary of points made or a reminder of what you started out to prove. Go back to the quote or idea you started with and express it again in a memorable way.

Delivering the speech. After writing the presentation, give attention to its delivery. A great deal of practice is necessary if you do an effective job. Be sure to time and revise your presentation if there are time limitations to follow. Practice before a mirror reveals flaws in appearance and delivery.

Notes. Use note cards if they help you give a better speech. The knowledge you have close at hand may give you the extra confidence you need. Don't feel like you have to use note cards just because you have them. It might be best to use 3 X 5 or 5 X 7 cards if you choose to use notes. Cards don't rattle like paper. So don't worry about cards being noisy if you shake or move them. Use a few small cards. Don't write the entire speech on them, just your main ideas and key words. Hold the cards in your hands or put them on the speaker's stand. Use notes if needed, just don't attempt to hide notes from the audience. Remind yourself that you know your subject and are somewhat of an authority.