

Tips on public speaking

With a little preparation, practice, and faith in your ideas, anyone can stand up in front of a group -- large or small -- and deliver an interesting and convincing speech.

Advance preparation is the key

Before you develop any speech, it's important to know your audience.

- Who are they?
- What are they interested in?
- How much do they already know about your subject?
- Are they open to your views -- or are you trying to change their minds?

Before the speech, find out who will be there and what kind of reception you can expect to receive. Only begin preparing your speech or presentation after you have assessed your audience.

Getting the message across

Believing in what you have to say is important, but your beliefs are based on *your* knowledge and experience that in many cases your audience hasn't yet had. *Sharing* that experience and knowledge with an audience is what public speaking is all about.

Think for a minute about what you want to share with the group. Gather all the facts -- if any -- that you will need to support your speech. Organize your thoughts in an outline to get them in a logical order. Then write your first draft.

A good speech breaks down into three basic parts -- an introduction, the main body, and the final summary.

Points to remember

- Speeches are like clothes. They should fit, reflect your personality and make you feel at ease in a crowd.
- Humor can enliven your talk, but use it wisely. Some people may misunderstand your meaning and be offended.
- Prepare an attention getting introduction and a strong conclusion that highlights the main points.
- Make sure your speech moves logically from point to point. Use simple words and short, simple sentences.
- Keep eye contact with your audience.
- When appropriate, use visual props. Charts, displays, graphs or an object that

makes your point. Make sure they are large, simple, and easy to hold.

- Keep it short and do not go over your time limit. Leave the audience wanting more.
- Don't forget to identify yourself as a member of your union or community organization!

Rehearse your speech in front of a mirror or with a friend. It's better not to memorize it word for word. Instead, know it point by point. Jot down these main points on separate, numbered, index cards if you think you'll need help.

Try taping the speech and afterwards listen and critique yourself. The more familiar you are with the material and with the delivery, the more confident you will be.

With point-by-point organization you can also easily vary your speech -- taking into account something that has already been said or done by others at the event.

Time your remarks. No one will complain if it is under the allotted time.