

# Speech,

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# Speech! How to Write It Right

One easy way to slide into a joke is through the back door of the quote department: "Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, 'Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel. It is to bring another out of his bad sense into your good sense.' Well, if I happen to stumble upon any good sense up here, please do let me know." A self-aimed quip like this will make people laugh and immediately prove to your audience that you are a humble person who isn't trying to hog the spotlight.

When it comes to writing a good speech, the most important thing is to recognize your talents. Are you a trivia buff? A good storyteller? Can you sing? Be sure that you employ your strengths in your delivery.

## SPEAK YOUR MIND

Dynamite speeches have three things in common: a strong opening, a meaty body that makes a good argument by citing evidence and examples, and a powerful conclusion that sparks a crowd's interest. Every word should reflect the speaker's passion.

Listen to one of the world's finest public speakers, Martin Luther King Jr.: "When we let

freedom ring ... we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children ... will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"

You may not be speaking about something as important as racial equality, but try to invoke the conviction in King's voice to sturdy your own soap-

box! Write with the enthusiasm you feel when you think about your topic. Dig deep in your heart and don't get sidetracked.

## BE GREAT!

Think about what you would applaud. Great speeches capture people's attention and stir their emotions.

When writing your speech, do you feel bored or tired? Then rip up your words and start all over again. Grab your listeners by their perky, word-hungry ears. Write with the eloquence you're capable of, speak with the assurance your topic deserves, and when the roof caves in from all the thunderous applause, shield your pride and cherish the moment, knowing that you've left your audience wanting more.

**Y**ou have great ideas and lots of pizzazz, but you're not running for student council. Why not? Oh, you're afraid of public speaking. So what? You're not alone. Plenty of people sweat buckets just *thinking* about speaking in public.

Fear is not always easy to overcome, but these simple tips on public speaking and persuasive writing should help you get through the angst:

- **Watch yourself.** Practice delivering your speech in front of a mirror (or a friend) until you are familiar and perfectly comfortable with it.
- **Exude confidence.** Even if you're a lamb, act the lion. Speak with an intensity that screams "My Words Matter!" (But don't actually scream!)
- **Pro-nun-ci-ate.** Make your voice crystal clear and your words strong. Imagine yourself delivering your speech on a radio or TV broadcast that echoes across the land.
- **Write a great speech.** That's the most important thing. Here's how.

## WHO CARES?

While writing, keep your listeners at the center of your thoughts. A speech you give at graduation should be entirely different from a eulogy you deliver at your grandfather's funeral. Picturing your audience as you write will give you a head start to achieving a professional edge.

## BAD SPEECH

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, mollusks and monkeys, turkeys and hams, I am here today to show off my amazing talent. I am the best senior class president that ever lived, just watch ...

*(Deepen voice here)* "Hello, I am the best senior class president that ever lived." See what I mean? I'm awesome! And I'm wearing a tie! Is my opponent wearing a tie? Nooooo, he doesn't feel that he should try to impress you. Well, I want to impress you. If you vote for me, I'll make sure that school weeks end on Thursdays and pizza is served for lunch every day! Yeah! That's what I'm talkin' about! My name's Matt, and I'm all that!

Peace, I'm outta here.

For example, when writing a speech for a school election, remember that you have two sets of eyes—the students' and the faculty's—focused on you. Write in a commanding and humorous tone that will appeal to your classmates, but don't cross any decency lines with your teachers. Making a joke about Sloppy Joe day in the cafeteria is OK; discussing your principal's weight problem is not.

## IS THIS THING ON?

"A clown, a giraffe, and Superman walk into a nursery ... and, boy, are my arms tired!" Silence. That wasn't funny, was it? While you don't always have to start out with a joke (after all, jokes are funny only if you tell them right!), humor does help a crowd warm up to you.

## GOOD SPEECH

Mark Twain once said, "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education." I know exactly what he means. We've all come a long way since kindergarten. We've learned important subjects like science, math, English, and history. But there's something missing. We've never learned how to like each other. We've never been educated in Friendship 101.

We all grew up together on the playground, but it doesn't seem like it, does it? I walk around this school every day and I see cliques and divisions, scuffles and fights, misplaced hatred and animosity. I don't understand it. It's high time we educate ourselves beyond the classroom. Let's face it, next year we'll all be off at college or traveling the world or ... who knows where? This is our last chance to get to know one another. Right here, right now, let's put all our petty differences aside.

Vote for me, and I promise to bridge the gap between social groups. I have what it takes to do that. You all know me as the class social butterfly. I'm friends with the "cool kids" and a confidant to the so-called "dorks." I'm a "jock" and a "band geek." I'm a part-time straight-A student who occasionally resides in Slackerville. Because I hail from all those backgrounds, I can use my presidency to bring everyone here at North Lakeview High School together!

My name is Matthew, and I'm running for senior class president. A vote for me is a vote for you (point) and you (point) and you! (point) A vote for us all!