

# Chapter 1

# Giving a Speech

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## *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Examining the contents of this book
  - ▶ Exploring what you need to know
- .....

**W**hether you're giving your first speech or your five hundredth, this book can show you how to improve your speaking skills. Crammed full of nuts-and-bolts ideas, techniques, and suggestions, beginners can benefit just from discovering and avoiding basic mistakes, and experienced speakers may appreciate the expert tips and techniques sprinkled throughout these pages. Because this book isn't designed to be read from cover to cover (of course, you can if you want to), you can skip chapters and even sections within chapters, focusing only on the material that suits your needs. So if you're looking for an idea of where to start or an idea of what chapters may benefit you the most, just check out the sections that follow to find out what each chapter has to offer.

## *Finding Out What You Need to Know*

Before you give your speech, or even write it, there's a lot of basic information that you need to know. Chapters 2 and 3 tell you how to get started researching the basics.

## *Getting down the preliminaries*

Getting asked to speak begins the process of making a lot of decisions. The first decision is exactly what to talk about. Even when you're assigned a topic, there's usually still room for you to shape it. How you do this depends on the audience — not just their age and sex, but also their education, attitudes, and much more. Chapter 2 tells you what you need to know and how to find it out.

## ***Doing research***

No matter what you talk about, you can improve it by doing a little research. I don't mean just locating facts and statistics. You can also find quotes, jokes, and stories to spice up your remarks. Chapter 3 puts a wealth of research tools and techniques at your disposal, such as using traditional library sleuthing, logging onto cool Web sites, and getting other people to do your research for you — for free.

## ***Organizing your speech***

After you've got a topic and you've done some research, it's time to get organized. To make your speech flow, you can choose from several patterns: problem and solution; past, present, and future; and cause and effect. Chapter 4 gives you lots of ideas for organizational patterns and shows you how to create a speech outline that's actually useful and conforms to your time limits.

# ***Developing Your Speech***

Giving a speech scares a lot of people. Writing one is just perceived as a hassle. And doing it right can take a lot of time. But calm down. This part of the book will show you everything you need to know to write a speech quickly and effectively.

## ***Selecting the right material***

You've done research and you've got an outline. Now it's time to put some meat on those bones. (Or leaves on those branches if you're a vegetarian.) If you're looking for the key to captivating an audience with statistics quotes, stories, and examples, you're in luck. I unlock all kinds of potential speech material in Chapter 5.

## ***Starting and ending your speech***

Many people believe that you have to open with a joke, but you can get the audience involved better by asking a rhetorical question or by using a quotation for the opening — or the conclusion. In Chapters 6 and 7, I discuss cool ways to open and close your speech, and I give you great ideas to make sure you and your audience reach your conclusion at the same time.

## *Polishing It Off*

Anyone can throw a speech together, but you do need to make it memorable. If you need to find just that right turn of phrase, develop the winning argument, come up with the perfect example or anecdote that an audience will never forget, or get ideas on how to deliver your speech flawlessly even if you're nervous, Chapters 8 through 10 make polishing your speech and delivery much easier.

### *Making sure your speech makes sense*

Sure, your speech makes perfect sense to you, but the test is whether it makes sense to your audience. If you'd rather not find that out as you deliver your speech, visit Chapter 8 and find out how to put a little spit shine on your speech to make it stand out from the crowd.

### *Adding some style*

You don't have to be a poet or literary type to give a little zip to your speech. Just remember that certain words and phrases can make more powerful statements than others — you just have to pick the right ones. Chapter 9 shows you how to use rhetorical techniques to create some colorful lines and phrases to spice up your speech.

### *Using visual aids*

If you need eye candy to dress up your next speech, find out everything you need to know to make your graphics look good and to avoid common mistakes in Chapter 10. From PowerPoint to overheads to good old-fashioned flip charts, you can find several great choices for displaying information during your speech.

## *Delivering a Speech*

After you've written a brilliant, witty speech that captures your message exactly, you still have to perform it in front of an audience. So, if your goal is to receive a standing ovation, Chapters 11 to 14 may give you a chance for one.

## ***Overcoming stage fright***

If you've gone to all the trouble to create a brilliant speech, you don't want to ruin it by fainting at the podium. If you need to squelch anxiety at the outset or find some stress-busting techniques used by professional speakers, check out Chapter 11.

## ***Talking with your body***

The way you move and make eye contact affects how your audience receives your message. To ensure that your verbal and non-verbal messages match, check out Chapter 12 and find out all the details on how to move, dress, make eye contact, deal with your hands and habits, and get your other body-language questions answered.

## ***Taking questions***

Answering audience questions is an art unto itself. What do you do if you don't know the answer? How do you respond to hostile questions? What if the questioners have no idea what they're talking about? Chapter 13 addresses all these issues and shows you how to anticipate questions, design perfect answers, and get an audience to ask questions.

## ***Handling the audience***

Your speech is fantastic but your audience is not: They're heckling you; they're falling asleep; they're leaving! Understanding how to read an audience is an essential skill for anyone who has to give a speech. You have to adapt quickly and know what you're adapting to. If you want to discover how to deal with tough audiences, keep their attention, and get them involved, then Chapter 14 is for you.

## ***Preparing for Special Speaking Situations***

Speaking in front of public bodies, informal speeches, introductions, panels, debates, international meetings, and virtual meetings are all common speaking situations, but they don't fit into the normal

speech you may give at a convention or meeting. Special meetings require special preparation, and Chapters 15 through 20 tell you how to handle all these situations.

## ***Talking to public bodies***

Concerned citizens have lots of opportunities to give speeches: city council meetings, school board meetings, board of supervisor meetings, planning commission meetings, and the list goes on. But these types of forums have special rules, such as speaker sign-up procedures, time limits, requirements regarding handouts, and basic rules of courtesy that are strictly enforced. Chapter 15 provides the inside scoop on all these rules and describes effective strategies for persuading public officials.

## ***Speaking on the fly***

One of the most common, yet feared, speaking situations is when someone asks you to get up and say a few words about something off-the-cuff. The good news is that you didn't have to spend a lot of time preparing your speech. Of course, that's also the bad news. Chapter 16 tells you how to anticipate those situations, plan for them, and give fabulous impromptu speeches.

## ***Introducing other speakers***

If you have to introduce a speaker at a meeting, conference, or convention, you probably wonder how big a deal you should make of it: should the introduction be long and flowery, should you just recite the speaker's resume, or should you do a lot of research and find some "inside" stories about the speaker. Find out how to handle your next introduction in Chapter 16.

## ***Speaking on panels or roundtables***

Some people figure it's easy to serve on a panel or roundtable. They think they can just wing it because the other panelists can always pick up the slack. If you happen to be more of a slacker than a pick-up-the-slacker, just remember that the audience is going to *compare* you to those other panelists, so you'd better be good. Chapter 17 shows you how to stand out from the crowd when you're speaking on a panel or roundtable.

## ***Debating***

If you have to deal with kids, teachers, neighbors, parking enforcement officers, liberals, conservatives, extremists of any stripe, or the manager of a store where you want to return something, then you already know something about debate. Chapter 18 shows you some formal techniques so your next debate can be a sure bet.

## ***Speaking at international meetings***

Today's global economy has increased the number of business-people who speak before international audiences. While language differences are a big challenge, cultural differences can be even bigger. Use Chapter 19 to prepare for your next international meeting so you can avoid embarrassing gaffes.

## ***Participating in virtual meetings***

Meetings are commonly held in virtual locations, so you may be more used to attending face-to-space rather than face-to-face meetings. Before your next virtual meeting, check out the techniques in Chapter 20 to maximize the effectiveness of your participation.

## ***The Parts of Ten***

In this section, I show you how to make your speech sparkle with humor — even if you can't tell a joke. The techniques are so simple that you'll wonder why you didn't use them before. I also point out what to check just before you speak.