



A GUIDE TO MAKING GREAT 4-H SPEECHES

Communication and public speaking are important life skills gained through 4-H participation. Speaking face-to-face is one of the oldest forms of communication and is still the most effective. The listener hears your words, but more than that, he/she watches your face and your hands. They catch your enthusiasm or your concern. It is a warm, personal way of communicating. For the rest of your life, you will be communicating, trying to persuade and to inform. The work you do now in 4-H public speaking will have longer-lasting benefits than any event. So give it all you've got!

By giving a speech, you develop:

- **Ability to express yourself clearly and convincingly**
- **Skills in organizing your ideas and ability to present them in a logical order**
- **Research skills and factual information to support your ideas.**
- **Poise and confidence in your ability to present your ideas.**

The only way to learn good public speaking skills is to give one, and you'll get better the more you give.

Start with something simple, perhaps among friends at a 4-H Club meeting. You'll have their interest and support, and the butterflies won't be jumping in your stomach. All 4-H members should give at least one presentation or public speech each year. Once a year, you can find something to talk about, that you want to share

with others. And you will learn more when you do a presentation than the members who watch.

Remember that public speaking is basically the same as a demonstration, except that:

- It is just telling.
- It requires careful planning and effective delivery with gestures, voice variety, and proper grammar.

TYPES OF SPEECHES

Before selecting a topic, you need to be aware of the different types of speeches. There are four major types: informative, persuasive, motivational and entertaining.

1. **Informative speech** gives your audience information and facts on a subject.
2. **Persuasive speech** is used to affect the listener's behavior by changing a way of thinking. You are trying to convince or persuade them that your opinion is best.
3. **Motivational speech** encourages people to join an activity, initiate a program or take some other kind of action.
4. **Entertaining speech** amuses the audience, but it can also be used as a tool to communicate a message.

SELECTING A TOPIC

Your first step is to select a subject or topic. Usually you'll do best if you choose a subject from your own experiences. Determine the purpose of your presentation. Is it to inform, or do you want to create action?

When selecting your subject, ask yourself is it:

- Something you like to do.
- Something you have learned to do in 4-H or about 4-H.
- One single idea or theme.
- Something you think others would like to know how to do or know about.
- Timely and seasonal.
- Something interesting and worthwhile to you and your audience.
- Something you can do in a limited time.
- Something that has economic or practical importance to your community, your family, or to you.
- A topic on which you already have some knowledge, would like to know more about, and have an interest.
- A subject suitable to your age, experience, and surroundings.

You can find information about your subject from books, the Internet, newspapers, and magazines. Talk to parents, leaders, or teachers for ideas.

Select the topic you feel will work best and begin to organize your thoughts.

PLANNING A SPEECH

The purpose of your speech should be to communicate your ideas to your audience. To do this, your speech must be organized so that the

audience can understand what you are telling them. A speech is usually outlined into three

major parts: the introduction, body, and conclusion.



1. The **INTRODUCTION** captures the attention of the audience. It introduces the central thought of the speech and appeals to the interests of the audience.
2. The **BODY** presents the major points through discussion and examples. This is the longest section of the speech.
3. The **CONCLUSION** restates the central thought and summarizes the major highlights of the speech. This is the “final thought,” the high point and the last chance to impress the audience.

Identify Key Ideas First. Don't start gathering material until you have listed two to five major ideas or thoughts you want your listeners to know. These will guide your search.





Get Organized

The four common ways to organize a speech are: logical, topical, spatial, and chronological.

1. **Logical:** In this form, the problem is stated and the speaker gives the possible solutions. (In a persuasive speech, the action or response the speaker gets from the audience is part of the solution.)
2. **Topical:** Here the speech is divided into general areas which become main headings. Suppose we were to inform an audience about the 4-H Club emblem. We might say that the emblem is composed of four H's. The names of these four H's would become our main headings.
3. **Spatial:** In this arrangement, the main headings are physically related to each other. An informative speech about the human body (head, shoulders, legs, feet, etc.) would use spatial arrangement.
4. **Chronological:** The fourth arrangement is according to time sequence. In telling the history of America, a speaker discusses the events of history year by year.

Of these four arrangements, logical and topical are used most often.



Use an Outline

An outline is used to help you prepare the speech. It gives you a format to follow and helps get your thoughts onto paper in an organized manner. Here is a simple outline that you can change to fit your needs. This might be used for an informative speech with topical organization.

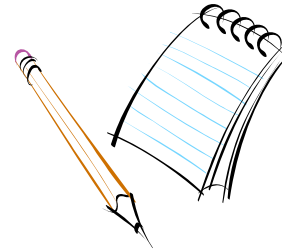
- I. Introduction
 - A. Opening phrases to get audience attention
 - B. Subject or purpose statement—why the audience should be concerned
 - C. Bring 4-H into speech
- II. Body
 - A. Main point
 - B. Main point
 - C. Main point

1. sub-point
 - a. detail
 - b. detail
2. sub-point
 - a. detail
 - b. detail

D. How 4-H is or can be involved

III. Conclusion

- A. Summary of main points
- B. Closing statements



A good speaker usually prefers speaking from an outline. Speaking from a script may hamper delivery because one tends to read rather than “speak” from notes. However, in some instances, it may be wise to write out a speech. Make the decision based on what makes you the most comfortable. If you use notes, write them large enough so you can see them at a glance.



Develop a Catchy Introduction

A good introduction is like a handshake; it introduces you in a friendly way. An attention-getter during the introduction makes the audience react positively and makes you feel successful. When you capture the listener's attention, you make them want to listen. The other purpose of the introduction is to inform the audience of your subject. This is where you will state the main points of your speech. Do not expand on them yet; just state them so that the audience knows what your speech is about.

To capture the attention and interest of the audience, you might begin your speech by:

- Challenging them with a question.
- Giving a startling statement, but not an offensive one.
- Recounting a personal experience or telling a story.

- Using an appropriate poem or quote. Be sure the method you choose is one that relates to the audience and to what you are going to say.
- Referencing a common experience with humor.
- Revealing statistics related to a cause.

Speakers usually don't begin with "Good morning. My name is. . ." because it does not capture the interest of the audience. The introduction sets the stage for the speech, so you may want to write this section last. The length of the introduction should never exceed the body of the speech. It should be about five to ten percent of the total time allotted.

Develop the Body

The body is the portion of your speech where you support the main points of your topic. It contains the heart of your information. Plan this part of your speech first, and then you can develop an introduction and a conclusion that are appropriate. Three to five main points are a good number to use so the audience will not get confused. Try to keep your ideas well-defined so that the audience will remember them. The material supporting main points may be classified into four general types: testimony, statistics, examples, and analogies.

1. **Testimony:** the expression of an opinion on a topic by any person.
2. **Statistics:** quantitative information produced by organizing and analyzing data collected and the relationships among them.
3. **Examples:** include personal experience interviews with knowledgeable and experienced people, documents and library resources.
4. **Analogy:** a method of reasoning, concluding that when two particulars are alike in a number of known respects, they will be alike in an unknown respect.

Create a Memorable Conclusion

The conclusion is the part of your speech that the audience will remember the most. It should summarize your main points in the body, briefly giving your audience one more chance to hear what you have said. Your conclusion may also motivate your audience to action or just round out your thoughts bringing the speech to a smooth ending. Don't expand on your points in this section. All of the details are given in the body. Listeners tend to remember first and last statements. Give these crucial moments of your speech special attention. While experts recommend that you not memorize your entire speech, it is helpful to memorize your introduction and conclusion. This insures you will get off to a good start, even if you are nervous.

The **introduction** tells what you are going to tell them, the **body** is where you tell them, and the **conclusion** is where you tell them what you have told them.

Using Transitions

Transitions are the connecting parts of the speech. Transition words or phrases allow you to move smoothly from one point to another, developing relationships to help listeners understand your message.

Transitions can be used between the three major parts of a speech and within each part. Use transitions between:

- The introduction and body. (*"I will identify five reasons..."*)
- The major points within the body. (*"In addition to that, we need to...otherwise, we will not be able...and consequently the 4-H'ers..."*)
- The body and conclusion. (*"So this means we must..."*)

These sample words can help accomplish the following transitions:

- *Further, besides, also, finally, again* - to add a point.
- *But, despite, however, on the contrary, yet* - to contrast one point with another.
- *Consequently, therefore, accordingly* - to identify a result of an activity.
- *Either, both, not only, on the other hand* - to link two alternate points.
- *When, then, inasmuch as* - to identify a cause of a major point.
- *So this means, to be sure, in reality* - to repeat and emphasize a point
- *Points are, first, the, follow by, next* - to call attention to next point.

Planning Your Time

There are approximately 150 words in each speaking minute. If you have seven minutes for a speech, you will prepare approximately 1,050 words. Consider this time schedule as a guide:

5-10%	Introduction (50-115 words)
80%	Body (850 words)
10-15%	Conclusion (115-150 words)



Tips for Writing Your Speech

- Use your own words. Your words when spoken versus a written script will have a conversational quality and sound natural.
- Try not to use long sentences. They are hard to understand when spoken.
- Simplify ideas and main points so that the audience can understand and remember them.
- Use examples, stories, dialogue, or anything to help your audience visualize what you are telling them.
- Avoid clichés and words that are hard for you to pronounce.

DELIVERING YOUR SPEECH

The First Impression

You will come to the audience's attention as soon as you start to walk to the front of the room or onto the stage. You will have written and learned your speech, but there are other things that you need to do to be a successful public speaker:

- Create a "presence" by walking briskly to the front of the room with a sense of purpose. Project a feeling of confidence.
- Pause just a few seconds and smile naturally to relieve tension before speaking.
- Don't be rigid. Use a relaxed and balanced posture. Often it works to separate your feet by 10 to 12 inches, perhaps with one foot slightly forward. This is a "home base" posture. It is your starting point for the speech. You don't have to stay planted the entire time, however. You can move around. Move back and forward, going to and from the home base.
- Stand straight with your arms at your sides until you are ready to gesture. Practice good posture at all times.
- Look good. Get "a little bit dressed up"—reflect to your audience that this is an important event for you. Make a special effort to be well-groomed. Wear attractive, comfortable clothes (nothing inappropriate).
- If you're nervous, don't announce it. Once you do, your audience feels obligated to worry about you.

Delivery

Delivery is a very important aspect of public speaking. It includes how well you use your voice and nonverbal communication or body actions. Look for these qualities in a good speaking voice:

1. Vocal Expression

- *Quality*-mellow, clear, stable, steady, rich and full, instead of thin, harsh, nasal and shaky.
- *Force*-volume and intensity. Force of the voice should vary according to what you are saying to avoid monotony, but should be pleasant to listen to and loud enough to be heard.
- *Pitch*-position on the scale at which you speak. Different words will have higher or lower inflections than others, such as the rising of pitch at the end of a question. Normal speaking pitch should be at a moderate level.
- *Rate*-speed at which you speak. Rate will change with the effect you want to give. By slowing down, you can think ahead and give the audience a chance to absorb what you are saying. Pauses can be used effectively. But don't let them appear to be memory problems.
- *Enthusiasm*-this is the magic ingredient. Enthusiasm is what convinces your audience to see your point of view, to agree with the material you are presenting. Enthusiasm helps build audience acceptance and creates a feeling of enjoyment and togetherness between the listener and the speaker. Remember, enthusiasm is contagious. Once you have it, it is not difficult to infect the audience with it.

2. Enunciation and Articulation

- Pronounce all words so that the audience hears them. Try not to let endings such as “-ing” drop off words.
- Look up words if you are not sure of their correct pronunciation.

- Most of us have a tendency to slur words together, but over-precision is undesirable, too. It will sound “mechanical.”

3. Breathing

- A pleasing voice comes from a relaxed condition. By breathing deeply and evenly, you should be able to overcome a little of your nervousness. Short sentences will help put the pauses where they belong in relation to breathing.

All of these qualities contribute to the outcome of your speech. You have probably heard it one time or another, “*It's not what you said, but how you said it.*” This shows that the way we speak has much to do with what our audience actually hears.

What to Do with Your Hands



Body action is any physical movement by the speaker. It can relate your thoughts and feelings to the audience almost as effectively as words, so it is very important to understand this type of communication. How you feel always communicates itself to the audience through body language.

Any body movement, except moving from one spot to another, is considered a gesture. To convey your ideas to the audience, you will need to use your whole body. Use facial expressions and direct eye contact with your audience. Smile, frown, etc., just as you would in normal conversation.

Hands often speak louder than words. Here's a trick to help you prepare how to use your hands during your speech. Stand in front of a full-length mirror with a large book in each hand.

Then, talk. At times, you'll raise one hand or the other in a gesture, even though the books are heavy. Those are the real gestures. Save them. Eliminate all others. You'll also discover that the books will tell you exactly how your hands should be positioned—bent slightly at the biggest knuckle—comfortably close to your body, not moving except when there's an important point to be made.

Most gestures are variations and combinations of different movements. There are four basic hand positions used to express several meanings:

1. **Index finger:** This gesture is suggestive or descriptive, and is used to point out an object or an idea. For example, "*You are the problem and solution.*"



2. **Palms up:** This can show that you are in favor of something or to compare two things, but never for emphasis alone. For example, "*on the one hand . . . while on the other hand. . .*"



3. **Palms down:** This is the opposite of palms up. It shows disapproval and is made rapidly. "*I want nothing to do with it!*" can be emphasized by crossing the hands and arms in a downward sweep.



4. **Fist:** A very emphatic gesture such as this is used to show an important feeling of the speaker such as "*We must fight this problem.*"



Beginners may need to make a conscious effort to include gestures because they feel inhibited or shy, but put a purpose behind them. You should feel that a gesture is necessary to express your idea. Work toward a natural look as you make gestures and movements to emphasize points.

Control Your Nerves

Stage fright or nervousness before you speak to a group of people is natural. Understanding how and why it happens will help you overcome stage fright and change your nervousness to work to your advantage.



When faced with making a speech, it is only natural to be apprehensive or fearful because you care what the audience thinks of you. Stage fright is a physical and mental fear that causes your heart to quicken because you are breathing faster. As your heart speeds up, your blood pressure rises and adrenaline is released into the blood stream. This increases the supply of nervous energy. Muscles in your body tend to contract, causing the feeling of "butterflies" in your stomach.

Nervousness before giving a speech is a natural reaction that most people experience, but it does not mean that you will fail. Contrary to popular belief, nervousness is good for you and your speech—that is, up to a certain point. The challenge is to manage the nervousness so it

gives you a performance edge. Then your senses will be alert, and you will be able to talk with animation and liveliness.

Try some of these tips:

- Don't fight nervousness. Accept it as a positive influence.
- Reassure yourself that you are well prepared by having chosen a topic that interests you, and then, be confident that you have done enough research to be knowledgeable on your subject.
- Make sure that you have a clear organizational plan for the flow of your speech.
- Prepare a good introduction that includes material for gaining attention. By breaking the ice with your audience, you will feel more at ease as the speech progresses.
- Practice your speech out loud and in a physical setting that is similar to your speech making situation. As you practice, imagine yourself in the setting. The more you practice your speech, the better you'll feel about giving it to other people. If you know exactly what you are going to say (know it, don't memorize it), you won't need to worry about going blank. Try practicing your speech once a day for two weeks before the contest. It will get tiring after the first week, and then become easier as you work on the gestures. Also practice before a full-length mirror to improve eye contact and poise.
- Take a brisk walk. Walking gets your whole body loosened up and burns off excess nervousness.
- While you're sitting there waiting to present, let your arms dangle at their side.
- Try deep breathing for two minutes.
- Talk positively to yourself.

Remember, everyone is at least a little nervous in front of others, so don't give up if you do stumble over words or forget what to say next. As you gain experience, you will gain self-confidence. It will become easier to speak each time because you know that you can handle it.

Use of Notes



Using notes is allowed, but not encouraged. If you feel you need notes, try putting just your speech outline on a card. You then can refer to it, but not read off it. Do not gesture with your cards, but don't try to hide them either. If you forget what you wanted to say next, you can refer to the main points on your outline and easily recover.

Reading from a manuscript is not encouraged. Keep in mind that reference to notes and especially to the manuscript may detract from eye contact, audience interaction, and smoothness of delivery. Notes or manuscripts are, however, allowed. How well notes are used may be a factor in judging.

Also, practice enough so that your speech does not sound memorized.

Using a Microphone

When speaking to a very large audience, you may need to use a microphone to reach more people and to speak in a conversational, person-to-person style.

- Before the speech, check the microphone by talking into it to see if the height and volume are correct.
- Speak directly into the “mike” (about four to eight inches away is usually best), but do not lean into or away from it.
- Use a lapel mike if possible. This allows you to move around more than with a stationary microphone, but avoid turning your head away from it.
- Don’t rustle papers. Sounds will be magnified.
- Don’t be afraid of using a microphone. Try to produce a natural sound by listening to your voice to see if the “s, z, sh, and th” sounds are whistling or hissing too much.



Acknowledge Your Sources

When using materials written or spoken by someone else, be sure you acknowledge the source. For instance, a poem, quote, or passage from a book can be used as long as you identify who the author was. Using someone else’s exact words under the pretense that they are your own is called plagiarism.

You should also be able to back up what you say. If you want to state that there are 15,000 meadowlarks in Nebraska, you should also tell the source of information. You want to appear as a credible source to your audience, that is, a person to be trusted for accurate and truthful information. One of the most common faults of a speaker is the failure to give credit to sources or to make a statement of fact without proper documentation or evidence of research.

HOW DID YOU DO?

After giving a speech, people often do not go any further to become a good public speaker. There is more to it than just the speaking. A good speaker knows the value of their speech. Some speeches can be very good in content, but not be delivered well. Others may not expand enough on their subject. Every speech should be reviewed to determine the strengths of the speech and how it can be improved. Use the scorecard to evaluate your speech to make you a better public speaker.

Through the years, as you gain experience and confidence, you might want to try different speaking techniques, but starting with good basic skills will make you a much better speaker. The old saying of “practice makes perfect” is a good guideline to follow. The more speaking experiences you have the better you will become.

Public speaking benefits are almost too numerous to count, but perhaps the most important one is the confidence that you develop in yourself.

IN THE FUTURE

Everyone can benefit from public speaking experience. Your life will be richer if you develop skillful communication with other people. Almost every profession that comes in contact with the public needs people like you with speaking skills. There are unlimited opportunities in fields such as television and radio, teaching, law, medicine, sales, entertainment, public relations, farming, and many, many more.

The 4-H Public Speaking Contest is just the beginning. Take the opportunities that arise to speak at your 4-H club meetings, school groups, organizations, or community clubs. High school speech contests are good experiences because you have the chance to participate in activities such as dramatic interpretation of poetry and

prose, extemporaneous speaking, one-act plays, public address, and acting. But don't stop here. There are many good college speech courses that can open up new doors for you, such as:

- Speech Therapy
- Basic Theory of Acting
- Debate
- Radio and T.V. broadcasting
- Non-verbal human communication
- Interpretive reading
- Business and professional speaking



4-H Communication Activities

- 4-H public speaking contests
- 4-H judging contests
- 4-H presentation contests
- 4-H photography contests

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

For more information about the Nebraska 4-H Public Speaking Program and additional resources refer to the Nebraska 4-H website at <http://4h.unl.edu>.



Other resources available on the website are:

- 4-H Public Speaking Contest Rules
- The Versatile 4-H Presentations
- The Four P's of Planning a Presentation
- Getting Ready to Give a 4-H Presentation
- 4-H Presentation Visual Aids
- Using PowerPoint in 4-H Presentations
- Evaluating a 4-H Presentation
- How to Prepare a 4-H Radio Public Service Announcement

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PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

SPEECH SCORESHEET

County/Club: _____ Title of Speech: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Year in School: _____

Time Frame: Junior Division: 1 to 3 Minutes: Intermediate Division: 3 to 5 Minutes: Senior Division: 5 to 8 Minutes

Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____ Total Time: _____

Comments

SUBJECT: 20% of total score

Use of 4-H in Subject:

- How effective was 4-H used either as a solution to a specific issue, as an explanation of 4-H, or identification and solution of a problem within 4-H? Did it accomplish objective(s) on outline to entertain, inform, persuade, and/or obtain action?

Content:

- Did the speaker use good examples, illustrations and supporting stories or facts?
- Was there a substantial message?
- Was the speech convincing?
- Did the speech have adequate information about topic?

ORGANIZATION: 20% of total score

Introduction:

- Does it gain and maintain attention?
- Does it indicate the direction of the speech?

Body:

- Were the main points clearly stated?
- Was there evidence to support/document the main points in the speech?

Conclusion:

- Does the speech seem to end with a purpose?
- Does it summarize main points?

DELIVERY: 40% of total score

Bodily Action/Poise:

- Does the speaker maintain eye contact with the audience?
- Are movements and gestures natural, purposeful, and spontaneous?
- Is there a friendly, conversational attitude of the speaker?
- Is the speaker enthusiastic about the speech?

Voice:

- Does the speaker's voice have good pitch, quality and force?
- Is the speech delivered using an appropriate articulation rate?
- Does speaker use correct grammar, pronunciations and word choices?
- Does the speech have a good flow and transitions?

GENERAL 20% of total score

- Was the speaker's personal appearance and clothing appropriate?
- How attentive and engaged was the audience?
- Does the speaker show appropriate physical behavior while seated and while going to deliver their speech?
- Was the length of the speech delivered within the allotted time frame?

Ribbon Placing: (Please Circle) Purple Blue Red White

