

Got Orator Goals?



Speechwriting and Presenting Strategies

As we approach Martin Luther King Jr. Day, teachers around the country will use the opportunity to teach students just what a great speech really sounds like—one that is inspiring, engaging, and powerful. Students learn about language and metaphor, the power of repetition and rhetorical appeals, and analyze the larger ideas that Martin Luther King Jr. wove throughout his speeches. They learn that his influence was not only for the actions he took in the fight for racial equality, but for the words that inspired a nation and have continued to do so for generations. His messages are powerful because he knew how to speak to a large crowd, how to engage and even astound his audience, and sustain people’s undivided attention. He did this by speaking dynamically.

Oftentimes when students are writing and preparing a speech, they are apprehensive—not necessarily due to the work that it takes to write a good speech, but because of the fear that comes with speaking in front of an audience, albeit peers or strangers. The fear of public speaking is very real and the prospect of having to present your own ideas in front of a crowd can bring even the most extroverted student to muted silence. However, there are strategies teachers can use to help their students become more comfortable with speaking and presenting in public, while also finding their voice and strengthening their confidence. Below are the best tips for teaching students how to be a great orator in the classroom and beyond!

Tips for Dynamic Speaking:

Let students choose a topic they are passionate about

Giving students personal choice in the topic of their speech is a great way to foster both engagement and investment among students.

Personal choice leads to student ownership of their learning. Moreover, when students are personally interested in the topic, they will be more apt to speak upon it and thus, write a more engaging speech.

Identify who your audience is

The audience will determine the style in which students convey their message. The style will be very different if speaking to a group of adults as compared to speaking to a group of teenagers. Establishing the intended audience will also help to shape the tone of the speech and narrow down different methods to connect to the audience through cultural references, value assessment, and interest.

Establish your purpose

Why are you speaking or presenting? To inform or to convince? Are you trying to get your audience to do something, or are you trying to teach them something? Determining the purpose will set the stage for how students approach the topic and how they convey their message.

Research, research, research!

Every great speech has been vetted for fact-checking. Don't go on tirades that can't be supported by facts. Make sure you research your topic and have a solid understanding of it, and even better, make sure you have a solid understanding of the counterarguments or counterclaims against it.

Organize your structure

Depending on your purpose, most speeches follow the classic problem-solution structure where a problem is introduced and a solution is offered. In order to keep track, make a bulleted list of the most important information for talking points. However, the introduction and conclusion are just as important as the body of your speech and without a strong beginning and end, the audience's attention will wane.

Write an engaging hook

You have about 20 seconds to grab the audience's attention before they bail on you, so use it wisely! Humor or an element of surprise works well, or try a funny story or perhaps a surprising statistic, depending on your audience and purpose.

Close with a strong ending/call-to-action

If you are trying to convince your audience to do something, make sure you reiterate this at the end. Connect the audience back to your original thesis by restating and reminding them that their action is needed. Then, end on a strong note—the closing of a speech is what the audience will remember most, so make sure to tie everything together and make your closing statement the most powerful statement of all!

Establish your credibility

Why should the audience listen to you? Establish your credibility, whether through personal experience or citing a credible source, and demonstrate to the audience your connection to the topic and why your voice matters.

Use rhetorical appeals

Have an adequate understanding of rhetorical appeals and how they can be used in speeches to inspire an audience. Research and personal experience can be used in appeals and can help connect the audience to the speaker and the topic.

Write like you speak

Remember that you are writing a speech to be spoken, not an essay to be read, so make sure that syntax is clear and concise, fluent, and fluid. Once you have your speech written, go back and read it out loud to yourself. Cut any places where you fumble or places that don't flow naturally. Change any words that don't demonstrate your message authentically.

Repeat.. .Repeat. . .Repeat!

Pull your audience back to your main points throughout the speech. People's attention tends to wander, so it's important to always revisit your main thesis throughout the speech in order to leave a lasting impression on your audience.

Be confident

Whether it's the first speech or the 100th speech, exude confidence. If you demonstrate your knowledge and authority emanates from you while speaking to a crowd, then the crowd will have confidence in you. The audience's energy mirrors the speaker's energy, so make sure to go out there with as much confidence and authenticity as possible.



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