

Chapter 15 – Public Speaking

PO.6 – Public Speaking

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Public speaking is an important part of the Young Marines program and an important part of being an effective leader. You need to be comfortable speaking in front of small and large groups of people whether formally with a prepared speech, or informally and speaking from the heart in the moment. This chapter will cover basic speech preparation techniques and how to interact with your audience.

EO.1 - Prepare and Construct a Basic Speech

You follow similar steps for speech preparation and writing as you would for essay writing or a similar task. Each of them will be covered in more detail in this section, but the general steps are as follows:

- Choose a topic.
- Determine the purpose and audience for the speech.
- Gather evidence, data, and support.
- Outline and write a draft of your speech.

Choose a Topic

You will usually be given a topic to write your speech on, and it is likely the topic will be very broad. There will be a lot within the topic you could talk about. For example, you may be asked to give a speech on living a healthy drug-free lifestyle, or on the Young Marines program. There are smaller topics within both of these that would help you narrow down what to research, and give your speech a clear focus.

To narrow down your topic, start by brainstorming a list of all the smaller topics within it, or all the things you're interested in speaking about. Once you have a list, choose the top two or three topics you find most interesting, or will be most interesting to the people you are speaking to. You may need to do a little research during this portion of the process to narrow down your thoughts and make sure you can gather enough information.

Choose topics that:

- You are interested in
- Your audience is invested in
- Can be backed up with research, data, or important people's opinions
- You have the ability to research

Avoid topics that:

- Are too broad
- Cannot be backed up by facts or data
- You cannot research or do not have access to information for
- Your audience is opposed to
- You do not believe in

Determine the Purpose and Audience for the Speech

Once you have your topic, decide on the purpose for your speech and who you will be speaking to. These are the two most important pieces of giving a speech.

There are three different purposes for public speaking: **to inform, to persuade, and to entertain**. Your speech may have more than one purpose and may potentially address all three. For example, a speech about the dangers of drugs may both inform and persuade. You may have to inform your audience about the dangers of certain gateway drugs before you can persuade them not to use them. If you are giving this speech to young children, you may have to inform and persuade them as well, but you will also have to entertain them to keep them interested in your speech.

For this reason, it is important to know your audience as well. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who is my audience? Consider everything from age to background to gender.
- What do they know about my topic? Will there be information that they need to know or information you can leave out because they may already know it?
- What are their interests? Is there any information you can include or anything you can do to make them interested or invested in your speech?
- What do they know about you and/or the Young Marines? Will you need to introduce yourself and the program?

Once you have your purpose and have analyzed your audience, you have a starting point for your research.

Gather Evidence, Data, and Support

Regardless of your speech purpose, you will need to gather evidence, data, and support for any point you are making in your speech. If you are informing your audience of your topic, you will need specific details to include. If you are trying to persuade them, you will need facts and data to back up your points. The more evidence you include in a speech from trusted sources, the more your audience will believe and trust in you.

You can gather evidence, data, and support from:

- Print and internet sources such as books, newspapers, or websites
- Observations you make in your community or daily life
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Personal experience

What is important in gathering evidence, is not just the evidence all by itself but what you do with the evidence and how you explain it to your audience. As you gather evidence, here are some questions you can ask yourself to make sure you explain your evidence and work it into your speech effectively:

- I've just stated this point, but so what? Why is it interesting? Why should anyone care?
- What does this information imply?
- What are the consequences of thinking this way or looking at a problem this way?
- I've just described what something is like or how I see it, but why is it like that?
- I've just said that something happens—so how does it happen? How does it come to be the way it is?
- Why is this information important? Why does it matter?
- How is this idea related to my topic? What connections exist between them? Does it support my main idea? If so, how does it do that?
- Can I give an example to better communicate this point?

(The Writing Center, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2018)

You will not need to or be able to answer all of these questions for everything you include in your speech, but you should always make sure to at least state why each point is important and say how it supports your ideas.

Outline and Write a Draft of your Speech

Any speech you give should be clearly organized with an **introduction, body, and conclusion**. To make sure your speech is organized, you should always create an outline before writing your full speech.

When making an outline, divide your paper into three parts for your **introduction, body, and conclusion**. Your **introduction** should state who you are, give a little bit of your background, state your topic, and state the purpose for your speech. The **body** of your speech should contain your main points in order from least to most important, the evidence to back up your points, and an explanation of your evidence and points. Your **conclusion** wraps up your points. Remind your audience what you've just talked about, but most importantly, let them know what they should now do with this information. Now that they have all of this information, what do you want them to do? Most of your speeches will end with a Call to Action, some greater purpose for the speech or something for your audience to do once you've finished speaking.

Your outline should include all of this information, but it does not have to be in great detail. The purpose for an outline is to get your ideas on paper and to put them all in order before you write your actual speech. Outlines might contain only brief ideas, short sentences, or no complete sentences at all.

When you set out to write a full draft, this is when you write down everything you want to say in complete sentences. Use the bones you put down in your outline, all your ideas, and add the meat in your draft, all the words you need to say to get your point across. Make sure to state any sources you used to create your speech as well.

EO.2 – Demonstrate Basic Speech Techniques

Now that you've written your speech, it's time to give it. Below are some tips to help you before and during your speech:

- Always rehearse your speech ahead of time. Make sure you stayed within your given time frame and aren't forgetting large portions of your speech.
- Write down the main points of your speech on note cards so you can refer to them if you forget where you are in your speech. Practice using the note cards so you aren't just reading from the cards.
- Speak slowly and clearly. We have a tendency to speak quickly or mumble when we are nervous, so remember to take deep breaths before beginning, speak each word by itself, and breathe between each sentence and during natural pauses. Again, practice this as you practice your speech.
- Make eye contact with members of the audience. You don't have to stare at just one person. Just let your eyes naturally wander throughout the crowd, looking

at different people as you speak. This helps the audience to better connect with you and your words.

- Be mindful of your body language. Stand tall with good posture. Avoid slouching, crossing your arms, fidgeting too much, or even standing too stiffly. Give your speech as if you are talking with someone you feel comfortable around.
- Think positively. Give yourself a pep talk before your speech and tell yourself how great you are going to do. This will help you to feel less nervous, and it will help you do better while you are speaking. You can also try a power pose: stand with your feet apart, hands on your hips, and your head held high. It will help calm your nerves and make you feel strong.

EO.3 – Utilize Visual Aids

Your speech can also include a visual aid. Visual aids can be as simple as a photograph or poster, and as complex as a PowerPoint presentation, but they are all used to enhance your speech and emphasize the important points you are talking about. Your visual aid should never contain an entire written copy of your speech. It may contain your important points, but it should not have whole portions of your speech on it for you to read from. Use these tips to help you create a visual aid for your speech:

- Create your visual aid after you have written your whole speech. This way you will know which points are most important and which would be the best to include in your visual aid.
- Avoid clutter. Do not use too many pictures, words, or colors on one page or slide. If you are creating a poster, do not make a collage of pictures or words. If you are creating a PowerPoint presentation, do not fill each slide with large boxes of text.
- Avoid using large blocks of text. Your visual aid should not contain large portions of your speech. Instead, include key words, phrases, or points you are making in your speech.
- Explain any jargon or acronyms. The Young Marines uses a lot of words and abbreviations that most people who weren't in the military will not understand. If you include any of these, make sure to explain what they are to your audience.
- Keep it simple. Avoid overly bright colors, complex images or graphics, or any animations or videos that will be hard for your audience to see. You also want to make sure your colors aren't too dark especially if you include words on your slides. For example, blue words on a black background or bright orange words on a white background are very difficult for an audience to see.
- Make sure your visual aid compliments your speech. If you are using a PowerPoint presentation, each slide should contain different points. If you are using a poster, point out different sections as you are speaking.

Overall, your visual aid is there to help make your speech better and highlight the important parts. Be careful not to focus on your visual aid. Refer to it but do not read from it or look at it, instead focus on your audience.

E0.4 – Prepare for Audience Questions

It is always a good idea to ask your audience if they have any questions after you finish your speech. This helps them feel involved in your presentation and may help them to understand anything you talked about that wasn't clear to them right away. Because of this, you may want to let your audience know that you will be holding a question and answer session after your speech. This way they know to hold their questions until the end, and they know to think of some things to ask you. Follow the steps below to help you prepare for questions from your audience:

- It is always a good idea to over prepare for audience questions. You probably did a lot of research for your speech, and you may have information that you did not use. This is good because it means that you have extra information to tell your audience if they have questions about certain points. Always make sure you know a little more than what you included in your speech in case this happens, and you need to explain something in more detail.
- Listen carefully to your audience's questions. Before you respond, you want to make sure you fully understood the question. You might also want to repeat the questions back to your audience to make sure you know what you're being asked.
- Pause and think about your answer before responding. It is fine to wait a few seconds to collect your thoughts before you answer a question. It is also fine to admit you don't know the answer to a question and follow up with saying you will find out the answer and let them know later.

E0.5 – Give a Speech

Now that you've written and practiced your speech and created your visual aid, it's time to give your speech to your chosen audience. For your guidebook sign-off or any other time you are giving a speech in your unit, whoever is listening will use this rubric or one similar to it. It is printed here so you know what your audience is looking for in a well-put-together speech. Look it over while you are writing and practicing your speech to make sure you are hitting all of the important points.

EXPRESSION

1. Facial/Vocal – Young Marine enters into the thought and spirit of the selection and communicates the same to the audience.
2. Introduction and Conclusion
3. Content

4. Variety - Timing, pitch, emphasis (effective for meaning)
5. Appropriate gestures and makes the story come alive

PLATFORM PRESENCE

1. Poise - before audience (at ease in stance, voice and facial expression)
2. Eye Contact - with audience

VOICE AND SPEECH

1. Clearly Audible
2. Words are Understandable - enunciation, pronunciation
3. No Noticeable Interruption - due to forgetfulness and/or use of cue cards

Your evaluator will give you a score from one to five in each category with five being the highest you can score in each category. They will also score you based on your age and grade level so that each evaluation is fair. You will be given your score sheet each time you give a speech so that you can look at your notes, read your feedback, and work on areas that need improvement for next time.

The full rubric can be viewed in **Appendix D**.