



## AUSTRALIAN ROSTRUM

(Rostrum clubs are for men and women who wish to practise become competent in and the art of speaking in public. Rostrum believes that truthfulness and clarity of expression are essential to democracy.)"

# ROSTRUM VOICE OF YOUTH

## SPEAKING COMPETITION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

### NOTES ON SPEAKING

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#### **GENERAL**

Whatever your future role in life, you will need to be able to express your ideas well if you are to have any effect on others. If you cannot present yourself or your ideas, people may assume that your thinking capacity is limited. Good jobs, and satisfying relationships, tend to go to those who can communicate.

If you can now carry on a satisfactory conversation, you have the ability to speak to a group of people. You do need, however, to ensure that your words are pronounced clearly and correctly, and that your ideas are expressed so that everyone present may understand them. Public speaking develops your poise and your personality.

The art of speaking does not consist merely of delivering a thoroughly rehearsed speech, similar to the lines delivered by an actor. Speeches are acts of communication by sincere speakers presenting their own views to audiences. A bond has to be built up between the speaker and the audience. The people present must be talked **to** and not **at**.

So look members of the audience in the eye and talk to them. Don't think about yourself - think only about your message, the audience and their acceptance of your ideas.

What follows concerns the techniques of speaking.

#### **WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY (THE MATERIAL)**

It is easier to give a good speech if you yourself are interested in and enthusiastic about the topic. Remember that the audience is interested in you and your ideas, so be personal

rather than impersonal in your approach, i.e. what the topic means to you - what **you** think about it.

Speeches fall into different categories according to what you are trying to do - to inform, to persuade, to amuse, and so on. Decide what you intend to do and establish your purpose - your objective. Everything in the speech should assist you to attain your goal. Everything in the speech should be able to justify its existence. If it's no help-toss it out! Don't try to include too much material. It is better to make a limited number of well supported points that flow logically on from one to another.

When you have finished speaking, your audience should have a clear idea of what you have been saying and of what you set out to do.

### **PUTTING THE SPEECH TOGETHER**

Consider the title and gather material widely from whatever sources are available to you. Jot down ideas. Place the material in logical order. Discard irrelevant items. Continually review the logical flow of ideas. Seek interesting illustrations. Try to avoid hackneyed, outworn concepts or statements. Inject a little humour if you can, but make sure it relates to the subject of the speech.

Consider the various ways in which your ideas may be expressed. There is a great wealth of words from which to choose. In general, short words are strong, and longer words more flowing in style. Select a mode of expression which suits your treatment of the topic. Avoid detailed statistics; rather, use comparisons with things which are familiar to your audience. Avoid using diagrams etc. which the audience cannot read. Avoid lengthy quotations.

Consider how your material fits into the traditional subdivisions of a speech: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

The introduction serves to get the attention of the audience; to make them want to hear what you have to say. It prepares the audience for the main ideas in your speech.

The body of the speech contains your main thoughts, presented in logical order.

The conclusion is vital. It must relate to the objective. It may summarise your points, and it is often effective to refer back to the way you introduced your speech. Strive for a powerful conclusion, and leave your audience in no doubt of your ideas. While you are preparing your speech, be on the lookout for a really effective concluding phrase.

### **PRESENTING THE SPEECH**

It is desirable to be quite clear in your mind on the words you will use to open and to close the speech. Rehearse these parts of the speech especially, practising the emphasis and the actual words you will use.

While it is good to practise the whole speech, it is not a good thing to learn it all parrot-fashion, as this tends to produce an unnatural style which can detract from your effectiveness. The audience wants to hear someone speaking sincerely from the heart, in which there is an element of spontaneity. So it is best to practise presenting **ideas**, using favoured words and phrases

### **COMING OUT TO SPEAK**

Remember that the audience will be looking at you as you walk out to the front to speak. The way you walk and your facial expression will tell the audience how you are feeling. Walk out without hurrying, with your head up, look confident and you will feel confident. When you reach the place from which you will be speaking, look around the audience and wait until everyone is ready before you start. This may take a few seconds. Don't worry if it does. Your first words are very important, so you must have the audience's attention when you start speaking.

## **NOTES**

Use clearly written reminders on fairly small cards. Do not try to conceal the fact that you are referring to notes. Some speakers can manage without notes. If you do take them with you to the platform, hold them in one hand and glance at them occasionally throughout your speech, keeping a check on where you are. This will give you confidence and avoid the possibility of a mental block.

## **PACE**

About 100 words a minute is a normal speaking speed. Don't rush your speech. Take your time and make the words effective. Limit your material so that you don't have to rush. Pause after important thoughts and after humour. Deliver powerful phrases and important points more slowly.

## **NERVOUSNESS**

You're nervous? Good! It shows you have sensitivity, which you need. Nervousness is only bad when it prevents you from doing your best. Overcome most of it by calming your thoughts, deep breathing, and concentrating on the audience, not yourself. They will love your speech! Speak to groups whenever you can. Nervousness results from unfamiliarity, so get used to speaking and nervousness almost disappears.

## **STANCE**

Stand with feet slightly apart, with hands at sides ready for gesture. Hold the head erect and face the audience. Don't walk around.

## **GESTURE**

Use gesture only as it comes naturally. It does help to avoid a 'wooden' posture. Avoid repeating the same gesture. People are looking at your face - make it lively, with smiles when appropriate.

## **VOICE**

Use sufficient volume that the person in the back row can hear. Vary the pace. Articulate clearly. Avoid 'Ums' and 'Ers'. Use pauses for effect.

## **SALUTATION**

Don't forget to address the Chair and the audience.

## **SINCERITY**

Above all, be sincere. Be Yourself.

## **SHORT NOTICE OR IMPROMPTU SPEAKING**

Firstly, consider the title - its meaning or meanings, and possibly its implications. Then decide on a purpose, i.e. what you can do with the topic -- inform, persuade, amuse, etc. Consider the opening and the closing. Remember the time limit and that you will only be able to deal with one or two points.

## Six possible approaches to a topic:

### 1. Past/Present/Future

Thoughts and information are gathered into 3 groups:

**Past** - the historical background - its origins, and events leading up to the Present situation.

**Present** - current and novel aspects. What it means in your life or in the lives of others.

**Future** - the possible development, difficulties, foreseeable problems, etc.

As an alternative, you might deal only with one time period - Past, Present or Future - and relate it to the title.

### 2. Personal/National/International

**Personal** - How does this affect the individual? How does this concern everyday living?

**National** - How does this affect one group or country? Is it of national importance?

**International** - How does it concern the international situation, perhaps in relation to politics, law, economics, etc.

### 3. The What/Where/Why method. Who is involved? What happens? When did it occur? Where does this occur? What is meant by . . . ?

4. Considering the '**Places or Regions**' to which the subject can be related is another method, e.g. how is cricket viewed in various countries or localities? How is architecture looked at or developed in differing areas?

5. The **Social, Economic and Political** feature or aspects may be considered with general interest or public concern topics, e.g. Government Aid for Private Schools, Immigration, etc.

Consideration may also be given to the moral aspects, say, in lieu of economic or perhaps political.

6. The **Yes/No** method, which can be employed if the topic is in a question form, e.g. 'Is "Modern Art" art?' Then answer the question and give reasons why or why not. Try to give good support for your answers. There is more chance of an effective speech if you take a definite viewpoint.

These methods may help to overcome the paucity of ideas which is often present in impromptu speaking. Practise and experience in all aspects of public speaking will help you to build confidence and perform well.

It is often possible to use anecdotes, quotations, humorous references etc. in your speech, so have a storehouse of items. Make sure they are not too long, and that they are relevant to the topic.

An impromptu speech should sound spontaneous and not appear to be a repetition of an earlier speech.

## FINALLY

Study the 'Adjudicators' Criteria' in the brochure. These are the values by which the adjudicators will select the winner. How does your speech satisfy these criteria? Perhaps a few adjustments will be of benefit. Even if you don't win, the experience of entering the competition will assist in developing your poise and personality!