

Wolverhampton Speakers Club

How To Write A Speech



We are often asked: 'How do I actually write a speech?'

Well, we'll try to help you ...

The thing is, everyone has their own method - so we asked some of our senior members at WSC how they do it - in their own words ...



How I Do It ...

Tracey



"I always start with a mind map. The centre is the topic I am speaking about. Three prongs are the areas I wish to cover and then I bullet-point interesting facts about the area under each heading.

I then try to think of an introduction concept and a closing statement.

When I have this sorted I actually write the speech and read it back to myself whilst timing it. At this point I can add weight, take content away, add inflection and gestures.

The speech then gets colour coded to each section make it easier for me to follow".

Peter



"I'm very primitive – I go on a bike ride for an hour or two until I've thought of a subject and then sit in front of my PC writing the speech in full before reviewing and editing. Definitely no rocket science involved!"

James



"I tend to write my introduction first when I have thought of a topic. This acts as my plan for the speech.

When I have decided which sub-headings from that topic I want to speak about, I finish the introduction and signpost it all from there.

I'll then move on to the main body and do some further research, if need be, to to put meat on the bones.

Then I'll write the conclusion last and attempt to tie it all together by dropping in some quotes, answering questions that I may have opened with in the introduction or leaving the audience with some questions to answer themselves."

Debbie



"I get inspiration from things I've seen on TV or speeches I've heard online. It might be a great opening line or a quote or an example of repetition and I'll know straight away that I want to use that next time I speak.

From that seed I'll build a speech around it with an introduction, a main body of three items and a conclusion to tie it all together. For example with a recent movie speech 'Gone with the Wind' I wanted to quote the famous lines "frankly my dear I don't give a damn" so I built the intro and body around the author, producer and actors to bring me to that moment.

I try to make a memorable last line or repeat or tie the first and last lines together. For example with my blood donor speech I used a heart beat gesture at the beginning and end.

Listening to other speeches improves and inspires me so I recommend members COME TO ALL THE MEETINGS and not just turn up when they are giving a speech."

Adam



"I normally think of an idea over the course of a few days, something that is suitable to the purpose of the exercise. I then basically just sit down and start writing. The first write-up is a very rough draft, and as I think of things I'll make notes and come back to those sections to expand upon them

I write my speeches out word-for-word. Then when I have enough content that is between 5-8 minutes in length, I'll start reading it out aloud to practise and make changes where necessary. This practising also allows me to learn the speech so that I don't have to rely too much on my notes."

Maura



"If I am just given a topic or title I will sit with paper and just brainstorm, noting anything that comes into my head - random information, questions, bits I've heard on the radio, quotations, people - anything at all. Then some research to see what comes up on the internet or books of quotations etc. The quirkier the better.

Add anything that comes to mind over the next few days.

Usually a thread or theme will emerge or a few section headings, and I will sort what I have on to 6 or so bits of paper, or these days PowerPoint slides, then edit, move things about so there is a logical progression and write it up. I keep a thesaurus handy so as to vary the vocabulary.

I work out which bits will make a good introduction and finish, and try not to keep changing it!

If I have a more specific brief then the research is a little more focused - starting with the section headings.

Brian



“Like Tracey I usually start with a mind map, but if the subject is complex or unfamiliar I might also do something similar to Maura in ‘brainstorming’ my ideas on to paper as they occur to me or as I do background research.

Once I have my ideas on paper I mark them into (usually) five groups or sub-headings for beginning, three middle and end. Then I flesh out my ideas by writing the text of the speech.

I will pay particular attention to the beginning and the end, but I have to confess that sometimes I will start with an idea for the beginning of a speech and then go on to build the speech upon that initial idea.

But this is only the start of the process for me - I will revise, revise and revise again until I am satisfied. Of course this is just the organisational side - the creative bit comes when I decide on the words and I will fine-tune the vocabulary and turns-of-phrase as I go on.

Finally I will decide what form of notes to use and then do a lot of practice, sometimes aloud, sometimes silently.”

Carolyn



“When preparing a speech I spend some time thinking about a good opening. I will often prepare the beginning and end of a speech before anything else. It has often been the case that I think of a subject for a speech but when I come to getting down the wording I hit a problem. So for me getting a subject that has some substance is my first difficulty.

When it comes to the main body of the speech I will often have ideas that might just pop into my head or perhaps someone will say something that immediately feels right to include in the speech. As each part of the speech is put together I read it out loud to myself to get a feel of what it will should like when given in front of an audience. It's important for me that the speech hangs together and does not appear as a disjointed series of thoughts or information.”

‘Brainstorming’

We have used the term ‘brainstorming’, even though it has received a bad press in recent years in case it is offensive to epilepsy sufferers.

However, we understand that the word is not offensive to the vast majority of people with epilepsy, according to a survey carried out by Epilepsy Society - in fact they recommend that the term should not be used to describe an epileptic attack.

We will continue to use the word, but if any reader is uncomfortable please feel free to substitute an alternative, such as ‘ideastorm’.



‘Ideastorm’ isn’t bad but please, not a ‘*thought shower*’ ...that’s one example of business jargon too far

Ordering Your Ideas

A lot of us have mentioned that we sort our ideas out so that we can put them in the different sections of our speech.

This is what speakers can find difficult at first, although you do get used to it, so we thought we'd have a look at one possible way of 'designing' a speech. This is not the only method, though, and you will probably develop your own way of doing it.

Whatever method works for you, that's the one you should use.

Starting from scratch



You might like to take a look at one way to decide how to structure your speech from scratch

Who's that?

The Education Director

Oooh!

There are lots of ways that speakers use to prepare their speeches. Here is one detailed method that we share with you. Notice that we separate 'preparing' and 'writing': they are two complementary activities and we say that you should prepare thoroughly before you start writing your speech and try to arrive at a framework for your speech.

Once you have your subject, write down a summary of what you are trying to say (let's call it your '**intention**') and also your desired **outcome** for the speech. Your intention is what you aim to do while the outcome is audience-centred - what you want them to take away from your speech. When you have written these down you can convert them into the framework of your speech.

To illustrate the process, we will consider as an example a speech that you might want to write about 'Paper Making'.

The intention is simply a brief statement of what you want to put across, for example:



I will inform the audience about the history and techniques of paper making and the relevance of paper in today's digital world

The outcome is what you want your speech to achieve: inspire, inform, succeed in an exercise and so on. This gives you an idea of where you are going and what you want to achieve.

Be specific and define a positive outcome - what DO you want them to do? Is it reasonable? Is it possible? Is it achievable?

Can we check it?

So for the paper making speech your outcome might be:



'After my speech the audience WILL know the background of how paper is made and how relevant it is today'

When you write and deliver your speech this is what you will be aiming for.

Your intention as a framework

Once you've written down your intention you can use it to make a framework for your speech. Underline the three most important words - this will give you three main points to write your speech around.

Then underline what type of speech it will be. Here's the intention of the paper making speech again with these words underlined:



'I will inform the audience about the history and techniques of paper making and the relevance of paper in today's digital world'

So Jasmine will write an informative speech that will focus on the history of paper making, how it is made today and the relevance of paper in today's world.

Develop your main points

Some of the ways you can develop your main points might include:

- A logical progression of your main points, one leading on to another
- Outline a problem and suggest its solution
- Structure the speech based around past, present and future situations
- Consider the cause and effect for a particular situation
- Review the alternatives for any particular situation
- Structure your speech around simple itemised points
- Deliver a narrative or story to get your points across
- Consider a situation and examine points for and against
- Raise some debating points

Arranging your material



To show you how I arrange my material, I'm writing a speech about social media ...

Dave's intention and framework is:

'I will help my audience *understand* modern **communication** and its **positive** and **negative** features.'

So he will write an informative speech about communication using social media and looking at its positive and negative sides, so he will be thinking and researching for material about modern communication and its positive and negative aspects, as he highlighted in his suggested framework.

Material cloud



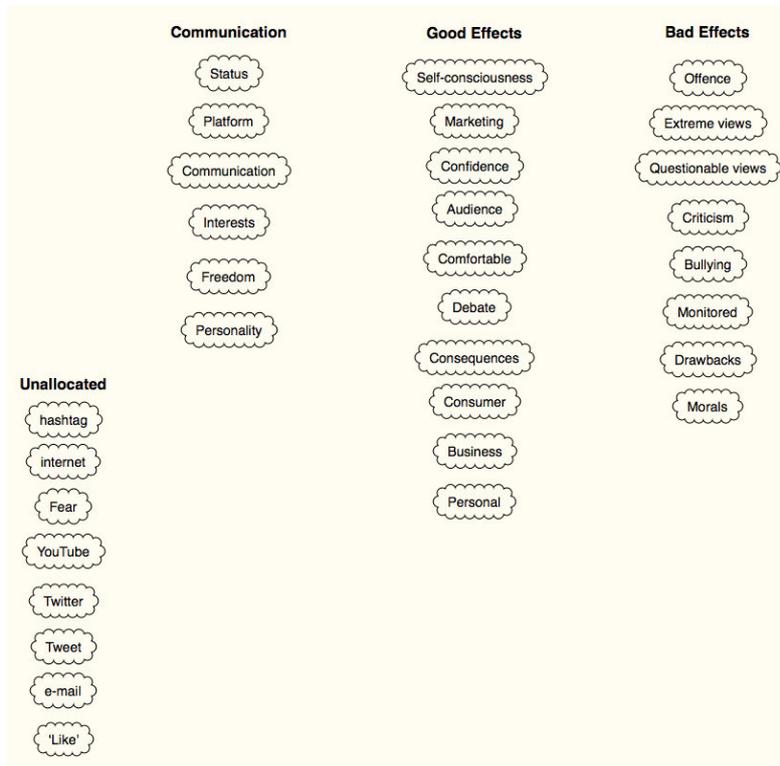
So, Dave ... the first stage is to put your main thoughts on paper.

Begin with your intention and the outcome you seek and then make a collection of your own ideas and put your thoughts in writing – you could use various ways of doing this such as lists, diagrams, mind maps, outlines: whatever you prefer. You might use paper, your computer, cards, post-it notes, whiteboard, flip chart – whatever suits you and is at hand. Then add your research material to what you already know. All of this can be phrases, headings or just single words.

In the end you will have a whole 'cloud' of material, some of which will be useful, some not. Here is a material cloud that you might write for your social media speech:



You can now insert your three main points: communication, positive (good effects) and negative (bad effects) and arrange the material that you want to use under the headings so that you can see a pattern emerging. It might now look like this:



At first glance this will tell you whether you have enough material to support each point – if not, you’ll have either to research more material or think again about your main points.



You don't have to do it this way - choose whatever you're comfortable with as long as it helps you make sense of what you've got. For example ...

