



TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL

PREPARATION **AND PRACTICE**



The Better
Speaker Series



**WHERE LEADERS
ARE MADE**



PREPARATION AND PRACTICE

The Better Speaker Series

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Item 278A



**WHERE LEADERS
ARE MADE**

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THE BETTER SPEAKER SERIES

Toastmasters International's *The Better Speaker Series* is a set of presentations offering instruction on basic speaking skills. Designed to be delivered by members to their clubs, presentations in this series provide new speaking techniques and facts that can help all club members develop their communication skills.

Presentations in *The Better Speaker Series* may be offered by any club member and require 10 to 15 minutes to present.

CONDUCTING THE PROGRAM

"Preparation and Practice" offers several strategies for planning and executing an effective presentation. This product consists of four parts:

- ▶ Definition and explanation of the presentation
- ▶ Guidelines for your introduction to the audience
- ▶ Outline for the development of your speech
- ▶ PowerPoint presentation

In Your Own Words

The outline is not a script and should not be read word-for-word. Instead, use the document as a guide for presenting the material in your own words and with your own narrative style. The outline is a structure on which to build your presentation. Use the points of the outline to develop your speech, but be the author of your own oration.

Here are some tips on using this outline to develop and deliver your presentation:

- ▶ Study the outline carefully. Familiarize yourself with the general structure. Preparation is the key to a successful presentation.
- ▶ Use the outline to build your own speech using your own words. Prepare a set of notes indicating where you wish to pause, gesture, or add special verbal emphasis. Highlight key words or sentences to help you present the material most effectively.
- ▶ Be expressive when delivering your speech. Use all of the presentation skills you have learned as a Toastmaster including vocal variety and gestures.

USING VISUAL AIDS EFFECTIVELY

Visual aids add interest to any presentation and help your audience retain information. If you plan to use the PowerPoint slides for this presentation as visual aids, make sure you have the equipment and technology needed to share the slides with your audience. It is recommended that you test your technology and equipment in advance.

In the outline, there are indications for placement of the PowerPoint slides. Each is numbered. For example, V1 refers to the first visual.

Please note that the first slide in the PowerPoint show is a title slide and is not included in this numbering system.

If your presentation is taking place in a fully in-person format but you do not have the equipment needed to share the PowerPoint, you could create a flip chart using the visuals from the slides.

Follow these tips when using visual aids in an in-person setting:

- ▶ Set them up and test them before the meeting begins. Place them so they are easily visible to listeners.
- ▶ Bring backup equipment in case your technology fails.
- ▶ Display your visuals only when they are needed. If you are using a flip chart, flip the page back out of view when you are finished with it.
- ▶ Remember not to stand between the screen or flip chart and your audience or you will block their view.
- ▶ Maintain eye contact with your listeners. If you must turn your back to point out something, pause as you point it out, and then resume speaking only after you are once again facing your audience.

Follow these tips when using visuals in the online or hybrid setting:

- ▶ Share your screen. Be sure your PowerPoint presentation is visible in the room and on the screens of those members participating from another location.
- ▶ Consider having someone else share the visuals so you can maintain eye contact with the camera.
- ▶ Consider an online whiteboard when sharing information, as it will be visible to both members in the room and those participating online.
- ▶ Consider enlisting the assistance of a partner to join the meeting on their computer in the room with you so that they can facilitate the remote attendees and monitor what is happening online. This is a good practice for all hybrid meetings.
- ▶ Test your online platform and technology before the meeting begins. Have an online participant confirm they can see everything as expected.
- ▶ Forgo visual aids altogether if you cannot be sure they will work for everyone in attendance.
- ▶ Share any handouts or other documents you use as part of your presentation with all attendees in advance or via the chat function of your meeting app so that all participants have access to them at the same time.

BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

By giving this presentation, you will be helping your club build excellence and move toward the possibility of becoming a Distinguished club—or reaching an even greater Distinguished status.

While this is an outlined presentation, it still provides a good opportunity for you to further practice speaking and build your presentation skills.

PREPARATION AND PRACTICE

Introducing the Presenter

TIPS FOR THE PRESENTER: WRITE YOUR INTRODUCTION

All prepared speeches in Toastmasters require an introduction. A proper introduction of you and your speech is important to the success of your presentation. Use the following as a guide in writing your introduction:

- ▶ Include the purpose of *The Better Speaker Series*.
- ▶ Explain why “Preparation and Practice” is important for a Toastmasters club, stating the purpose and one or more objectives of your presentation.
- ▶ Incorporate some background about yourself.
- ▶ Read *When You’re the Introducer* in *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats* (Item 1167D) for further details on giving a proper introduction.
- ▶ Give your finished introduction to the person who will be introducing you.

TIPS FOR THE INTRODUCER

- ▶ Ask the presenter any clarifying questions.
- ▶ Rehearse the introduction.

PREPARATION AND PRACTICE

Outline

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

– Benjamin Franklin, American inventor and statesman

INTRODUCTION

The majority of speakers recognize the value of careful preparation and regular rehearsal before delivering a speech. But successful speechmaking consists of more than devising an idea, writing down notes, and staying up at the lectern for a specified length of time. The difference between a truly excellent speaker and an average one lies in the amount of preparation that goes into their presentation.

CREATE COMFORT AND SECURITY

Speakers need to be ready to deal with an unfamiliar speech setting and adapt their presentation as necessary. One way to help deal with these situations is for the speaker to become familiar with the site, either by asking questions, or by visiting in advance.

Important points to consider:

- ▶ **Location of lectern and audience.** Room arrangements dictate the layout for both speaker and audience – where the speaker stands to present, and how the audience is seated. If a speaker is unfamiliar with the venue, it is important to consider, visualize, and ask about:
 - The designated speaking area, which may or may not feature a lectern
 - The audience configuration (lecture format, circle, U-shape, etc.)
 - The stage location of steps or ramp, if you are speaking from a platform
- ▶ **Microphones.** Depending on the size of the room and the number of occupants, a speaker may wish to use the microphone that is provided on site. Testing the microphone equipment in advance will ease feelings of apprehension and give an indication of what kind of voice modulation will be needed. A microphone will help the speaker keep in control if:
 - Speaking to a group of more than 100 people
 - A majority of the audience members are over the age of 50
 - The acoustics of the room are poor, impeding sound
 - One is suffering from voice strain
- ▶ **Room conditions.** The immediate surroundings affect not only the speaker, but also the audience. When the speaker knows where the presentation will take place, he or she should find out:
 - If the room will be sufficiently heated or air conditioned
 - If the lighting is appropriate

V1

V2

V3

V4

V5

- If they are speaking close to the room's entrance, will late comers be able to enter more discretely
- If there is competitive sound from other rooms or outside noise

Although some situations may be beyond a speaker's control, they should be aware of any potential difficulty and be ready with a contingency plan or a quip.

V6

- ▶ **Visual aids.** Presenters should visit the speaking site in advance and determine how the visual aids can be accommodated. If a speaker intends to use any visual aids, it is important to consider the following:
 - Ensure visuals such as flipcharts are located where all can see.
 - If using a PowerPoint presentation, verify the viewing screen is large enough for the audience to see and that the projector works.
 - Decide how handouts will be distributed. Leave a copy at each person's seat prior to the presentation or employ helpers to distribute the items either during or after a talk.

REHEARSING THE SPEECH

Practice is the best way to prepare for a presentation, although relentless practice tends to be a frustrating experience, even to the point of undermining the presentation. Use these proven rehearsal methods that will encourage an excellent performance:

V7

- ▶ **Practice ideas, not words.** You should be familiar with the ideas you wish to share and focus on communicating ideas instead of memorized copy. Ensure special data such as statistics or quotations are delivered accurately by referring to notes during the presentation. Keep the presentation conversational in tone.
- ▶ **Prepare a mental draft of the speech.** Preparing a mental draft of the speech can help avoid the frustration of a faulty verbal delivery and allow you to internalize your ideas and focus on the message.
- ▶ **Finish each rehearsal session.** If you falter while rehearsing, instead of stopping and starting again, you should indicate the trouble spot with a check or some other mark on the script, then resume. You can return to the problem delivery areas after delivering the entire speech.

V8

- ▶ **Add improvements gradually.** Concentrate on improving one specific area, such as inflection, pacing, or body language, with each rehearsal. Once an area has been mastered, work on the next improvement.
- ▶ **Arrange for feedback.** Friends or family members can provide opinions on the delivery of the speech. If outside opinions are not available, record the speech and play it back for self-evaluation.

EXTRA CONSIDERATIONS

Some additional steps to ensure a successful presentation:

- ▶ **Provide material for an introduction.** Write a short introduction and submit it in advance. Include a brief mention of the topic, why the speech is being given, your name (spelled out phonetically if it tends to be mispronounced), and the speech title.
- ▶ **Physical preparation.** If you feel good mentally and physically, your presentation is likely to be successful. The following recommendations may seem obvious, but they bear mentioning:
 - Eat and drink moderately before the presentation. Do not drink alcoholic beverages or caffeine-based drinks.
 - Exercise moderately. A short distance walk will improve blood flow and help relax the body. Focused exercise, such as gently rotating the head clockwise, then counterclockwise, helps to relieve anxiety. A full-bodied yawn while slowly stretching arms and legs will open the lungs, soothe the stomach, and induce a general state of well-being.
- ▶ **Have a mental rehearsal.** Visualize the entire presentation, beginning with the arrival at the meeting site, the introduction, and, after a successful delivery, the speech's final moments, followed by enthusiastic applause. This type of visualization can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

CONCLUSION

When receiving a speech assignment, it is easy to become so focused on what to say that other areas are neglected. During the research and organization stages it is important to also think about the presentation's delivery. Careful preparation and well-devised practice strategies will assist in achieving speaking excellence. Ample preparation and practice will help you feel assured, confident, and ready to give an outstanding performance.

"Good luck happens when preparedness meets opportunity."

– Anon

V9

V10

Evaluation Guide

Evaluator's Name _____

Presentation Title _____ Date _____

- ▶ How effective was the speaker's introduction in helping the audience understand the purpose of *The Better Speaker Series* and the presentation itself?
- ▶ Was the presenter adequately prepared? How heavily did the presenter rely on notes?
- ▶ How did the speaker use vocal variety to enhance this presentation?
- ▶ What other techniques did the speaker use to personalize and augment the presentation? Were they effective? How?
- ▶ Did the speaker display the visuals smoothly and at the appropriate times? How could the speaker improve?
- ▶ What aspect of the speaker's presentation style did you find unique? Why?
- ▶ Did the speaker present the material clearly and simply so audience members could easily use the information to improve their own speeches?
- ▶ What could the speaker have done differently to make the presentation more effective?
- ▶ What did you like about the presentation?



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