Speaking Your Way to Success

A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Effective Speeches and Presentations

CANADA
4-H Alberta

The 4-H Motto

"Learn To Do By Doing."

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge

My **head** to clearer thinking,
My **heart** to greater loyalty,
My **hands** to larger service,
My **health** to better living,
For my club, my community,
my country, and my world

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Why Communicate?

Effective speakers are not born polished or perfect, but are developed through practice and experience. They are energetic and direct and are knowledgeable about their subject matter.

The greatest value of communication activities is to you, the person who plans, prepares and presents it. Through communication activities you can:

- Work on something you like and have an interest in
- Develop poise and self-confidence
- Gain new knowledge and learn about a specific subject
- Learn to plan and organize your thoughts to express yourself clearly
- Share useful information
- Develop effective communication skills

Types of Communications Activities

In Alberta 4-H, the word 'communications' is used to refer to two categories of activities, speeches and presentations.

Speeches

In a speech you convey your thoughts without visual aids. In a 4-H public speaking competition you are required to give a prepared and an impromptu talk.

Presentations

In a presentation, you show how while telling why. In a 4-H presentations competition, there are two kinds of presentations that you can give:

Demonstrations

A demonstration can be as simple as threading a needle or as complex as dressing a calf for show. The whole idea of doing a demonstration is to communicate - showing others how to do something and explaining your actions as you do it.

A demonstration is hands on. You show how to complete a task step by step, while explaining clearly what you are doing, how you are doing it and why you are doing it.

Illustrated Talks

An illustrated talk is mostly talking. You tell how and use visual aids such as posters, charts, slides, models, handouts, pictures, etc. to refer to.

Steps in Developing a Speech or Presentation

Although there is no one right way to prepare a speech or presentation, the following steps will help ensure that your talk is successful.

- Choose a topic
- Create a goal
- Research and gather information
- Organize your material
- Choose visuals and equipment* (only complete this step if giving a presentation)
- Prepare

Choose a Topic

When choosing a topic, it is important to select one that you are interested in, know something about or are willing to research. The topic may be related to your 4-H activity, current event or social issue. However, whichever topic you choose should appeal to your audience.

Deciding on a topic can sometimes be the hardest part of preparing your speech or presentation. Here are some ways to help you generate ideas:

- List things you like to do
- List things you are good at
- List things that you would like to learn or have learned in the past
- List current events and societal issues
- List ideas from reading a magazine or newspaper, or from watching T.V.
- Ask others

Once you have selected a topic, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the topic fit my capabilities, knowledge and experience?
- Who is my audience and will this be of interest to them?
- Can the topic be covered properly within the time allotted?

If giving a presentation, consider the following:

- Will the audience be able to see and understand what is happening?
- Is the equipment needed for the presentation obtainable and appropriate?

Create a Goal

Every speech or presentation should have a goal determined by the needs and interests of the audience and your own interests and capabilities. A junior 4-H member's goal may be to entertain while a senior member may want educate the audience on a specific subject.

There are four major types of talks that you can choose from:

- **Informative** - Gives the audience information and facts on a subject (speech or illustrated talk) or teaches them to perform a new skill (demonstration)
- **Persuasive** - Is used to affect the listener's behaviour by changing a way of thinking. You are trying to convince or persuade the audience that your opinion is best
- **Motivational** - Encourages people to join an activity, initiate a program or take some other kind of action
- **Entertaining** - Entertains the audience, but can also be used to communicate a message

The main point to remember is the method you use should suit the goal of the presentation and the situation in which it will be given.

Research and Gather Information

Once you have selected the purpose of your speech, learn as much as you can about the topic. A good background of information gives confidence and assures a better performance.

Here are a few tips to prepare your information:

- Start early! Research takes time to do a good job
- Use up-to-date information from reliable sources. This adds credibility to your talk. If you use another person's statements in your speech, you must reference and quote that person
- Collect much more information than you need. This way you can sort out your strongest and most interesting points. Information can be gathered from 4-H project books and resource materials, publications, textbooks, libraries, newspapers and current magazines
- Talk to individuals who are familiar with the subject
- Use your own experiences and ideas

It is known that the average person speaks at a rate of 120-135 words per minute. This means that it is important to be selective of the information you include in order to keep your talk within the specified time limit.

Organize Your Material

After you have gathered all your information, you are ready to read over the information and organize it into a basic outline. List the major headings and group your information to suit the points you wish to make.

There are a few basic parts to a speech or presentation:

- Attention getter (optional)
- Salutation
- Introduction
- Body
- Summary

Attention Getter

(optional)

The attention getter is intended to get the audience's attention and get them ready to listen to your speech. Attention getters can include a:

- Quotation
- Startling statement
- Appropriate story
- Personal experience
- Fact

Salutation

The salutation is a greeting. An example salutation is "Thank you, madame (or mister) chairperson, honourable judges, ladies and gentlemen and fellow 4-H members."

If you are giving more than one talk to the same audience (in the case when giving prepared and impromptu speeches in competition), you may choose to use a shorter salutation for the second time you acknowledge the audience. An example of a short salutation is, "Thank you, Madame chairperson, good evening once again". However, you may use a full salutation each time if you wish.

Note: The salutation may come before or after the attention getter.

Introduction

The introduction should inform the audience of your purpose and subject, and tell them why they should be concerned with your subject. In other words, the introduction tells the audience what you are about to tell them.

Hint: Write the introduction last. It is much easier to write the introduction when you know what you are going to say later. Once you have written your introduction, select a title that suggests your speech subject without telling the whole story.

Body

This is the main part (about 80 percent) of your speech where you present the important facts you are covering. You can present information in several ways to your audience. Since the bodies of a speech, demonstration and illustrated talk differ slightly, they have been described separately below.

Speech

You might find one of the following methods useful:

- Chronological - arrange your talk historically around the past, present and future
- Spatial - arrange your talk geographically. For example, you might be interested in water pollution. You could trace it from its source as it moves downstream
- Problem-effect-solution - State the problem, describe its effects, and suggest ways to solve it. (In a persuasive speech, the action or response the speaker gets from the audience is part of the solution)
- Narrative - in simple terms, just tell your story from beginning to end

Depending on the length of your talk, you should select three to five main points. Take each point in turn, select a lead sentence and then expand on it. The basic thought should be concentrated in the first sentence. Each following sentence should relate directly to the basic thought of the total paragraph.

When building your ideas, begin with something familiar to your audience. Move from the known to the unknown. Remember to stick to the subject. The speech should be easy to follow and every bit of information should pertain to the purpose of the speech. Give concrete examples for the audience to remember.

Demonstration

The body of a demonstration shows how and tells why. With each step, tell what is or should be done and why the demonstrated method is correct. If the step is incomplete at this time, information about its completion and needed equipment should be given. If you have equipment that makes a lot of noise when used, turn it off or stop using it when you are talking to the audience.

Illustrated Talk

Like a demonstration, the body of an illustrated talk also shows and tells. However, visuals, models and samples take the place of physically demonstrating the steps. Props are used to illustrate the main points as opposed to doing them for the audience.

When preparing a team demonstration or talk, the talents and limitations of each partner should be taken into consideration. Divisions of work and explanation of steps should flow naturally when shifting from one step to another or one idea to the next. Too much switching between members may become confusing and distracting to your audience.

Summary

Your summary is the part of your talk that the audience will remember most, but it should be no longer than your introduction (about 10 percent of the total speech). It should summarize your main points in the body, giving your audience one more chance to hear what you have to say, in a brief form. Your summary may also motivate your audience to action, or just round out your thoughts bringing your talk to an end.

Here are a few points to keep in mind when preparing and presenting your summary:

- Do not introduce new material
- Avoid false endings
- End with the idea you most want remembered
- Summarize without repeating the speech. Important points should be summarized one by one
- Use a quotation, story or poem that summarizes the importance of what you have said

If giving a presentation, you should also:

- Display the final product whether it is real or a model
- Identify the sources of information used
- Invite the audience to use the information or method you've shown

If you chose a cause-effect-solution speech, the following suggestions are great additions to your speech:

- Ask questions. For example, "What can you and I do about this problem or situation?" Then, answer the question by stating clearly what can be gained by taking action, and what can be lost if action is not taken.
- Call for action on the part of the audience. Challenge them to do something.

Note: You should not end a speech with "thank you". As a 4-H member, you are taught to think of the speech as a gift to the audience.

Choose Visuals and Equipment

(Skip this section if giving a speech)

The success of a demonstration or illustrated talk depends on the effective use of appropriate props. What is shown in a presentation is as important as what is said.

Visuals, including such items as posters, charts, slides, models and pictures should:

- Complement what you are doing or showing (you should not be repeating exactly what is written on the visual aid)
- Be used only where needed. Use the real item whenever possible
- Be large and dark enough to be easily seen by the audience
- Not look crowded. It is better to use two or three charts than to have too much information on one
- Be neat, simple and easy to use
- Be on heavy cardboard that will not buckle or bend

Videos or sound clips should be used in short time intervals and easy to see or hear.

Making Effective Posters

- Aim your poster at your audience. Choose the appropriate design, colors and wording to catch their eye
- Include the 5W's (who, what, when, where, why)
- Where will it be displayed? Plan a suitable size (small enough that it will be displayed and large enough to be read)
- Study various posters. Which are most effective and why? Can you use the same methods?
- Use color wisely and attractively. Choose colors that stand out and can be read easily. Use theme colors for special events
- Use lettering that is clear and legible
- Keep it simple. Don't try to put too many points on one poster[1]

1 Alberta Agriculture, 4-H Branch, Doing Demonstrations. 2002.

Creating Effective PowerPoint Presentations

- There are a number of ways that you can put together a PowerPoint presentation. Below are some general tips that may be useful:
- Use a dark coloured text with a large size (28 point or larger) and a common font type (Arial, Times New Roman, etc). Avoid slang, check spelling and keep the total number of words per slide to a minimum
- Simple, light coloured backgrounds work best with dark text. Avoid pictures in the background if possible
- Provide only key points on your slide (seven words per line and seven lines per slide is a general rule)
- Use consistent text and style for slides, titles, bulleted points and sub-points
- Use a consistent transition throughout the entire lecture. Transitions should be short and attention grabbing. Do not use sound bites with transitions if possible. Old text may be dimmed when new text arrives
- Use color sparingly and for impact. Avoid colors on opposite positions of the color wheel
- Visuals such as pictures, movie clips and audio clips can enhance your presentation as long as you use a limited number per page (should not exceed two multimedia clips per page). They should also be relevant to the presentation and consistent
- Limit your number of slides (no more than 12 slides for a 10 minute presentation)

Handling Visuals and Equipment

If you are using visuals and equipment, be sure to:

- Use trays to assemble equipment and supplies
- Plan the arrangement of material to avoid reaching across the body. Use the hand closest to the chart or object when you are pointing something out
- Keep the table clear in front so people can see
- Handle props carefully and quietly. Use a folded towel under bowls or pans to absorb noise
- Keep the work surface clean. Have damp cloths, paper towels or a sponge handy. Tape a paper or plastic sack to the table for trash
- Check posters, charts and easels before beginning for proper sequence
- Make sure each part of the presentation is visible. Use slanted surfaces, clear bowls or mirrors as needed
- Display visuals at the right moment. Putting up posters too soon will distract the audience's attention from what you are saying and doing
- Label all materials so the audience knows what they are

Preparing To Give Your Speech or Presentation

Each time you deliver your speech or presentation you will strengthen your delivery, technique and confidence. Practicing also helps to determine whether or not there is sufficient information on the subject and if your talk will stay within the specified time limit.

Here are a few guidelines to follow when practicing:

- Practice with feedback. You want to make sure that you are not reinforcing bad habits so practice with a friend, a family member, a video camera, a tape recorder or a mirror.
- Practice all the way through. Sometimes during practices beginning speakers stop their speech and start over each time they stumble rather than continuing on. As a result, they know the beginning of the speech well but are less and less polished as the speech progresses, thus increasing their nervousness. Get comfortable with the idea that you may make mistakes but that you can just keep going. Mistakes won't bother you as much and you will draw less attention to the slip if you just keep going.
- Practice the introduction and conclusion an extra amount. The introduction and conclusion are remembered more than other parts of the speech because they are the first and last things the audience hears. You'll also find that the introduction and conclusion perform functions that are expanded on in the body of the speech, thus you can always refer to them to remember what you want to accomplish in your speech.

If you are giving a presentation, practice will also help to:

- Coordinate your actions with the appropriate explanations
- Ensure steps and actions are done in a logical order
- Stay within the time limit
- Know whether or not there is sufficient information on the subject
- Use equipment skilfully
- Know that special equipment is functioning properly

Delivering Your Speech or Presentation

There is no "right" or "best" way to speak, except to be yourself and to show you are interested in your topic. Read through the following four points to make sure you have the basis of your delivery covered.

Speaking

Speak in a voice that is natural, distinct and loud enough to be heard. A friendly and confident tone that has inflection and enthusiasm, and that can be heard clearly is a great way to intrigue your audience!

Remember to enunciate your words. Do not speak too fast, drop your voice at the end of sentences, run your words together or speak too softly.

Audience prompting is not tolerated. Be sure to practice speaking ahead of time so that you are comfortable and confident in your delivery.

Using a Microphone

Although you are not required to use a microphone in a 4-H communications activity, it may be necessary to project your voice to the entire audience when the room is large or the acoustics are poor. If a mike is available, be sure to test it to see if it will add to your speech. You should be able to stand 8 to 10 inches away from it and speak in a conversational tone. Keep in mind that a mike does not always mean quality and it is not always necessary.

If you choose to use a microphone, adjust it to your height. The audience will wait; they have come to hear you. After you have adjusted the mike, do not touch it again. Back away if it hums or if you get feedback.

Eye Contact

A good speaker spends about 75 percent of his or her time making eye contact with the audience. Look around the audience in one constant motion. It is not effective to sporadically look from place to place.

Spend time making eye contact with each person in your audience. Each person in the audience should feel as if you are talking personally to him or her. People that you make eye contact with often nod or smile. That is encouraging!

Gestures and Posture

Gestures reinforce what our voices say and are an important part of the total message. Gestures should be natural, not forced. Your hands should be visible to the audience, so try to get them up above your waist. If you are using a podium, place them on each side of the podium in a "gesture ready" position.

Stand up straight with your feet slightly apart. Distribute your weight on both feet and be careful not to lock your knees. Avoid swaying back and forth or rocking up and down.

Using a Podium

A podium may be useful if you are giving a speech or illustrated talk. Choosing to use a podium is your decision. If you choose to use one, make sure to use it properly.

The podium can be used correctly if you follow these simple rules:

- Stand tall behind the podium, don't lean on it or slouch behind it
- Do not use a podium that is higher than the midpoint of your chest. If the podium is too high the audience will not be able to see you
- Place you notes on the podium
- If gesturing, bring your gestures up to an appropriate level so the audience can see them
- Place your hands on the podium in a natural, relaxed way when not making gestures (hands on the side edges of the podium). Do not grip the podium. If you have the tendency to grip the podium, it is better to keep your hands at your sides[2]

Clothes

Conservative clothes are the best. Avoid clothes that are distracting to the audience, you want them to remember what you said, not what you wore.

Call for Questions

(Skip this section if giving a speech)

Revised

Note: When giving a 4-H presentation, you must end your speech with the statement *"I/We are ready for the judges' question"* You are timed until this statement is made.

When answering this question:

- Repeat the question to the entire audience
- Offer to find the information and supply it to the judges if you are unsure of the correct answer.

2 Extension Service, Texas A&M University, Public Speaking…4-H Style. June, 1999.

Evaluating Your Speech or Presentation

After you have completed your speech or presentation, it is a good idea to evaluate how it went. Avoid the temptation of using the competition placing as the only indicator of a well prepared and delivered talk! Be fair to yourself and give yourself the same understanding you would extend to another person.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself with regards to your content and delivery:

Content

- Did I achieve my purpose?
- Was my purpose clear and appropriate?
- Was the talk suitable for the audience and situation?
- Did I develop my main points in a logical way so that people understood them?
- Was my talk organized (introduction, body, conclusion)?
- Were my facts accurate and did they support my main points?

Delivery

- Did I establish eye contact before I began speaking and maintain it for the duration of my talk?
- Did I dress appropriately for the occasion?
- Did people hear and see me?
- Were my gestures natural, not planned or stiff?
- Did I speak to everyone in the room, not just to a select few?
- Was I enthusiastic?
- Did I finish my talk and pause before I leave the front?
- Did I stop at the end of sentences and avoid using hook sentences with "and" or "uhhh"?

If you gave a presentation, also ask yourself:

- Could I have taught the same thing in a better way?
- Did I follow the steps in the correct order?
- Did I have a good balance of work and talking?
- Did the audience learn from my presentation?
- Did I use the equipment and visual aids effectively?

Questions that you answered “no” to may be areas where you need to improve.

Additional Resources

There are a number of other 4-H resources available to you. Visit our website at to obtain competition rules and guidelines, sample impromptu topics and more.

Appendix

Using Cue Cards

Speakers use cue cards to remind them of the main points. They often ask: "Should I write out my entire speech or use an outline of my most important points?"

Some speakers use a complete outline. If you do this, write some sub-points under each main point. Indicate under each heading which facts or examples you will use. Outline your introduction and conclusion in the same way.

Other speakers prefer to organize their thoughts, but find that they can best choose their words when they are actually speaking. So, they start with an outline and talk it through many times, trying out different ways of developing the ideas.

If you choose to write your talk out in its entirety, avoid the temptation to read it rather than speak to the audience. A voice becomes flat and monotonous when reading, and the audience loses eye contact and interest.

To help keep organized, you should:

- Use 3x5 white index cards for your notes. Do not put a ring in your cards as it can be distracting
- Use minimal cards if possible. Older 4-H members should be using no more than four cards
- Hold your cards above waist level so that when you refer to them you do not have a long ways down to look
- Do not to speak down into your cards! Try to pause, glance at your cards, then look up before you begin speaking
- Avoid using lots of gestures with the hand holding your cards. It can be distracting to your audience

Preparing Impromptu Speeches

Impromptu speaking teaches you to "think on your feet" and demonstrate your knowledge on a subject area. Although impromptus are much shorter than your prepared speech, the same basic content and delivery rules apply.

An impromptu speech is not as organized as a prepared speech, but try to follow this plan when you speak:

- Pick one central idea and expand on it (talk specifically about one aspect of the topic instead of generally about everything)
- Create an introduction, body and conclusion
- State your topic clearly
- Give details: stories, your experiences, examples, etc.
- Use your own personal experiences wherever possible
- Stay away from discussing areas you are unsure of

Since you only have one minute to prepare, use your time wisely. Only write down your main ideas and keep them in point form.

Hint: Slow down your delivery. When giving impromptus, speakers often speak at a faster than normal pace. Slowing down allows you to think ahead, reduces "umms" and "ahhs", and gives the audience time to absorb what you are saying.

Dealing with Nervousness or Speech Anxiety

Everyone, even experienced speakers, have some anxiety when speaking in front of a group of people. The best way to deal with this anxiety is to first acknowledge that this fear is perfectly normal and you are not alone. If you are worried about giving your speech, the following suggestions may help you:

Start early and small

Anxiety produced by a speech starts during the preparation stage and may lead a speaker to procrastinate in preparing. One way to deal with this is to break the preparation process into small, manageable parts and establish a time line to accomplish these parts.

Make sure you select a topic that interests you so you will have an easier time developing your speech or presentation.

Have a positive attitude

The physical symptoms of anxiety may include a rush of adrenalin, a faster heart rate, sweaty palms, and quicker breathing. Although even expert speakers feel these physical symptoms, it's important to keep in mind that they are normal, not easily observed and could be interpreted as excitement. Remember that everyone wants you to succeed!

Practice

One reason speakers get nervous is that they are afraid they won't know what to say. Practicing will help to eliminate this.

Gain Experience

Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking. You will find that your anxieties will continue to decrease after each speech you give. [3]

3 No Sweat Presentations - The Painless Way to Successful Speaking. Lenny Laskowski, July 2002.

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