



# **SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS**

**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**

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## **SECTION 12**

## **SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In your role as a Fire Chief you can and will be asked to prepare and deliver presentations or speeches for varied groups ranging from small local organizations to large groups outside your municipality. The audience may or may not be fire service oriented and your subject could range from specific emergency action to new concepts or innovations in your department or municipality or to legal battles or challenges being faced by the fire service in general.

While presentations to small groups are usually quite informal and delivered to a non-technical audience, some presentations can be to informed audiences numbering in the thousands. Anything less than a polished and well researched presentation will not be accepted or appreciated and will reflect badly on you as an individual, your department and your municipality.

The terms speech and presentation are interchangeable within the context of this section. It is generally agreed that a speech is a more formal public address process and a presentation is often more technical in nature and less formal in approach.

This section has been prepared to give some practical direction in the preparation of speeches and presentations.

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### PREPARATION STEPS

The steps in the preparation of a presentation or speech are:

- (1) select and limit the subject;
- (2) determine the purpose of the speech;
- (3) analyze the audience and the occasion;
- (4) gather data;
- (5) outline the material;
- (6) organize and develop the speech;
- (7) plan the visual aids; and
- (8) practise aloud.

Some of these steps you may be able to perform quite rapidly; others may require time-consuming work. You may work on more than one step at a time: e.g., before you can outline the material, you must consider three factors - subject, purpose, and situation. Actually, you go through the first steps simultaneously since your subject and purpose are influenced by the audience and the occasion.

#### Step 1 - **Select and Limit the Subject**

In many cases you will not select your own subject. If you are free to do so, then keep the following considerations in mind. If possible, choose a subject which relates to your own experiences, interests, or convictions. You will find the subject easier to prepare, and you will speak with enthusiasm and conviction and win the respect which all audiences give to informed sincerity. Consider the needs and interests of your audience. Consider too the time in which you have to speak. Do not make the mistake of tackling too broad a subject base, choose something concrete and specific.

#### Step 2 - **Determine Your Purpose**

In speaking, as in writing, you have a general and specific purpose and hope to retain the desired response, once you have obtained it. Most speaking has one of three general purposes:

<b>General Purpose</b>	<b>Expected Response</b>
To entertain To inform To persuade	Pleasure Understanding Agreement - Action

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You should concentrate on informative and persuasive presentations.

As the general purpose is the target, so the specific purpose is the bull's-eye. Your specific purpose states exactly what you want your audience to understand, believe, or do. You cannot choose material intelligently until you know exactly what you wish to accomplish. Record in one sentence your specific purpose and during your preparation let it dominate everything.

### Step 3 - Analyze Your Audience and the Occasion

Your subject and your purpose will be influenced by the nature of the audience. As a speaker you should know something about the social, economic, and educational levels of your listeners and their probable reaction to the specific purpose of your speech. You should also know something about the occasion, for it will also affect what you do and say. Where are you to speak? How large is the place? How many people will be there? Who else is on the program? What time will you speak? A knowledge of all of these factors will help you select and organize the material for your speaking engagement.

### Step 4 - Gather the Data

After considering your subject, your purpose, your audience and the occasion, you are ready to gather your data. Before going to outside sources, explore what you know about the subject. List the main points that you feel are necessary to accomplish your purpose. Under each major point, list the minor supporting points. This tentative outline provides you with the blueprint to guide you in your research, points up the areas in which you lack knowledge, fixes a sequence of ideas in your mind, and permits a desirable flexibility in the speech itself. Making a tentative outline forces you to think your way through the subject, to weigh your ideas, and to assess their relative importance.

When you have what seems to be an orderly listing, you are ready to begin research in sources from libraries and elsewhere. As you collect new data, revise and expand your tentative list.

### Step 5 - Outline Your Material

The basic function of an outline is to show the thought relationships. Each main point must explain, prove, or support the specific purpose of your speech. Each sub-point must amplify, develop, prove, and in some way support the main point to which it is subordinate. A good outline ensures unity, coherence and emphasis.

The outline is a flexible working guide. From the time you draft your first outline until your speech is in final form, you will probably continue to make slight alterations. This polishing is a continuous process that helps you put your ideas across.

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### Step 6 - Organize and Develop the Speech

Since organization is vital to good speech, you must organize your material for your listeners, so that they will clearly understand.

Speeches, like letters, are normally organized in the following three major divisions:

- (1) introduction;
- (2) body; and
- (3) conclusion.

The introduction is usually prepared last and has two purposes - to arrest attention and establish good will, and to state and clarify your subject. The ways in which you may gain attention and establish rapport are:

- (1) personal reference or greeting;
- (2) interesting narrative or illustration.
- (3) reference to the place and occasion;
- (4) apt quotation;
- (5) fusillade of questions;
- (6) dramatized fact;
- (7) amusing anecdote;
- (8) sincerity;
- (9) reference to the special interests of the audience.

Normally you will state your specific purpose and give an outline of the main points you intend to cover, early in the speech. In some introductions you may have to explain, define, or simplify certain points that are essential to audience understanding. The introduction in a persuasive or argumentative type speech, however, may leave the purpose hidden until you have established rapport with your audience.

The "body" is the heart of the speech. It is suggested that, regardless of the length, the speech should usually have three or four main ideas, but never more than five. The body of your speech can be a smooth unit if you use these devices:

- (1) Transition. A word or passage, short or long, which bridges the gap between ideas: e.g., "therefore", "yet", "sometimes", etc.
- (2) Summary. A recapitulation or review of major points just made.
- (3) Partition. A list of steps yet to be taken: e.g., "Let's look ahead to three possible results of this action . . . ."

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If a main point or sub-point is to be clear and convincing, it must be developed and supported. Good speakers translate the abstract into the concrete. They use such verbal supports as:

- (1) definitions;
- (2) examples;
- (3) comparisons;
- (4) testimony;
- (5) statistics; and
- (6) restatements.

The conclusion, like the introduction, should be brief. It may contain:

- (1) a brief recapitulation of main points;
- (2) a quotation that epitomizes the argument; and
- (3) a vivid illustration or narrative that dramatizes the central idea.

The conclusion of a persuasive speech should end with an effective appeal for belief or action.

### Step 7 - Plan Your Visual Aids

The verbal forms of support discussed above appeal only to the sense of hearing. If you can use visual aids and appeal to a second sense, you will establish a stronger bond with the audience. Visual aids serve the same purpose as the verbal means of support since they:

- (1) arrest attention;
- (2) hold interest;
- (3) clarify;
- (4) amplify; and
- (5) prove.

You must select visual aids with care, integrate them into your speech, and use them skillfully.

### Step 8 - Practise Aloud

You want to make a worthy presentation when you are on the stage and are the centre of attention. Your chances of success will be much better if you rehearse - preferably before several of your colleagues who will offer constructive criticism, and in a physical environment similar to the one in which you will present your scheduled speech. If your organization is judged clear, your aids appropriate, and your delivery effective, then you are ready.

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### DELIVERY

**General.** No matter how well prepared or interesting your material may be, you cannot be a successful speaker unless you can put your message across to your audience. Through the skilful use of voice and body, you must project your ideas to your listeners. You can improve delivery through practice followed by competent criticism and guidance. Below are some suggestions to help you in your practice.

**Attitude.** Most speakers are nervous before an audience, but the more experienced ones have learned to control their fears. The best insurance against failure is thorough preparation. A confident, poised, enthusiastic attitude is required. This attitude is reflected in your willingness to establish eye contact and to speak to your audience, not simply at them, or in front of them.

**Appearance.** Your appearance frequently reflects your attitude. You should be well-groomed and well-tailored. Your deportment and bearing should reflect your confidence. Your gestures should be natural and contribute to, not detract from, what you are saying. You should eliminate distracting mannerisms (physical or verbal)

**Voice.** As a speaker, you can develop a good speaking voice. You must pay particular attention to:

1. Pitch. Vary the speaking level.
2. Volume. Vary the force with which you speak.
3. Rate. Vary the speed at which you speak.
4. Quality. It is a product of the resonance of the fundamental tone produced in the larynx. You should think about and be responsive to what you are saying - it will add to the quality of your voice.
5. Articulation. Refers to distinct speech, or the clarity with which you speak the parts of each word. You must open your mouth when you speak and be instantly intelligible to everyone in the audience.
6. Pauses. They should be definite and planned. Clear breaks bring variety and interest. They should punctuate, not mutilate.
7. Pronunciation. You must pronounce words correctly to win confidence and to avoid the unwanted attention which a mistake will attract.