

CONCLUDING YOUR SPEECH

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 “Concluding Your Speech” 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* (Item 1167E) 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.

CONCLUDING YOUR SPEECH

Outline

INTRODUCTION

A conclusion is important to the success of any speech. All too often, an otherwise excellent speech loses its effectiveness because of a poor closing. People remember the last thing they hear more than any other part of your speech. If you want people to remember and be favorably impressed with it, you must strive to conclude your speech positively and forcefully.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSIONS

Successful speech closings meet three criteria:

- ▶ **Achieve a sense of closure:** People need and expect closure. An effective closing signals to the audience that your speech is ending and reminds them to pay attention to your final words. The following are common ways and phrases to tell listeners you will be ending your speech and leading them to closure:
 - “in conclusion”
 - “let me end by saying”
 - “in summary”
- ▶ **Make an impact:** A good ending makes a lasting impression on your audience. As mentioned earlier, people remember the last thing they hear the longest. After a few weeks, your listeners may have forgotten most of your speech. However, they will remember the last words you said to them and how they felt after hearing those words if you deliver the ending in a striking, forceful, or meaningful way.
- ▶ **Take less than five to 10 percent of the entire speech time:** Most of your allotted speaking time should be spent on the body of your speech. Your conclusion should take only five to 10 percent of your entire speech time. For example, a 10-minute speech should have a closing of 30 to 60 seconds.

CLOSING TECHNIQUES

There are certain techniques, if applied with the criteria that will create a lasting and vivid impression with your audience. The following six techniques will help you create strong speech endings:

Presenter:

Personalize the following techniques by referring to speech endings used by some of your fellow club members. For example, if Betty Smith ended her speech last week with an appeal for listeners to take action, refer to it when you discuss “Call for action” below.

V1

V2

- ▶ **Use a quotation:** Used properly, a quotation can add authority to your closing, amuse your listeners, or dramatize your speech points. Whatever quote you choose, keep it short and related directly to your speech topic.

Example: A presentation encouraging people to become concerned about the future environment could close with George Bernard Shaw's words, "Some men see things as they are and ask, 'Why?' I dare to dream of things that never were and ask, 'Why not?'"

V3

- ▶ **Tell a short story or anecdote:** A powerful story or anecdote can make a memorable close. It can be inspirational or funny, but it should be short, develop quickly, and be related to or reinforce your message. Personalize it if possible, too.

V4

- ▶ **Call for action:** If your speech was intended to persuade or urge your listeners to take some kind of action, your closing statement should clearly explain what action they should take.

Example: You could conclude a speech about drug abuse prevention by saying, "Educating our young people about drugs begins with you. After you leave here tonight, I urge you to go home and talk to your children. Tell them you love them and are concerned for them. Talk to them about drugs."

V5

- ▶ **Ask a rhetorical question:** End a speech by asking one question or a series of questions that relate to your topic. The audience will think about an answer and thus your speech.

Example: "You may ask, 'Can we afford to do this?' I ask, 'Can we afford not to?'"

V6

- ▶ **Refer to the beginning of the speech:** Tie your closing words to the beginning of your speech to reinforce your message.

Example: "I began my remarks by reviewing the challenges our company must confront if we are to continue to be successful. I believe these challenges provide opportunities for each of us to learn and grow as individuals. Let's not be afraid of these challenges; let's welcome them as opportunities and move forward."

V7

- ▶ **Summarize your main points:** Repeat the points presented in the body of the speech. Repetition reinforces your message and enhances your audience's learning.

Example: "Remember, please, the three keys to making this new program work: understanding, commitment, and teamwork. Only when we all know the program, commit to it, and work together will we achieve our goal."

V8

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

You can do several things to ensure that your speech ends with impact:

- ▶ **Memorize your conclusion:** A memorized, polished ending enables you to end confidently and adds impact to your speech.
- ▶ **End on time:** Too many speeches are ruined because the speaker goes far beyond the allotted time. By ending on time and with a dynamic conclusion, you will leave your audience with a favorable image.
- ▶ **Refrain from adding new points:** Occasionally, you may forget to mention a point in the body of your speech. Bringing it up in the conclusion of your speech detracts from the effectiveness of the conclusion and can confuse the audience.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes, an otherwise-excellent speech loses its effectiveness because of a poor closing. Do not let this happen to you. You have put too much work into creating and presenting your speech. Do not risk leaving your audience with a less-than-favorable impression. Make a lasting impact. Use some of the methods presented to conclude your speech positively and forcefully.

"Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending."

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow