

## **SPEECH WRITING**

You have been asked to make a speech. Maybe a father of the bride speech, or a eulogy at a wedding, or at an annual dinner. Thorough preparation is required, and a fundamental part of this is the writing of the speech itself. Time taken will enable you to really get your message across. So, where to start? Once you know what you are going to say, write it down. Write down everything that comes into your head. Whether it is relevant or not doesn't matter at this point, allow your imagination to fly free. With your ideas recorded, consider the following advice.

- Preparation is everything. Try to start on your speech well in advance of delivering it, allowing yourself time to refine it.
- Keep a notebook handy. Ideas may leap into your head in the most unlikely circumstances and times of the day, so record them at the time.
- Focus on the message. What do you want your audience to remember? Learn? Be persuaded of? As the army might put it: Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you have told them.
- Sleep on it. An apparent 'blockage' or section of substandard text can often be easily resolved some time later.
- Make it understandable. Your audience doesn't know the subject the way you do. If your audience fails to comprehend what you are saying, they are not likely to sit in awe of your superior knowledge.
- Vary sentence length. Not every sentence has to be loaded with adjectival phrases, colourful prose and subordinating conjunctions.
- Consider use of questions. Skilfully used, they can captivate the audience, or stimulate thinking at key points.
- Be ruthless. Journalists refer to it, rather chillingly, as being prepared to 'kill your babies'. If that beautifully descriptive line, vivid word picture or funny anecdote, doesn't serve the purpose of your speech...drop it.
- Select your vocabulary. Featuring hopelessly obscure words isn't clever! Your words should enable the listener to understand and appreciate your message.
- Avoid clichés. Not every eccentric scientist is 'mad', nor every genius 'flawed', morning 'misty', legs 'weary' or wit 'sparkling'!
- Choose your tools wisely. Not every aspect of the speakers guide has to be in your speech, any more than a plumber must use every tool in their bag.
- Use subheadings. These alone can, after rehearsal, be copied onto a card, and provide a simple prompt as you deliver your speech.
- Relax. Writing a speech can be enjoyable. Don't worry about the delivery aspects of speaking at the writing stage. These can be developed later.

This advice is by no means exhaustive. All great speech writers have their own style, and with practise and reflection, you will discover what is effective for you, and you will deliver memorable speeches!