



Top Tips for Speechwriting by Imogen Morley

Imogen graduated from the University of London in 2014 with a degree in English Literature. She then worked for a few years at the UK Speechwriters' Guild and European Speechwriter Network in London and abroad. Imogen assisted on speechwriting training courses and helped organise conferences. During this time she lived in Germany for two years and also started her own blog imogenmorley.wordpress.com. Imogen now lives in the UK where she works as an English language teacher and teaches and trains in communication skills.

1. Read other people's speeches (aloud!)

Getting inspiration from other people's speeches can help you write your own. Be careful not to copy, though! Try reading some famous speeches aloud: for instance, Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech. If you can do this in a group, even better, because you can take it in turns to read and listen. You can also listen to a lot of famous speeches online. Think about what makes the speech successful: what rhetorical devices do they use?; how does the speaker deliver the speech?; how do they make their argument interesting?

2. Who are your audience?

Once you have decided (or been given) a topic, think about your audience. Why are they there? Is this a formal or informal occasion? Are they your friends and relations, or total strangers? Answering these questions is important, because in any speech you are trying to persuade your audience, and you can only do that well if you know who they are. We may end up with two completely different speeches on the same topic, depending on our audience.

3. What is your core message?

You probably have millions of different ideas about what you want to say in your speech. You may have made notes and talked your ideas through with your teacher or friends. But before you try and actually write your speech, it's a good idea to find your core message: what you want to tell your audience. Try and whittle it down to one sentence that sums up what you want to say. It will probably be something persuasive. This task helps you streamline your speech, so that you don't waffle.

4. Use your rhetorical toolkit

These tools help us put your ideas into words – words that will have a real impact on your audience. They include: metaphors; rhetorical questions; hyperbole; repetition of words or phrases; jokes. Stories and anecdotes are also part of our toolkit: think about how an emotional or vivid story could help you persuade your audience.

5. Practising your delivery

Start by reading it through aloud to yourself. Any place you stumble probably needs rewriting. Keep reading it through until you are happy with it. Time yourself, too. Then try it on a friendly audience. A partner, friend, even a pet will do to start off with. Try to find someone as close to your real audience as possible – someone who's actually going to be there on the day is perfect. This is often the most nerve-wracking part, but the more times you deliver your speech to someone, the easier it will be on the day. Notice when they get bored. Or laugh. Ask them for feedback. The more you practise beforehand, the better your speech will flow on the day. Even with a racing heart and sweaty palms, you'll be able to make your speech sing.