

classroom

Writing Your Platform

Here it is – your time to take center stage – to grab the attention of the audience and get your message across. By the time the speech season is over, you may have had the ear of 20, 50, or even 100 or more listeners. While you won’t be standing on a soap box, you will definitely have a platform to share something you care about with others. Today we’ll look at how to construct your platform speech so that your finished product will be purposeful, polished, and powerful.

Let’s start at the beginning

I The Intro

1. Hook

A hook is just that – an opening that will really grab the interest of your audience and hook them in. These can be dramatic or funny – the more creative the better. A quote, a story, a bible verse or a stunning statistic could work as well. There are really no restrictions here – just reel them in.

“Enticing Hooks” will be one of the electives offered next meeting – don’t miss it for a deeper look at hooks and how they can really get your speech off on the right foot.

B. Thesis – a statement that summarizes your speech

If you had to sum up your speech in one sentence, what would it be? The thesis doesn’t have to state your three points. Now how will you support that thesis?

1. Roadmapping – stating your 3 supporting points

While not everyone agrees with this, many judges are listening to hear and write down these three main points. It shows that you are organized and lets the audience know where you’ll be going in your speech. This serves as your transition to the next part of the speech.

II Main Body of Speech – 3 supporting points

Jan D’Arcy, an executive speech coach, states that, “Three main points seem to be the maximum for an audience to digest and retain. If you give five or six point, your audience will get lost and go into overload and shut down.”

1. Each point gets its own paragraph. The point should be clearly stated at the beginning of the paragraph (it is like a mini-thesis for that paragraph). Everything that comes after should support this statement. If it doesn’t, then it doesn’t belong here.
2. Points will emerge from research

As you read more and more about your subject, new angles will arise and your initial 3 points may change to something else. Great! Be fluid and flexible in the early stages of writing. If you find a good story that helps drive your thesis but doesn’t fit into one of your points – maybe you could change one of the points.

1. Use transitions to bridge one paragraph to the next

Mrs. D’Arcy also reports that an audience has usually forgotten 75% of a speech 24 hours later. Transitions are a great way to sum up what you’ve covered so far and point to where you are going next. These can take some time to come up with, but really add polish to your speech.

OK – we’ve talked about research. What kind of research does a platform require?

III Research Required

The NCFCA website explains that, “The purpose of the Platform category is to

train the student to research, assemble and communicate a prepared speech

that would appeal to a variety of audiences.”

1. Go to several different sources to find support

A recent trend has been to use one source and mention it at the beginning of the speech like, “All information presented in this speech comes from *The Definitive Book on Salt*.” While 1 or 2 sources may weigh heavily in your preparation, it is best to have a wide variety of sources – this will be more interesting to your audience, more impressive to your judges, and more beneficial to your education.

1. Sources to use
2. Books
3. Internet Articles
4. Newspaper Articles
5. Experiences in your own life and your family’s life
6. Four main types of support – shoot for 3 in each paragraph

What type of research you do will vary depending on the nature of your speech, but almost any subject can be made more interesting by spicing it up with a great support system including:

1. Stories

Personal stories are great – but usually don’t require much research. Other stories, do. A few years ago a persuasive speech on creativity included a story on Veggie Tales creator Phil Vischer. It illustrated a point powerfully. A search on creativity on the web led to a tidbit about Mr. Vischer that led to a book to read that led to the story.

1. Facts

Facts can bolster your case powerfully. Of course they must be cited

by a credible source. Some judges do not like hearing, “Wikipedia

reports”. A more credible source might be The Wall Street Journal or

Journal of the American Medical Association.

1. Quotes

Quotes are a quick, easy way to enliven a speech. There are plenty of websites that will pop up when you type in your subject followed by the word “quote”. If you can find one from a well-regarded source that relates, use it. It is nice to bring famous friends along with you to make your case. A funny quote goes a long way too.

1. Statistics

Statistics are another powerful tool to support your points. Are there

numbers out there that really demonstrate what your words are

saying? If so, do those statistics need to be illustrated? I am sure

you’ve all heard the length of something compared to a certain

number of school buses or football fields or stories of a building.

They are used because they make it easier for the listener or reader

to grasp the distance. In the same way, statistics help your audience

grasp the importance of what you are talking about.

While we are talking about research, let’s take a minute to go over proper sourcing – or how to cite the origin of your claims.

IV Citation Requirements

1. All speeches must cite sources within the speech. This applies not just to quotes and facts, but even general ideas.

Citing sources within the speech might look something like this:

“Ben Franklin once said, “He who would give up liberty for security deserves

neither.”

In their book, *Do Hard Things*, the Harris brothers list a list of teen

expectations.

Make sure you use creative words for “said”. It is easy to overuse this and

sound very boring and repetitious.

1. Follow in-speech citations with an in-text source citation in parentheses

According to C.S. Lewis, Aslan apparently cannot be called a lion that is

tame (Lewis 25)

1. All speeches must cite sources in an accompanying separate bibliography

attached at the end of the speech.

Type: Book/journal/article/periodical

i. Format:

Last name of author(s)/editor(s), First name of author(s)/editor(s).

Title. Year of publication.

(Omit any items/details not available)

Bauer, Susan Wise. The Story of the World: Volume Two. 2003

You can find more examples of these on the NCFCA website.

V Conclusion

Here is where you sum up your speech. Restate the thesis, review the points

and close by referring back to the hook.

The length of a platform cannot exceed 10 minutes. Try to get as close to 10 minutes as possible. A 10 minute speech is about 4 ½ double-spaced pages (12 font) or 1550-1600 words.