

Introduction

"Help! Three minutes???" How do I speak for *three* whole minutes?"

"How do I even start to prepare a short notice speech?"

"Can you give me some tips? *Pleeeze!*"

These cries of apparent desperation are often heard from Voice of Youth participants. Yet, despite the initial panic, it may not be as difficult as it first seems. This document provides some insights into preparing a short notice speech for which only 15 minutes preparation time is allowed.

A point to make from the start is that these tips are not a recipe that must be followed, nor will adjudicators ever ask themselves if the advice here was followed or not. But they will allow speakers to prepare a very interesting speech, which makes an impact, in the time allowed. But, a minor warning: by using this approach speakers may want to keep talking to their topic even after the 3 minutes have elapsed!

This document is for Rostrum Voice of Youth participants as well as their parents and teachers.

What will the topics be like?

The short notice speech topics are generally non-specific. The choice of very specific topics may play into the hands of one speaker as against another so are avoided. Non-specific topics require the speaker to identify a subject that relates to the topic. The speech topic may be "Something I love" The speaker then has to determine what it is that they love that they wish to speak about. Let's say they then choose to speak about music as one of the things they love - "I Love Music."

Where to go from there? Ask some "Starting Questions"

Ask yourself some questions like:

- What sort of music do I like?
- Why do I like it?
- How does it make me feel?
- When do I specially like to listen?
- What used I to listen to?
- What do I listen to now?
- How has music changed?
- Where do I like to listen?

You will see that there are a series of questions that will lead you back to personal experience. The answers to those questions will give you the substance of a speech that will be of interest to the audience and tell them something about you. You do not have to respond to all your questions though, just the ones that "turn you on".

I love music, but I find that over time my taste changes. In the past I loved short, sharp noisy music like Hip Hop. Strangely now I find that I also like quiet, melodic, tuneful music especially when I feel a little down or sad. etc. etc.

The topic might be "It was all over in a second." Clearly you must search for something that happened quickly - an accident, a decision, a split second of inattention. Where to go for inspiration? My experiences, the media, history? The media!! A truck crash. A moment of inattention.

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- What made it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What was the result of it happening?
- Who did it affect?
- What can be changed to prevent it happening again?

Again the speech is there in the skeleton. *A truck was travelling on the Lincoln Highway towards Whyalla. It was dusk and raining. A station wagon was travelling in the opposite direction. The road was covered with water and the station wagon was travelling fast. The driver was drowsy having driven from Adelaide with hardly a break. He allowed the wagon to drift off the road - it struck soft ground and veered sharply to the left etc. etc. DROWSY DRIVERS DIE.*

The topic may be "Looking Down From Above." Looking down on what? People? A panorama of green pastures with distant blue hills? A steep ravine with a swiftly flowing stream falling over the edge to crash below into the pool at the bottom? The view from the top of a Ferris wheel?

A personal experience in New Zealand. Looking down from the mountain, the source of the river on which you and your family went white water rafting.

- Where were we?
- When were we?
- Why were we at the top of the mountain?
- What was it like? Cold, windy, snowing, awesome?
- Was I scared?
- What was the source of the water?
- Was the climb hard?
- Was it dangerous?
- Were there safety precautions?

Answers to the above should enable you to describe the beauty, dangers, difficulty, grandeur and exhilaration of being on a mountain top.

I hope these practical examples illustrate the technique. Ask yourself questions about your subject matter. The answers should give you a speech. From the answers there may emerge a speech of substance. For example in the road accident story you may know of a real case of someone suffering permanent disabilities as a result. You could describe the terrible results, and finish with something like " *A lifetime of suffering for a whole family for a moment's inattention (or for the sake of a half hour break in the journey).*"

The next step is your finish

Once you have a skeleton, think of a powerful or purposeful finish, it could be (for the above examples):

- *My tastes may change, my moods may change, where I live may even change; but one thing that remains constant is my love of good music in my life.*
- *One lesson is clear, drowsy drivers do die, and it can be all over in a second.*
- *Was the climb worth it? Long after the pain, terror and tiredness have gone, the memory of nature's grandeur remains ... nothing compares with looking down from above.*

Try to finish the speech in a way that ties it back to the idea you started with. So, be sneaky, find a start that 'fits' the ending (it's perfectly legal!).

And to start?

Try your best to start with something that sounds interesting or impressive. Maybe even ask the audience one of the questions you asked yourself, or else something intriguing and personal.

- *There I was, swaying, singing, seemingly out of control. Why? you may well ask...*
- *It was dusk and raining. A truck was travelling on the Lincoln Highway towards Whyalla. A station wagon was travelling in the opposite direction. Was this a recipe for disaster or did it need another ingredient?*
- *I wanted to die! My legs ached, it was cold but I was hot and sweaty. "Dad, are we there yet? Can we turn back?" I pleaded...*

Now put in the finishing touches - the material of your speech

Once you have your start and finish, go back to those starting questions. You are now ready to work on the material of your speech - to "flesh out the skeleton" as it were.

It helps not to rush. You don't need a huge volume of material or great range of ideas in a 3 minute speech; just a few well linked ideas and some good descriptions that come from those starting questions. This will help your listeners to know where you were, what you were doing or what you were thinking (or whatever) so they feel they understand the situation.

Practice?

As a suggestion, practice this approach. Get help from your parents or teachers, so you can become comfortable and skilled at using it to prepare and deliver short notice speeches.

Overall...

If you start and end with emphasis and use the material in the middle to give helpful details you will have a very receptive audience and, more importantly, impress the adjudicators. Your good speech will make their task even harder!

Good luck!