



2009 Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition Hints & Guidelines

Thanks for your school's entry in the Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition. The following is a very simple guide to what is expected of speakers in the competition, and what the adjudicators will be looking for. It's important to remember that the things which work in some speeches will not always work in others, so there's no formula for writing the perfect speech. Still, hopefully these guidelines will give you a better idea of what makes a good multicultural speech.

Prepared Speeches — Manner

- A speaker's manner should be **natural and conversational**.
- Exaggerated gestures, exaggerated use of voice, over-acting and the like should be discouraged in favour of a sincere, down-to-earth manner.
- With that in mind, it is still important that speakers develop their own individual style. Some speakers will come across more serious than others, some will be more entertaining and light-hearted.
- Speakers must not use props, and should not act out scenes or sing no matter how good at it they are.
- Eye contact with the audience should be maintained as much as possible. However, the best speeches are generally not learnt off by heart and robotically recited, but rather require the speaker to glance at his or her palm cards occasionally.
- Good speakers will occasionally stumble or say 'um' . This is preferable to speeches which are at the one extreme entirely read or at the other over-rehearsed. The competition is very much a learning exercise for primary-aged speakers, and learners stumble from time to time.
- A speaker's body language should again be natural and easy, which means hand gestures in moderation, a comfortable stance, and the occasional step.
- Speakers' voices should be relaxed and expressive without being exaggerated.

Prepared Speeches — Matter

- Every prepared speech **must have Multicultural content**. Speakers who neglect or entirely misunderstand multiculturalism will not proceed through the competition.
- The best speeches usually have a strong point of view and a clear direction. All good speeches have a purpose in mind.
- The best speeches are balanced. This means a balance between personal perspective and a broader world-view, between rhetorical device and cold hard facts, and between humour and sincerity. A speech which is entirely personal is not a successful one, and nor is a speech which is essentially an information report. A simple tip would be to begin with a personal story and then broaden out to look at an issue in the community or the country, but remember that this won't work for every speech.
- Finally, good speeches are unique and striking. They should be original and catch the audience's attention by presenting them with something they haven't seen before.

Prepared Speeches — Method

- Speeches need to have a clear introduction, middle, and conclusion.
- Good introductions are unique and give the audience a sense of the speaker's theme without being boringly explicit. "My name is _____ and today I'm here to talk about _____" is a very dull beginning, as is anything equally pro forma. Speakers might try beginning with a question, an anecdote, or for more serious speeches, a bold and striking statement.
- The middle of the speech should contain 3 or 4 separate, coherent ideas arranged so as to improve the flow of the speech, for example by moving from arguments on a personal scale to a look at a global issue, or from a look at the past to where we are heading in the future. Each idea should be given a reasonable amount of time. A simple list of every idea related to the topic is not a useful way to structure this middle section.
- Good conclusions are memorable, effective and original, avoiding pro forma clichés like "I hope you have enjoyed listening to my speech". Speakers should also avoid thanking the audience and opt for a strong final statement of their message as their last words.

Impromptu Speeches

- Impromptu topics will be general and allow speeches on a wide variety of issues. Some examples of topics given in the past are: "A Matter of Life and Death", "Hard Work", "Changes", "Bigger and Better", "Friends", "Honesty", "A Big Problem". Last year's state finals topics were "Hard Times" for Years 3&4 and "Give and Take" for the Years 5&6. Parts of newspaper headlines often make great impromptu topics for practice.
- Impromptu speeches **should not have a Multicultural content**. The best impromptu speeches are very different from the prepared speeches that the audience has already seen. Speakers will be disadvantaged if they use material from their own or anyone else's prepared speech. That's why it's best to avoid multiculturalism altogether.
- The rules of what makes a good impromptu speech are exactly the same as for the prepared section. This means a beginning, middle and end are still a must.
- A clear, singular approach to the topic is vital. Long lists of unrelated ideas make poor impromptu speeches. Speakers should not just rattle off everything that comes into their head when they hear the topic.
- It's even better if that clear, singular approach is original and different to the rest of the field.
- Students who descend into rambling just to make time won't be rewarded for it, but speakers who are well under time will also be disadvantaged.
- Remember that equal weight is given to the prepared and impromptu speeches in judging the Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition, so speakers should practice both equally.

In summary, while there's no formula for writing the perfect speech, most good speeches have a purpose, are sincere, are balanced, and are original and striking. Finally, speakers should remember that there'll be many more opportunities in public speaking as they continue through school, so they should focus on enjoying the competition and learning as much as possible rather than on winning. The adjudicators will be happy to give feedback at the end of the final, so make sure the speakers ask questions and pick up as many tips on their speeches as time allows. Good luck!