AGES 16-20

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION 2024

Guidance for Speakers

ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices

GUIDANCE FOR IPSC SPEAKERS

Prepared speeches

Note: The following is advice for speakers taking part in the IPSC itself, based on the IPSC criteria. While this advice will probably be useful for national competitions as well, please check the specific criteria of a national competition if you are a participant of a national competition or if you are an organiser/teacher that wishes to train participants for a national competition.

GETTING STARTED

Interpreting the theme

Speakers may interpret the theme in any way they wish, but may not use the theme as the title of their speech. Themes for the IPSC are deliberately broad and do not suggest any specific subject area. Speakers should avoid trying to second guess any notional 'intention' behind the theme (there is none!), and should choose a topic they want to speak on, rather than a topic they feel they should speak on.

Finally, speakers should remember that the audience and the adjudicators will be hearing approximately 50 speeches based around the same theme, so an original or creative interpretation of the theme, with an interesting or memorable speech title, is likely to be rewarded.

Choosing a topic and a title

Many speakers attempt to think of a title that is connected with the theme and then try to construct a speech around that title. It is usually much more effective to choose a topic that they want to write a speech about first (either something they already know a lot about or something they would like to learn more about), and then find a connection between that subject area and the theme. An interesting title is very often something that simply comes to the writer during the researching or writing process (or indeed after the speech has been constructed in its entirety).

Speakers should consider the following when choosing a topic:

Am I interested in the topic?

Speakers should never write a speech on a topic or subject area that they are not interested in. Enthusiasm is difficult to fabricate and without it speakers can't hope to maximise their marks under Expression and Delivery. Conversely, many speakers also try to avoid writing a speech on a topic or subject area that they have very detailed knowledge of, as the inability to get all their knowledge into a five-minute speech can be quite frustrating.

For those reasons, speakers often try to strike a balance between the two extremes; i.e. they choose a topic or subject area which they don't know a lot about but which they are interested in.

Will my topic capture the interest of the audience?

The audience and the adjudicators do not necessarily have to be interested in the speaker's topic to be persuaded by the speech. Speakers should try to make their speech more engaging by demonstrating the relevance of their arguments to the audience and the adjudicators (e.g. The allocation of government resources may seem like a boring topic to some audience members until one considers that the topic could be linked to the availability of teachers or hospital beds. Similarly, intellectual property law may be something that few people are interested in until one considers its link to illegal downloading.

Will I be able to research my topic effectively?

Speakers will need a certain amount of evidence to support their arguments and persuade the audience. The speaker's topic must be one which they can research effectively using the resources available to them (the school or university library, the local library, the internet etc.). Researching the topic area is important; not only for the speech itself, but for the question period when the speaker's background or ancillary knowledge of the issues is put to the test.

Will I be able to discuss my topic in the limited time available?

Some topics or subject areas are particularly obscure or otherwise unfamiliar and would require a significant amount of explanation to make the information accessible to the audience and the adjudicators.

For example, it would probably be impossible to convince an audience that 'The Meiji Restoration in Japan was unfair on the daimyos' in five minutes. The speaker would have to begin by outlining the state of Japan before the restoration, then explain what a daimyo is, and then present analysis of those two descriptions or explanations to prove that the daimyos suffered wrongly as a result of the restoration.

Any background, contextual or technical information required should not take up more than a few sentences of the speech. If such information requires elaborate explanation, speakers should consider refining their topic.

Brainstorming

Initial brainstorm

One way for speakers to decide on a topic is to write down as many words and ideas as they can think of that are connected with the theme in 60 seconds. Another method is to take individual words from the theme (or various different permutations), put them into a search engine (e.g. Google) and see what kind of results come back. A similar exercise involves taking individual words from the theme (or various different permutations) and putting them into an online dictionary or thesaurus. The resulting definitions, synonyms or antonyms may inspire an interesting idea for a speech.

Secondary brainstorm

Once the speaker has decided on a topic for the speech, it is useful to go back and brainstorm again; writing down all the words and ideas relating to that topic that come to mind in 5 minutes. This process will help the speaker to identify all the possible arguments which they may want to use in their speech. It will also help the speaker to decide how best to group those arguments. Finally, it will help the speaker identify arguments which they may not be able to use in the speech, but which may be useful when answering questions.

Research

Once the speaker has decided on a topic for the speech and has taken the time to think about all the possible angles or arguments, they should begin researching in more depth. Even where the speaker has prior knowledge of the topic, it is important for them to broaden their perspective as much as possible, and to ensure that the evidence and information they use in their speech is reliable and up-to-date.

Speakers should bear the following points in mind when researching their topic:

Different types of sources

Speakers should aim to utilise fact-based resources (e.g. encyclopaedias), academic resources (e.g. journals or reports) and opinion-based resources (e.g. newspapers or news websites).

Up-to-date information

Speakers should ensure that the information they are relying on to support their arguments is up-to-date. The internet (e.g. Google) is invaluable for checking that the information already obtained (e.g. a journal or newspaper article) is the most up-to-date information available.

Multiple sources

Speakers should aim, where possible, to have more than one source of evidence, particularly where statistics are involved. It is generally unwise for a speaker to allow one piece of evidence, from one source, to underpin an entire argument in their speech.

Anecdotal evidence

Anecdotal evidence (personal stories, myths, memories etc.) is generally unpersuasive, as it usually lacks clarity, certainty and universal applicability. However, depending on the nature of the speech and the style of the speaker, anecdotal evidence can sometimes be used to great effect (particularly if the speaker's primary goal is to entertain or inspire empathy in the audience; anecdotal evidence can be used to demonstrate the human dimension of an issue).

KEY ELEMENTS

Expression and Delivery

35 MARKS

What is the purpose of the speech?

There are many different types of public speaker — politicians, school teachers, university professors, comedians, TV and radio presenters etc. It follows that there are many different types of public speech — a wedding speech, a business presentation, a protest speech; the list goes on.

The purpose of the speech (or the purpose of the speaker) is what distinguishes one type of public speech from another. A politician seeks to persuade the voters. A school teacher or a university professor seeks to inform and inspire their students. A comedian seeks to entertain the audience.

In a competitive context, speakers should always approach their task of speech writing with a clear purpose in mind. Good speeches should attempt to do all four — persuade, inform, inspire and entertain the audience and the adjudicators.

Make an impact from the start!

First impressions are important. The audience and the adjudicators are at their most attentive at the very beginning of the speech. It is crucial to grab their attention from the very start with a confident and flawless opening.

Compare the opening lines of this speech: "Ladies and Gentlemen, today I will speak to you about global warming, caused by carbon emissions. I will show how the rise in global temperatures will lead to floods, droughts and food shortages in certain areas, as well as disruption to the ecosystem and civil unrest. I will then go on to tell you what can be done to prevent these effects from occurring."

With the opening lines of this speech: "Floods. Plagues. Famine. Death. War. Destruction on a global scale. No, Ladies and Gentlemen, not biblical prophecies, not scenes from a Hollywood disaster movie; but predictions for the real world in our lifetime if we continue to pump poisonous carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. By the end of this speech, I will have proven to you how crucial a role we all have to play in avoiding this doomsday scenario. Because this time, it's fact. Not fiction."

The two opening paragraphs convey the same basic information (the audience and the adjudicators know the general theme of the speech, and that a problem is going to be outlined and a solution proposed). However, whereas the former paragraph is measured and dispassionate, the latter is dramatic and conveys a sense of urgency. An excellent way to grab the attention of an audience or an adjudication panel is to make the speech relevant to them (i.e. "how crucial a role we all have to play"). The use of single words or very short sentences at the start of a speech (i.e. "Death. War. Destruction on a global scale.") makes for a dramatic opening (a shocking statistic or quote can have a similar effect). Note also the use of alliteration for emphasis (i.e. pump/poisonous and fact/fiction), the use of powerful or dramatic language (e.g. doomsday scenario), and the contrast between long and short sentences (i.e. the short sentence fragments at the start of the paragraph, then two long sentences, then two short sentences at the end; punctuating the end of a dramatic opening).

An opening that conveys a sense of humour or sorrow (or another emotion) can also be effective. The most effective type of opening will be determined by the subject matter of the speech and the speaking style of the speaker.

Similar emphasis should be put on the conclusion of the speech. It should link back to the opening of the speech (e.g. the problems that were identified, the questions that were posed etc.). All the techniques identified above (and much, much more) may be used to help a speaker to achieve a dramatic or otherwise memorable conclusion. It is often effective, at the end of a speech, to finish with a rhetorical question (something for the audience to ponder during the applause!).

Verbal skills

Speakers should remember that delivering a speech is not like reading an essay. If the reader of an essay misses a line or misunderstands a phrase, they can go back and re-read it. If a person listening to a speech misses a line or a phrase, they don't get an opportunity to hear it a second time (often resulting in a loss of continuity for that listener and the loss of that listener's attention for the speaker). For that reason, when giving a public speech, it is imperative that speakers speak slowly, clearly and loudly. This will help to ensure that the audience and the adjudicators hear every word, and can comprehend what is being said as they are listening.

Speakers should also attempt to vary their pitch and tone of voice, as well as the pace of their speech (where appropriate). These variations help to keep the audience and the adjudicators alert, and help the speaker to maintain their attention for the full five minutes of the speech.

Pauses can also be extremely effective. Two or three well-timed pauses can effectively juxtapose five minutes of constant speaking, and can be used to emphasise an important point or signal the transition from one section of the speech to another. The use of particular language in conjunction with the use of pauses can also be very effective (e.g. "that was followed by a pregnant pause" or
"the silence was deafening").

Non-verbal skills

Much of a speaker's communication is non-verbal. For that reason, public speakers must be conscious of their body language if they are to engage the audience and the adjudicators. 'Open' gestures (which help to engage the audience) include facing the audience, and using hands and arms freely to demonstrate, emphasise or otherwise support the words being spoken. By contrast, 'closed' gestures (which often disengage the audience) include the speaker folding their arms, facing away from the audience or hanging their head.

The use of facial expression and eye contact are both related to good body language, but are uniquely important. If the audience and the adjudicators are to be persuaded or inspired by a public speech they must feel engaged by the speaker and must feel like the speaker is speaking directly to them. As a general point, speakers should smile; but facial expression may also be used to mirror the message or emotion being conveyed by the speech (e.g. a humorous quote, a shocking statistic, a sorrowful narrative etc.), adding a sense of sincerity or truth to the words being spoken. Eye contact is another important way for speakers to engage with the audience and the adjudicators, and convince them of their confidence and their credibility.

Movement is another technique which public speakers use to keep the audience and the adjudicators alert. Similar the effect of changing your pace or tone of voice, or the use of pauses, physically moving your body during your speech has the effect of varying what the audience is hearing and seeing, which helps to maintain their attention. The use of movement can be particularly effective at certain points in the speech (e.g. taking a step forward when transitioning from one section of the speech to another) or when used in conjunction with particular language (e.g. physically taking a step back and saying "let's take a step back and look at the historical context of this issue"). Finally, the freedom to move allows the speaker to see every audience member, which is particularly important when trying to maintain eye contact in a large room.

Linguistic skills

Speakers should ensure that their use of vocabulary is consistent (i.e. avoid using multiple words interchangeably to convey the same meaning, as this may lead to confusion). Speakers should also aim to ensure that the intended meaning is conveyed by the words they choose. English is full of synonyms (i.e. two or more different words that refer to the same object or concept). Different words, used in different contexts, often conjure up slightly different versions of the same idea. It is useful to examine the use of a word in the media to appreciate the full implications of its use (e.g. Does the US government refer to insurgents as "freedom fighters" or "terrorists?" Do animal rights campaigners refer to cattle farmers as "agricultural workers" or "murderers?").

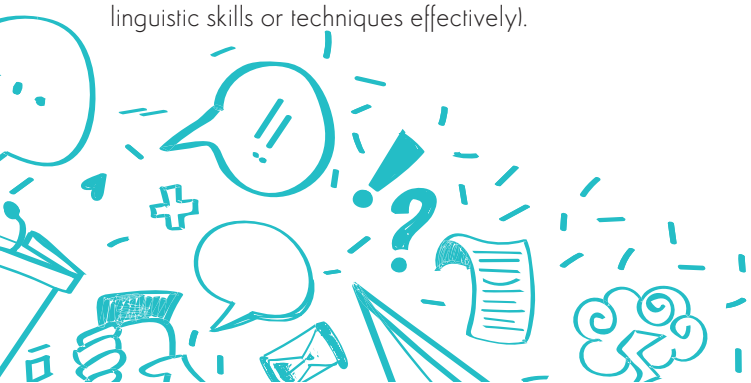
Speakers should also avoid the use of colloquialisms or slang, not because of any perceived lack of formality; but because audiences at the IPSC will usually be representative of over 50 countries and to use colloquialisms or slang would be to run the risk of excluding certain audience members from the intended meaning. In a similar vein, speakers should resist the temptation to use overly lofty or ornate language, which often undermines the clarity of the speech. When trying to communicate an idea to a large group of people, it often helps to keep the language simple and clear.

Speakers who have spent a lot of time researching for their speech will probably be very familiar with the surrounding issues, as well as background or ancillary subject matter. However, speakers should bear in mind that most audience members will not have their level of specialist knowledge on the issue and should therefore avoid the use of technical, specialist or abbreviated jargon or other unfamiliar terminology (without explanation).

Finally, the IPSC is a public speaking competition which is conducted through the medium of the English language. However, it is not an English language exam. Speakers are not penalised under Expression and Delivery (or under any other section of the marking scheme) for occasional grammatical errors, mispronunciations etc.

Confidence and style

Confidence and style are at the core of effective expression and delivery. Speakers feel more confident, and exude that confidence when delivering their speeches, by following the tips discussed above (having a clear purpose or goal, making an impact from the start with a dramatic or otherwise memorable opening, and using verbal, non-verbal and linguistic skills or techniques effectively).



A good way to practice projecting confidence is for public speakers to record themselves delivering their speech (audio-visual recording and in front of an audience, if possible). This allows speakers to go back and assess their own strengths and weaknesses under the sub-categories identified above. It also allows the speaker to assess the sections of the speech to which the audience reacted positively, and those they did not (and the effect that those reactions had on the speaker's performance and confidence during the speech).

Once speakers have mastered the art of projecting confidence when speaking in public, developing a speaking style comes next. A compelling speaking style is what makes a speaker unique (and what maximises their marks under Expression and Delivery!). Some speakers have an emotive speaking style, and feel most comfortable persuading the audience of important social, economic or global issues (e.g. environmental issues, political issues, humanitarian issues etc.). For such speakers, an ability to convey passion and emotion is a huge strength.

Other speakers have a witty, light-hearted or humorous speaking style and feel most comfortable when entertaining the audience; often delving into satire and using rhetorical devices such as sarcasm and irony to great effect. Light-hearted speakers often prefer to use narratives to communicate their ideas, rather than structured arguments supported empirical evidence. Both methods of illustration can be effective, depending on the subject matter of the speech and the natural style of the speaker.

The following are a few additional tips to enhance confidence and style: speakers should (1) know the opening lines of their speech off by heart, (2) take a few deep breaths before they speak, (3) avoid wearing uncomfortable or distracting clothing or jewellery, (4) take a drink of water before they start to speak and have a glass or bottle of water with them during their speech and (5) remain calm if they slip or stumble over a word or lose their position in their speech — pause, take a drink of water and continue.

A note on notes

Using notes effectively (or ineffectively as the case may be) is often what makes or breaks a good public speech. Most people who speak in public as part of their professional life (e.g. politicians, university professors etc.) usually rely on notes, palm cards, Teleprompters, PowerPoint slides etc., to a certain extent. It follows, therefore, that in the context of a public speaking competition, it is entirely appropriate (and indeed expected) for speakers to have some notes.

The key is striking the right balance between, on the one hand, being entirely reliant on notes (i.e. reading the speech from a piece of paper and failing to make eye contact with or engage the audience in any other way), and on the other hand, not relying on notes at all (i.e. reciting a speech, which has been learnt by heart, for the thirtieth time and sounding over-rehearsed or bored with the speech).

Rather than writing out their speech in full and learning it by heart, speakers are advised only to write out the structure of their speech (see the section on structure below). Speakers should know their introduction and conclusion very well (i.e. learnt by heart), and should know the progression of the points in the main body of the speech well (but not learnt by heart). Speakers should use their notes (while they are speaking) to remind themselves of the structure of their speech and the progression of the points within the main body of their speech, so that they can construct each individual sentence and argument afresh every time they deliver the speech. This allows the speech to retain a sense of novelty and reality each time it is delivered. It also ensures that when the speaker is speaking, their engagement is with their ideas and with the audience; not with a collection of words that have been committed to memory in a particular sequence.

Reasoning and Evidence

35 MARKS

Statement of intent

Providing the audience and the adjudicators with a statement of intent at the start of the speech lets them know what the speaker is trying to achieve with their speech, what the targets are etc. The statement of intent also gives the audience and the adjudicators a glimpse of the content or subject matter of each section of the speech.

For example, consider the following statement of intent: "Ladies and gentlemen, by the end of my speech I hope to have convinced you, not only that global poverty must be eradicated, but that it is a goal which is achievable in our life time, and that we have a responsibility to strive for the achievement of that goal."

Note the three targets outlined in the statement of intent: (1) to prove that global poverty must be eradicated, (2) to prove that global poverty can be eradicated in our lifetime and (3) to prove that we have a responsibility to eradicate global poverty. Note also the insight into the content of the three sections of the speech provided by the speaker (e.g. in the first section the speaker will provide some evidence that demonstrates the extent of the problem, in the second section the speaker will propose solutions to the problem, and in the third section the speaker will discuss the principled and practical reasons why we must solve the problem).

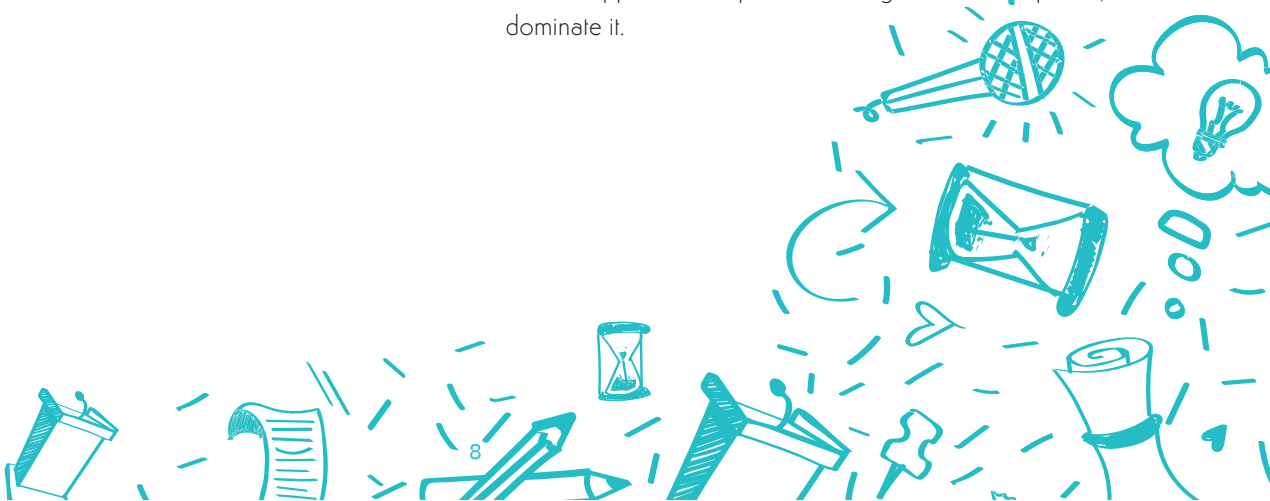
Using empirical evidence

There are various different types of evidence which a speaker may use in support of an argument in their speech — statistics from academic or scientific reports, statistics from newspapers or websites, quotations from academic journals or reports, quotations from newspapers or websites etc.

However, any empirical evidence used in support of an argument should (1) have a reliable source, (2) be up-to-date and (3) be relevant to the speech. Irrelevant evidence, evidence that comes from an unreliable source, or evidence that is out-of-date will inevitably undermine the credibility of the argument and the speaker.

Speakers should avoid using too much empirical evidence. Speeches that contain large amounts of facts and figures or lengthy quotations are unlikely to be particularly persuasive, because the audience and the adjudicators are unable to absorb large amounts of statistics, large excerpts from reports etc.

Speakers should also remember that simply stating the evidence is not a substitute for explaining their arguments logically, providing the audience with certain pieces of evidence in support of those arguments, and analyse the evidence to demonstrate how or why it supports the overall thesis of the speech. Ultimately, any empirical evidence used should support or complement an argument in the speech, not dominate it.



Using examples and analogies

An argument does not always have to be supported by facts, figures, quotations etc. Arguments can also be supported by analogies or examples of things which people know to be true under the status quo (i.e. without reference to statistics or quotations from credible sources to demonstrate or prove the truth of the example).

For example, in a speech proposing to legalise the sale, distribution and consumption of marijuana (in a country where it was previously illegal), rather than citing statistics from scientific reports or quotations from academic articles, the speaker could support their arguments by reference to another country where the sale, distribution and consumption of marijuana is already legal (e.g. the Netherlands). Similarly, rather than spending a lot of time justifying age limits or explaining an intricate licensing system, the speaker could simply support their arguments by reference to an analogous system in the same country (i.e. the age limits and licensing system applicable to the sale of tobacco in that country).

Arguments supported by analogies or examples, which most people accept as true under the status quo, are often even more persuasive than arguments supported by statistics or quotations, the sources of which many people may be unfamiliar with.

Using reasoned analysis and logic

Whether or not an argument is supported by evidence, examples or analogies, the audience and the adjudicators must be given some analysis explaining why what the speaker is saying is true and why what the speaker is saying supports the overall thesis of the speech.

When making an argument, speakers should try to avoid making assertions, assumptions or other errors in logic. Evidence, analogies, examples or other facts should be presented in a logical order such that they support the argument being made and lead to an obvious or logical conclusion. Crucially, each statement of fact or opinion should follow logically from the previous one and support the overall argument. Speakers should avoid presenting a series of seemingly disconnected statements.

For example, a good deductive argument goes:

1. All men are mortal.
2. Socrates was a man.
3. Therefore, Socrates was mortal.

Whereas, a bad deductive argument goes:

1. All men are mortal.
2. Socrates was a man.
3. Therefore, all men are like Socrates.

Dealing with conflicting evidence and opinions

Most speakers try to give speeches on issues which are topical and interesting. Many of those issues will be unresolved or debatable. There will be arguments on both sides. During research, speakers will discover evidence or other information which does not support the conclusion of their speech or with which they disagree.

This evidence or information should not be ignored! An interesting speaker will invariably make statements which are bold or controversial. A brave speaker will acknowledge the existence of evidence or opinion contrary to the conclusion of their own speech and utilise their persuasive skills and their own evidence to persuade the audience of their credibility and the truth of their own arguments.

There are a number of ways to challenge or undermine pieces of evidence or information which support a conclusion contrary to that presented in the speech.

The speaker may argue that the evidence is out-of-date or that the source of the evidence is unreliable (e.g. blogs by unknown persons are usually unreliable, as is anecdotal evidence generally). The speaker may argue that the evidence is irrelevant (e.g. because it relates to a specific country or a specific set of circumstances not applicable to the speech). The speaker may also argue that the evidence fails to take account of other issues (e.g. unavoidable practical obstacles may negate the possibility of implementing a solution to a problem which is sound in principle).

It is important to remember that audiences aren't passive. They are made up of people who also have opinions about the things they see and hear in the world around them. Ultimately, an audience is more likely to be persuaded by a speaker who understands and has engaged with both sides of an argument, but can still justify their stance on one side or the other.

Credibility is key!

Credibility is an important part of public speaking.

This doesn't mean being the most knowledgeable or qualified person in the room; it means presenting strong, logical arguments in support of your position (remember that the audience and the adjudicators probably won't have detailed knowledge or experience of the issues relevant to the speech either).

Just as mastering all the elements of Expression and Delivery leads to a confident speaker; mastering all the elements of Reasoning and Evidence leads to a credible speaker.

Organisation and Prioritisation

15 MARKS

Why structure is important

An audience is made up of people. An adjudication panel is made up of people. Most people have relatively short attention spans. For that reason, if a speaker stands up, starts speaking and continues to speak constantly for five minutes, most people (including audiences and adjudicators) will tune out after about 2 minutes.

Public speakers' use structure to help maintain their listeners' attention. By telling the audience and the adjudicators at the start what they can expect to hear, presenting the arguments in order of priority, gravity or importance, and reiterating what they have heard at the end, the speaker gives their speech a sense of symmetry or unity and compounds the arguments in the minds of the audience and the adjudicators.

Structure can also be used by speakers to make their speech more interesting (and therefore easier to follow). For example, many speakers group their points or arguments into categories at the start of their speech (e.g. principled arguments and practical arguments). Another example is when speakers give each group of points or arguments a label which is part of a theme that runs right throughout the speech (e.g. the theme of the speech is "the passage of time" and the three points are labelled "past" "present" and "future" or the theme of the speech is "questions answered" and the three points are labelled "what," when," and "how.").

Using structure creatively (e.g. by categorising arguments in an interesting way or by giving the structure a theme) allows the speaker to incorporate their own speaking style into their structure and maximise their marks under Organisation and Prioritisation.

The outline of a typical speech

Introduction — The speaker should tell the audience who they are, what they are speaking about, why, and what they want to have achieved or proven by the end of the speech. A map of the main points in the speech should be provided. Each point should be given a label (see above) and perhaps a brief explanation of what will be analysed.

Main Arguments — The speaker should then move onto to the main points of the speech, remembering to deal with each point in order of priority (in the same order they were listed in the introduction), and remembering to signal to the audience when they are moving from one point to the next (this is signposting or flagging).

Conclusion — The speaker should tie together all the main points of the speech at the end, remembering to refer back to the introduction (in particular, to any specific targets or goals that the speaker intended to achieve or prove). The conclusion should not be a simple re-statement of the speech; rather, it should be a comprehensive but succinct summary of all the main strands of the speech in support of the overall thesis of the speech.

NB: The outline described above is just one way of structuring a speech. Speakers will not lose marks under Organisation or Prioritisation just because they structure their speech or organise their points in a slightly different manner to the one presented above. In particular, the structure outlined above is not always suitable for speakers who prefer to use a narrative as a method of illustration. Crucially, the speech must be easy for the audience and the adjudicators to follow and understand. Speakers who achieve that aim in an interesting way will receive good marks under Organisation and Prioritisation.

Using notes effectively

Having a speech that is well structured makes it much easier for speakers to make their notes and refer to their notes during the speech. Some speakers prefer to use palm cards or cue cards and other speakers prefer to use sheets of paper. Either approach is acceptable and both have their advantages and disadvantages.

Speakers who use palm cards or cue cards can have one colour card for their introduction or opening statement (which they will usually write out in full, particularly if it contains a quotation or a statistic), another two or three colours for the two or three main points of their speech (usually speakers will not write out the arguments in the main sections in full but will have key words to remind them of the progression of their arguments, as well as any statistics or quotations in support of those arguments), and another colour card for their conclusion or summary (which, again, should contain all the main strands of the speech and may be written out in full, particularly if it contains a quotation or a statistic).

Speakers who use sheets of paper can have three sheets of paper, one for each of the main sections of their speech. The title of each sheet of paper could be the title (or 'label') of that section. Speakers could also have another sheet of paper with the text of the introduction and/or conclusion written out in full.

The advantage of palm or cue cards is that they are generally smaller than sheets of paper, making it easier for speakers to hold the cards in one hand while still having the freedom to move and gesture with ease. The disadvantage of using cards is that they may get mixed up resulting in the speaker losing their position in the speech (colour coding or numbering cards helps to avoid this). The advantage of using sheets of paper is that the speaker can put more supporting information on the sheet if they wish, and all the information pertaining to one argument is available to the speaker, on one sheet, at a glance. The disadvantage of using sheets of paper is that they can be cumbersome and distracting, making it more difficult for the speaker to move and gesticulate easily.

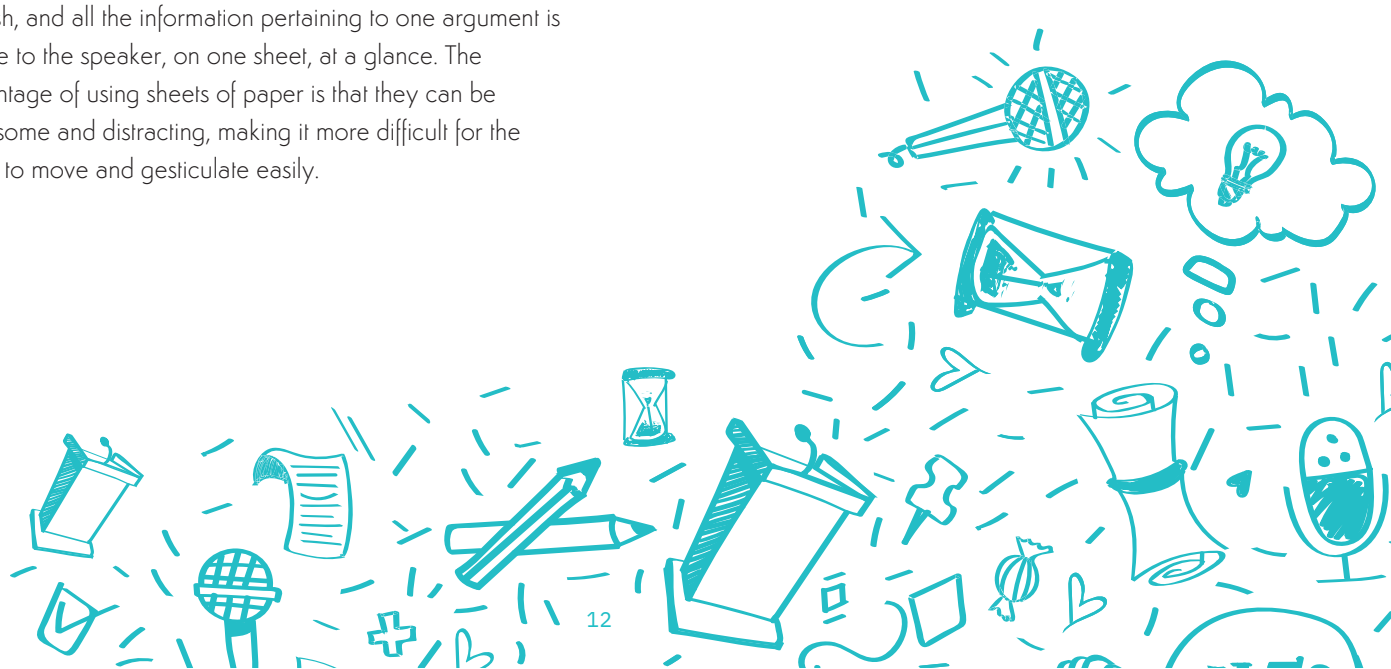
Timing

Timing goes hand-in-hand with structure and notes. Once a speaker has established a good structure for their speech and has found the method of using notes which works best for them, it's important to practice delivering the speech within the five minutes allowed.

A good speaker will know exactly how long they are going to spend on each section of their speech (i.e. introduction, main sections and conclusion). Some speakers will write timings on each card or sheet of paper so that they know when they have to move on to the next section. Speakers should try to ensure that they spend a similar amount of time on sections of the speech of similar importance (i.e. if a speaker identifies two important points that they want to cover in their introduction and then spends 3 minutes on the first point and 30 seconds on the second point, the adjudicators will assume that the speaker simply ran out of time for the second point — which suggests insufficient preparation).

Speakers should practice speaking for one minute, two minutes, three minutes etc., so that they know what it feels like to speak for different blocks of time and how much information they are able to cover in those blocks of time (speakers should also remember to speak extra slowly when practicing, to train themselves to speak slowly during the competition).

Finally, there will be a timekeeper at all stages of the competition, who will give audible signals to indicate how much time has elapsed. However, it is entirely appropriate for speakers to have a stopwatch or another electronic timing device with them when they get up to speak.



Listening and Response

15 MARKS

Answering Questions

Most public speakers have to justify the arguments made in their speech at some stage (e.g. school teachers, university professors, politicians etc.). The question period after the speech is designed to test the speaker's knowledge of the surrounding issues, as well as their ability to listen and respond to questions, justifying the position they have taken in their speech.

As part of their preparation, speakers should have considered alternative points of view to those presented in their speech and considered how best to respond to those alternative points of view if presented in the form of a question (questions from the audience and the adjudicators are generally not combative — this is not a debating competition — but speakers may be asked to justify their views).

Speakers should always listen to the question that is actually asked and avoid giving prepared answers to anticipated questions. Speakers frequently have questions put to them which they did not anticipate. Speakers should start thinking about the answer as the question is being put to them (while remembering to listen all the way to the end), but should never answer the question immediately after it has been asked. It is important to pause for a moment or two, consider again the question that was actually asked, and make sure that the answer being given is relevant to that question.

When answering questions, speakers should avoid re-stating sections of their speech verbatim. The question period is a great opportunity for speakers to demonstrate extra knowledge (perhaps an extra piece of evidence that there wasn't room to include in the speech). However, answers should always be relevant to the question asked and ultimately support the position taken in the speech.

Questions from the audience are often lengthy and convoluted, which can make it difficult to establish what the audience member or adjudicator is actually asking. Speakers should take a moment to try and break down what the questioner has said in their head. Speakers should also be willing to ask the questioner to repeat the question in a shorter or simpler form if necessary (if the speaker didn't understand the question, there's a good chance that at least some other audience members or adjudicators didn't understand it either!).

The question period only last for 3-4 minutes. Speakers should not feel obliged to give lengthy answers to questions, even where the question itself was lengthy or convoluted. The best answers to questions are usually brief, succinct and to the point. Lengthy answers often lose the attention of the audience and the adjudicators.

Finally, all the tips that are given under Expression and Delivery (above) apply to the question period exactly as they apply to the speech. It's important to continue to use body language and eye contact etc. effectively during the question period, and maintain confidence generally. Speakers may be asked to justify their position during the question period, but should avoid becoming defensive or entering into a debate with a particular questioner.