

DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

LISTENING SECTION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Wednesday, June 18, 2003—9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

BE SURE THAT THE LISTENING SECTION IS ADMINISTERED TO EVERY STUDENT.

- 1 Before the start of the examination period, say:

Do not open the examination booklet until you are instructed to do so.

- 2 Distribute one examination booklet and one essay booklet to each student.

- 3 After each student has received an examination booklet and an essay booklet, say:

Tear off the answer sheet, which is the last page of the examination booklet, and fill in its heading. Now circle “Session One” and fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet.

- 4 After the students have filled in all headings on their answer sheets and essay booklets, say:

Look at page 2 of your examination booklet and follow along while I read the **Overview** and **The Situation**.

Overview:

For this part of the test, you will listen to a speech about effective speechwriting, answer some multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You will hear the speech twice. You may take notes on the next page anytime you wish during the readings.

The Situation:

Your English class intends to publish a handbook for incoming freshmen, advising them on skills needed for high school. Your assignment is to write an article on techniques for effective speechwriting. In preparation for writing your article, listen to a speech by Jane Tully, a professional speechwriter. Then use relevant information from the speech to write your article.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.

- 5 Now read the passage aloud with appropriate expression, but without added comment.

Listening Passage

...You see, I have a theory that giving a speech is a lot like giving a party. You, the audience, are the invited guests. As the speaker, I am the host—at least for the moment. The speech I am delivering to you is like a meal. I want it to be nourishing food for thought - full of substance, with interesting ideas for you to chew on. I want to present it in a way that's appealing, so you'll be eager to take in my ideas. And like a good meal, I want my speech to be appropriate for this particular occasion.

If you think of a speech that way, then where does the speechwriter fit in? Actually, I like to think of myself as a kind of verbal caterer. You call on professionals like me when you don't have the time or expertise to do the job yourself, or when you have a special occasion and you want that extra something that will really make your speech stand out...

So in my role as caterer, I'd like to take this opportunity to share my basic recipe for a successful presentation. Follow this easy three-step recipe and you can't go wrong:

- Know who's coming to the party,
- Use only the best ingredients, and
- Focus on the main course.

First, know who's coming....

What do we need to know about audiences? Size, for one thing. This is important because smaller audiences pay closer attention. When a group is small, the speaker can easily maintain eye contact and hold people's attention. The larger the audience, the easier it is for listeners to feel anonymous and to drift off, so a speaker has to offer more entertainment value. With large convention-sized audiences of hundreds, or even thousands of people, this is essential: bring in audiovisual support whenever you can; add stories and humor. Keep it moving, and keep it short, or you'll lose them.

To the extent that it's possible, speechwriters also want to know the age range of the audience. Will it be a group of seniors, or young professionals, or students—or a mixed group? This affects the kinds of stories, humor, and other support material we will choose to make the speaker's points. Because so much of humor comes out of life experience, the jokes Grandma enjoys may fall completely flat with your teenage son. If your audience includes a wide range of ages, you need to find humor that has a very broad appeal.

This is also true for any examples from history. A number of years ago, a friend of mine was once asked to speak to a church youth group on the subject of war and whether or not it is ever justified. He started by telling about how he had felt, as a senior in college at the height of the Vietnam War, when his draft notice arrived in the mail. A young man in the group interrupted him to say, "Oh, yeah, Vietnam. We read about that in history last week."

My friend was barely 30 at the time, and he said he had never felt so old in all his life! But it was an important lesson for him as a speaker: never assume that your audience shares your experience or knowledge of history, and be sure to give your illustrations the historical context they need—especially if you are speaking to a younger audience.

Speechwriters also want to know what the gender mix of an audience will be. Will there be more men than women, or vice versa? Again, this information affects the kinds of illustrations we choose. One of my clients, a product sales manager at Citibank, recently gave a speech to pump up a group of brokers who were being asked to meet some new revenue goals. We used a story featuring the retired Notre Dame coach Lou Holtz. The story ends with a great one-liner about a quarterback who runs 85 yards to score a winning goal. The speaker delivered it beautifully, and he got a big laugh--the vast majority of his listeners were men. It was perfect for that group, but if the audience had been more mixed, I probably would have used something different.

For the speech I'm delivering to you, I actually had to think twice about my food image. At first I thought the comparison might be a little too domestic for an audience of professional women. But after giving it some thought, I decided that since so many of the world's great chefs are men, and since we all have to eat, this image can work for both male and female audiences. My point is that it was important for me to go through the process of thinking about the gender of this audience and how that could affect the way you receive my ideas....

So ... know who's coming to the party.

Second, use only the best ingredients. When I give a dinner party, I like to experiment with recipes that have an exotic twist--like a special ingredient I can't get down the street--maybe something I'll only find at Balducci's [gourmet food store] or the green market. The shopping is fun and interesting, and the new ingredient gives a special flavor to the whole meal.

The same is true with researching a speech. It's fun because I'm always learning something new. I have learned that it's worth going out of my way to find a little known fact or two that can help make the speech memorable. A National Geographic Society executive was once asked to accept an award on behalf of the Society from the Leukemia Society of America. In researching his remarks, I learned about a small periwinkle that grows in the tropical rainforest. This little flower is the source of the medication that saves the lives of 95 percent of the children who contract childhood leukemia. With that fact, the speaker was able to relate National Geographic's interest in saving the environment to the life-saving work of the Leukemia Society. The extra effort it took to find that little tidbit of information was really worth it.

Once you have the information you need for a speech, spice it up! A speechwriting guide called *American Speaker* points out that "Good quotes in a speech, like good seasoning in a stew, are meant to add zest without detracting from the essential nature of the dish and its basic ingredients." That's true not only of quotes, but of anecdotes and humor as well. These elements must add something to the speech, not detract from it. I think most audiences are impatient with speakers who start out with a belly laugh, then take off in an entirely different direction.

Not only is this annoying, but what a waste of a good story! The whole reason for telling stories in your speech is to help people pay closer attention and remember your ideas. So make sure your illustrations relate to your message, and make the connection clear for the audience....

Your audience will enjoy the story, but more than that, they'll enjoy the way you use it to reinforce your message.

So... know who's coming to the party, use only the best ingredients, and third, focus on the main course. Every great meal has a great main course, a piece de resistance. And every successful speech has a main focus, a central idea that listeners can take home. This is the concept that pulls the whole speech together and helps your audience remember your supporting points....

At the beginning of the speechwriting process, many speakers aren't sure how to focus their messages. At this stage, it's important to ask, "If your audience remembered only one thing, what would you want it to be?" The answer is often a range of choices....

Having a focus not only helps tie the speech together, it helps answer what I consider to be the most important question in speechwriting: "What should I leave out?" Usually the answer is, "Much - even most of the material I've found." If the idea or example doesn't support your main point in some way, drop it, no matter how fascinating it is. Save it for another speech.

This will help you keep the speech to 20 minutes or so. That's important, because most audiences begin losing concentration after that amount of time. If you're asked to speak for longer than that, find ways to break it up, perhaps with Q&A, slides, a video, or some kind of interactive exercise. Remember: a speech is like a meal. We can only eat so much at one sitting, and we can only hear so much at one sitting. Mark Twain said that few sinners are saved after the first 20 minutes of a sermon. That's true of just about any oral presentation. So keep it short.

Then you can think of the Q&A as a kind of dessert. Leave room for it, and time. You don't want your listeners to feel like that grand old lady who died during dinner. She was the sister of an 18th century French writer named Brillat-Savarin, and she expired at the table one night just before her 100th birthday. Her last words were, "Bring on the dessert. I think I'm about to die."

— excerpted from "Speeches That Satisfy"
Executive Speeches, June/July 1997

6 After reading the passage aloud once, say:

You may take a few minutes to look over **The Situation** and your notes.
(Pause) Now I will read the passage aloud a second time.

7 Read the passage a second time.

8 After the second reading, say:

Now turn to page 4 of your examination booklet, read the directions, and answer the multiple-choice questions. Be sure to follow all the directions given in your examination booklet and your essay booklet. You may now begin.