

What to Say When Speaking in Public

The student of public speaking will do well to confine his first efforts to simple forms of speech-making. Plain narrative and clear statement of fact should be his primary objects. The ornamental graces of rhetoric and oratory may advantageously be left for subsequent consideration.

His subject may be anything from a personal experience, such as a visit to New York or London, to a discussion of some social or political question of the day. But whatever theme he choose to speak upon, it is important that it be timely and of probable interest to his hearers. The highest oratorical talents will not atone for an inappropriate choice of subject. There are hundreds of vital topics, in which most men are more or less interested. A selection may be made from these:

The Unemployed.

Woman Suffrage.

Convict Labor.

Sunday Closing.

Capital Punishment.

Coeducation.

Restricted Immigration.

The Theater.

Aerial Navigation.

Crime and Poverty.

Life Insurance.

Child Labor.

Vivisection.

Trial by Jury.

Free Trade.

Gambling.

Universal Peace.

The Negro.

Strikes.

Anarchy.

Bimetallism.

Free Will.

Degeneration.

Vegetarianism.

The Press.

Suicide.

Cremation.

Divorce.

Imperialism.

Trusts.

Socialism.

Pensions.

Evolution.

Opportunity.

Prohibition.

Success.

Before attempting to write speeches of his own, the student will find it profitable to examine those of others, a good selection of which is provided in this volume. Cicero says:

Since, all the business and art of an orator is divided into five parts, he ought first to find out what he should say; next, to arrange and dispose his matter, not only in a certain order, but with a sort of power and judgment; then to clothe and deck his thoughts with language; then to secure them in his memory; and lastly, to deliver them with dignity and grace. I had learned and understood also that before we enter upon the main subject, the

minds of the audience should be conciliated by an exordium; next, that the case should be clearly stated; then, that the point in controversy should be established; then, that what we may maintain should be supported by proof, and that whatever was said on the other side should be refuted; and that, in the conclusion of our speech, whatever was in our favor should be amplified and enforced, and whatever made for our adversaries should be weakened and invalidated.

The mind once fixt upon a subject, that subject becomes a point of attraction, and material gathers around it with surprizing rapidity. These spontaneous thoughts should be committed immediately to paper, and only after the student has exhausted the natural resources of his mind should he have recourse to books. It is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules as to the choice of books, but in a general way the young speaker will be well advised if he confines himself to those which have stood the test of time.

It may be said in passing that the frequent and regular reading of standard books is not only useful for storing the mind with information, but is an essential part of practical training in extempore speaking. If much of this reading is done aloud, the results will be all the better, since many words and phrases will in this manner be actually fitted to the speaker's mouth and made ready for instant use. Probably no exercise develops as this does the faculty of ready utterance. History, biography, philosophy, science, poetry and fiction should be laid under tribute, and each made to render its share toward forming the student's speaking style.

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About the Author

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