

That's your speech for one of the next Toastmasters meetings!

choose a topic you like – prepare a presentation following the speech objectives – tell the Toastmasters of the Day what you need (equipment, introduction) – present it within the time frame

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At some time you will be called upon to speak in praise of someone – perhaps at a retirement banquet, anniversary celebration, or the funeral of a friend or family member. The most successful speeches of praise are inspirational, pointing out the meaning of another person's life and relating that meaning to our own lives. Talk about the individual and his or her accomplishments, including the qualities that made the person worthy of praise and the lessons we may learn from the person.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare a speech praising or honoring someone, either living or dead.
- ▶ Address five areas concerning the individual and his/her accomplishments.
- ▶ Include anecdotes illustrating points within the speech.

Time: Five to seven minutes

SPEAKING IN PRAISE

As you continue to grow and develop your speaking abilities as a Toastmaster, it is more than likely that you will be called to speak at special functions or during certain occasions. Next month's banquet honoring a retiring co-worker, for example, will require someone to stand and say a few words. Or you may be asked to speak at an anniversary or birthday party, or perhaps at the funeral of a friend or family member.

These types of speeches generally require you to speak in praise of the individual being honored by reviewing their positive qualities and characteristics. Such speeches are sometimes referred to as eulogies and can be difficult to deliver, particularly if the situation involves loss. A funeral is by nature an emotionally draining event; speaking about a recently departed loved one can intensify these emotions and cause even the most experienced Toastmaster to lose confidence and poise. Likewise, a farewell party, retirement banquet, or anniversary or birthday party are potentially sentimental events that can make presentations difficult.

DIFFERENT METHODS

The most successful speeches of praise are inspirational. They point out the meaning of another person's life and relate that meaning to our own lives. This can be accomplished in one of two ways.

When using a biographical approach, the speaker mentions the major influential events of the individual's life in chronological order, discussing how each event shaped that person's life. The danger in this approach, of course, is that the speech may become too much of a biographical sketch, with a dull, lengthy recitation of facts.

In the second method, the speaker selects one or two specific attributes that best describe the individual and then elaborates on those attributes. For example, if the individual

had a developmentally disabled child, was concerned about the lack of community facilities and programs for the disadvantaged, and worked to start a community program for disabled children, you could discuss this concern for disabled children, the contributions the individual made that improved the situation in the community unit, obstacles that were overcome, and the individual's place in community history.

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SELECTING MATERIAL

Whatever approach you choose in selecting material for the speech, remember to personalize it. Talk about the individual and his or her accomplishments, including:

- ▶ the qualities that make or made the individual great or worthy of praise
- ▶ the individual's source of power or inspiration
- ▶ the debt we owe the individual
- ▶ the inspiration we may receive or the lessons we may learn from the individual
- ▶ the individual's place in history

Illustrate these points with personal stories of events you may have witnessed that demonstrated such qualities as wisdom, concern, or sense of humor. Be honest and sincere. But avoid dissembling. Instead, use the person's idiosyncrasies and peccadillos to emphasize his or her humanness and to point out that despite weaknesses or shortcomings the individual still was – or is – a good person. If possible, include some humor.

A funny anecdote about the individual can help provide some relief for a stressful event. Again, be sincere and avoid roasting the individual. (You will have the opportunity to roast someone in Project Three.) If an extra quote or poem illustrates a particular point you are making, be sure to include it.

If parts of your speech cause you to become upset during rehearsal, leave them out.

KEEPING IN CONTROL

As you prepare your speech of praise, pay careful attention to your opening and closing, especially if the speech is to be given at a funeral or other stressful occasion. Create an opening statement that is free of emotion-arousing thoughts or words – one that you know you will be able to say with ease – and continue in this fashion for a few more sentences. This will allow you to build confidence and poise as you begin to speak. Be sure to rehearse your speech. If any material causes you to become upset during rehearsal, leave it out, and retain only the material you know you can deliver. Conclude your speech with a positive statement, anecdote, or quote that fits the occasion and the message you are conveying.

If your voice begins to quaver during your presentation, pause and take a deep breath. Focus on your words, not on the occasion or your feelings. Remember, too, that a shaky voice does not mean you must stop delivering your message; it simply adds to the poignancy of the moment.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, you will prepare and present a five- to seven-minute speech that is in praise of someone. The occasion could be a funeral, retirement banquet, anniversary, or farewell party. The individual being praised may be a friend, relative, or co-worker. You may also role play. You could also speak in praise of a famous person or someone whom you admire, living or dead. For example, you could speak in praise of Elvis Presley at the opening of a museum dedicated to him, or in praise of Dr. Martin Luther King on the anniversary of his birth or death.

Be sure the Toastmaster introducing you mentions the occasion for which your speech has been prepared to the audience.

