



Public Speaking: Making a Great Speech

Are you terrified of public speaking? Public speaking is one of the top fears of adults in the United States. It is also one of the best life skills you can gain during your time in 4-H. Participating in our public speaking contest is a great way to practice this skill and be recognized for your hard work.

You can compete in four public speaking categories in Maryland 4-H:

- Prepared speeches
- Radio spots
- Extemporaneous speeches
- Interpretation

You may choose to compete in one, two, three, or all four categories.

For each category, a county can have a champion and reserve champion for the junior, intermediate, and senior categories.

County champions are eligible to compete in the Maryland 4-H State Public Speaking Contest held on Maryland Day (the last Saturday in April) each year in College Park, MD.

County champions can only compete in one category at the state competition. If the champion is not able to compete in a given category, the reserve champion is eligible to compete.

Once an individual has won a category at the state level, they can no longer compete in that same age division category at the state level again.

The following pages contain an overview of the various public speaking categories and requirements, worksheets to help you prepare for each presentation type, and a public speaking tips page.

You can also find the scoresheets and public speaking contest rules at the end of this document.



Public Speaking Contest: Categories and Requirements

Speech Category	Description	Speech Length	Can Judges Ask Questions?	Can Use Notes?	Can Use Props/Costumes?
Prepared	A speech that should be prepared and practiced prior to the contest on a specific topic.	Juniors: 3 to 5 minutes Intermediates and Seniors: 4 to 6 minutes	Yes	Yes, as many as needed. Give copy of script to judges at the end of the presentation.	No
Radio Spots	This speech is meant to "sell" 4-H and must be an original creation that can contain music or sound effects played during your presentation.	30 seconds	No	Can read directly from script. Give copy of script to judges at end of presentation.	No
Extemporaneous	A speech that is prepared on the day of the competition based on topic chosen from three options.	Junior and Intermediates: 2 to 3 minutes (30 minutes to prepare) Seniors: 3 to 5 minutes (15 minutes to prepare)	Yes	Up to both sides of two 5 x 8 notecards.	No
Interpretation	This is a performance from a play, poem, or books excerpt (no television shows, movies, or unpublished sources) and may be in a different language.	Junior: 1.5 to 3 minutes Intermediate: 2 to 4 minutes Senior: 3 to 5 minutes	Yes	No. The performance must be memorized. Give copy of script to judges at end of presentation.	Yes. No visual aids like PowerPoint presentation.



Public Speaking Worksheet: Prepared Speeches

Topic: Should be something that interests you or a current hot topic.

My topic is: _____

Speech Layout: The speech should have an introduction, body and conclusion.

Example Topics

- Who is your role model?
- Why do people try to change each other?
- What is one of your favorite 4-H memories?
- If you were in the Olympics, what event would you compete in and why?
- The best vacation in the world is.....

Introduction: Introduces the topic, main points, and should be attention getting.

Attention getter: _____

State the topic: _____

Preview main points: _____

Body: This makes up the bulk of your speech and should include two to four major points to support your topic.

Major point (with supporting facts): _____



Major point (with supporting facts): _____

Major point (with supporting facts): _____

Major point (with supporting facts): _____

Conclusion: Should signal the close of the speech, reinforce main points, and have a strong ending.

Closing statement: _____

Finish Strong!

Strong endings can be a brief story, example, or a quote. You can also encourage the audience to take action on what you discussed. You may also want to thank the judges and audience for their time.



Theme: What is your theme and attention getter? How are you “selling” 4-H?

Create Interest: Why should the audience be interested in 4-H?

Develop Desire: Now that they are interested in 4-H, how will you create desire, or intention to act?

Action: What action should they take?

Sound Effects or Music: What and when – in the opening, closing, or during?
How will you play it?



While you cannot prepare in advance for your extemporaneous speech, below are some suggestions for how to approach writing your speech once you have selected a topic. Remember, the foundation of any good speech is having an introduction, main body with major points that are supported with details, and a strong conclusion. See the prepared speeches worksheet for more details on how to prepare a speech.

Extemporaneous Speech Preparation Suggestions:

- You will select from three topics for your speech. Pick the one that you feel strongest about and on which you have the most to say.
- Upon selecting your topic, write down the major points you want to make to the judges. Each major point should have two or three supporting statements.
- Once you have developed three to four major points, develop your introduction and conclusion. For the introduction, come up with one or two catchy points. For the conclusion, quickly recap your major points and come up with a strong ending.
- You will receive time warnings as you speak. If you notice you only have one minute left but have not finished, you can quickly remove one or more of your remaining major points and move on to your conclusion.



Selection: Select a section from a book, poem, play or other published work (remember, no TV or movies).

My selection is: _____

From: _____

Authored by: _____

Props: What props or costumes do you need to ensure a successful performance?

Props can include things like hats, costumes, a bouquet of flowers, or any object that is important to your piece that helps tell the story. Remember that props should be items you can easily handle for your performance.

Props I need are: _____

How to Choose?

Make sure your selected scene or excerpt is of the right length for your performance time. You may want to choose a scene that makes sense by itself, has sufficient action and drama, and only has one or two speakers.

Interpretation Speech Suggestions

- Avoid having too many or big gestures.
- Break down your performance into chunks to memorize, then put it all together.
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Don't let nervousness make you forget your hard work. Take a deep breath, then begin.
- If you make a mistake, that's okay. Just keep moving forward.

Preparing: Be prepared to introduce yourself as well as the scene or excerpt you are reading and the author. You will need to memorize your performance, both the words and any movements you will do.

Introduction:

My introduction will say: _____



Sections: Key points, or chunks of text for memorizing your words:

Chunk 1: _____

Chunk 2: _____

Chunk 3: _____

My movements and gestures will include: _____

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Eye Contact

Make eye contact with the judges and/or your audience.

Nerves

Identify ways to calm your nerves. Have those on hand the day of the competition.

This may include things like calm breathing, stretching muscles, thinking positively, or listening to music.

Your Own Words

If you find a word hard to pronounce, pick another one to get your point across. Mispronouncing a word will quickly jump out at the judges.

Keep sentences short and easy to get through.

Don't Chew Gum!

Attire and Posture

Dress appropriately (dress pants, nice shirt, or nice dress - no jeans)

Have proper posture. Don't stand like a statue, be relaxed, but make sure not to slouch.

Practice

Practice, practice, practice your speech. You may also want to practice answering questions that the judges may have for you. Practice in front of a mirror and other people.

Vocalization

Speak loud enough so that your audience can hear you, but not so loud that people get a headache. Practice speaking slowly. It may even seem extremely slow to you.

Make sure to enunciate (speak clearly).

Mistakes

If you make a mistake, take a breath and start your sentence over. Keep your game face!

Be Well Rested

Get a good night's sleep prior to the competition.

Delivery

Don't race through your speech, have a good tempo. You may want to record yourself to listen to your pacing or rehearse in front of parents or friends. You can write slow-down reminders in your script as well.

Learn from Feedback

Take the judges feedback as a way to learn. Reflect upon what they say to make future improvements.