

You've been asked to write a speech. You might never have done that before. So, how do you write a speech?

First of all, don't freak out. If you haven't done it before, writing a speech can sound intimidating. But, with the right techniques, anyone can write a speech that will score well in a GCSE English exam.

A speech is simply an official verbal presentation that is meant to achieve a certain goal. The aim of making a speech or even writing one, is to convince your audience to buy into your idea or pay attention to your subject of discussion.

In an exam setup, an examiner might ask you to write a speech on a particular topic, or you could be asked to imagine yourself as someone else and giving a speech to a different audience. Here are a few tips to help you prepare to score top marks in your GCSE English exam.

1. Introduce yourself

The first thing to do in any speech you write is to introduce yourself. If you have seen footage of historic speeches, the speaker might skip over the formality of introducing themselves, or they might be introduced by someone before they take the stage.

Put that out of your mind - for your GCSE speech, you need to make an introduction.

In fact, your introduction is an opportunity. An opportunity to show your examiners that you can adapt to introduce yourself to any audience. Here is two examples of different audiences and how you could introduce yourself appropriately:

- **You're giving a speech to your teachers**

Because you're talking to your teachers, in this example, your introduction would need to be more formal. For instance; "Hello, and thank you for taking the time to listen. My name is Lawrence Smart, and I'm here today to talk to you about..."

- Notice how the speech writer in this example uses their full name and is very polite to his audience.

- **You're making a speech to your classmates**

- In this example, your language can be more casual. Your classmates already know who you are, so you could say; "Hi everyone. Most of you already know me - my name's Shanice. I'm the one who always sits at the back of the class."

- This speech writer is far less formal, but that's perfect for her audience. She is speaking to her equals, and she can connect with them far more effectively by using the language they would usually use with each other.

Remember - your introduction is an opportunity. Be creative and introduce yourself to your audience with the tone you mean to go on with.

2. Make a great opening statement

Now the audience know who you are, it's time to make them pay attention.

You should always begin writing your speech in a way that is catchy. You want to craft an introduction that will captivate your target audience. A good opening statement is fairly brief, but uses language techniques to make an immediate impact.

To begin your speech, try using some of the following language techniques:

- **A rhetorical question**

Rhetorical questions are questions that you don't expect your audience to answer. So why use them? Because they make your audience think.

- When you ask a question that your audience wants to know the answer to, they will pay attention. If you then provide an answer to your own question, your audience will be hooked.

- Example:

- “I’m here to talk to you about what ordinary people can do to fight against climate change. Why? Because we’re running out of time to act.”
- **A surprising statement**
Surprise is a powerful tool in any speech. It makes your audience sit up and pay attention.
- Think of the most surprising opinion or fact you want to convey in your speech. Now, use it right at the beginning.
- **A famous quote**
- Before your exam, take a look at a list of famous quotes.
Don’t worry about revising famous quotes before your exam: the quote itself won’t get you marks. But, if you can remember one which is relevant to your speech topic, use it. It will demonstrate your creativity and flair.
- Example:
- “As a wiser woman than me once wrote: ‘It is our choices, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.’”

Think about how these different techniques effectively grab your attention, and remember that you can do the same with your speech.

3. Structure your speech

To structure your speech and make it easy for your audience to understand your point, split it into three sections: Introduction, main body, and conclusion. In each section you’re trying to achieve a different aim:

- In the **Introduction**, your aim is to tell your audience who you are and what you’re talking about. Then, you want to grab their attention.
- The **main body** of your speech is where you make your arguments. Divide this main body into 2-3 points, and separate each point into different paragraphs.
- At the end, comes the **conclusion**. A good conclusion takes everything you said and sums it up.

Watch [Mr Bruff’s video](#) for some helpful tips and examples of how to structure your speech.

4. Begin every paragraph with a topic sentence

Because you’re dividing your speech into separate paragraphs, it’s important to make it clear what each section is about. To do that, ensure that you have topic sentences for each paragraph.

For example: “Jellyfish are the second thing I want to put into Room 101, and for good reason.”

5. Use very good English

Good English is essential for your examiner to give you good marks.

But don’t worry, if you’re not confident, there are couple of tricks you can use to avoid making mistakes:

- Avoid long sentences. Write short sentences instead. By keeping things short, you limit the amount of complex punctuation you need to use. However, bear in mind that for the top marks, examiners are looking for a range of sentence structures and punctuation.
- Practice. It’s a simple tip but it’s the best one I can give you. Trying anything for the first time takes your attention away from your grammar and spelling, and that can lead to mistakes. Practice makes perfect, and it also makes you more confident.

6. Express your opinion

The most common mistake students make when writing a speech is that they don’t express an opinion.

Opinions are the element that make a speech interesting. Whatever you are writing a speech about, express yourself. Don’t just write *about* your topic, write *what you think about it*.

What if you don’t have a strong opinion on the subject? Imagine you do, and write from that perspective. The examiner won’t care about your opinion, or whether they agree with it. What they will care about is that you are expressing an opinion in a persuasive, engaging way.

7. Write from the 1st person and engage your audience

When writing your speech, always ensure that you write using the 1st person. This means, use “I” as you write. By doing this, your audience will recognise that what you’re saying is your opinion. You should also address your audience directly as if you were actually talking to them. Use “we” and “you” in your writing. For example: “I’m sure you’d all agree that...”, or “As a community, we need to...”. Using the 3rd person makes each of your audience members sit up and listen. It makes them think about how your topic and argument applies to them.

8. Use personal details and anecdotes

Every good speech writer aims to make the audience relate to them. If your audience relates to you, they are far more likely to agree with what you’re saying.

One of the best ways to do that is to tell a short story about yourself, or provide short personal details. You don’t want to spend too much time talking about yourself and not about your argument, but small details will bring your speech to life.

Here’s some examples:

- In a speech about bullying, you might say: “Like it is for so many young people, bullying is a subject that is close to my heart. When I was at primary school, I was bullied and I now know how harmful it can be.”
- For a speech about music, you could say: “Ever since the day I first heard Kanye West’s *Runaway*, I knew I’d be a lifelong fan.”
- If you were talking about sport, you might say: “I was never a good rugby player. But, football? My school’s muddy, overgrown football field is where I found my true calling.”

9. Use rhetorical questions

Use rhetorical questions throughout your speech, just like I suggested you should do in your opening. Remember: rhetorical questions grab your audience’s (and your examiner’s) attention.

But, don’t use too many questions, or you’ll begin to sound like you don’t know what you’re talking about! A good rule of thumb is to use 2-3 rhetorical questions in throughout your speech, each in different paragraphs.

10. Use emotive language

Emotive language is one of the most basic, but most effective tools a speech writer can use.

In your speech, things shouldn’t simply be described just as “good” or “bad”. They should be “fantastic” or “horrible”, “pure” or “corrupted”, “exciting” or “disappointing”. Notice how these example words express more than just “good” or “bad”, they also add other flavours to your description.

But, be careful not to over-use emotive language. If you go over the top it can reduce the effectiveness of all of your words. Use emotive words sparingly throughout your speech.

For more emotive language examples, read [this article](#).

11. Use figurative language

As with emotive language, this shouldn’t be over-used. But, used sparingly, figurative language creates powerful images in your audience’s mind. There are many types of figurative language, but these are the main ones you should focus on using in your speech:

- **Simile** - Describing something to be like something else. For instance, “She has eyes like a hawk”, “He’s thin as a twig”, or “They’re fighting like cats and dogs”.
- **Metaphor** - Describing something by using a word that isn’t literally relevant. For example, “It’s raining men”, “I’m feeling blue”, or “The weather was bitterly cold”.
- **Imagery** - Using words to make you imagine how they would affect your senses. For example; “A sweet apple”, “A sharp pin”, or “The lion roared”.

For more figurative language techniques and examples, read [this article](#).

12. Use contrast

Contrast is a powerful technique. It highlights your point because of the clash of imagery it creates in the audience's mind.

You can exploit this by using contrasting words and phrases in your sentences. For instance; "I love writing, but I hate writing essays".

You can also bring added flavour to your figurative language, by using contrasting imagery. For example, you could describe one person as a "fiery and passionate" and another as "cold-hearted".

13. Use repetition

Repetition is for emphasis. Repetition is memorable. Repetition is one of many persuasive techniques, which will help you get a good grade.

As I've just done, starting consecutive sentences with the same word is a very effective technique.

Repetition can also be used for key phrases in your introduction and conclusion to bring your speech full circle. For instance, if you started your speech by saying "The pen is mightier than the sword", repeat that phrase in the conclusion to your speech.

14. Use the list of three

We don't know exactly why, but the human brain easily remembers things in threes. Use this to your advantage.

When you're using a list of adjectives to describe something, use three. When you're

A very common technique is to combine repetition with the list of three. By repeating a word three times in consecutive sentences, you can make a very compelling point.

15. Focus on the topic

When writing a speech in an English exam, always stay focused on the topic you have been asked to write about. Never derail from the subject of the speech you are writing. This will make you lose marks.

This is why it is so important to plan your speech before you begin writing it. Think through the structure you are going to use and stick to it. That way, you'll stay on topic and your argument will be focused.

The following acronym might help you remember some of the points we have discussed and help you score highly in your English exam.

P-personal anecdotes to bring your speech to life

E-motive language to persuade your audience.

R-hetorical questions to make your audience listen.

F-igurative language such as metaphors and similes.

E-mphasis through repetition and the rule of three.

C-omparison and contrast to make your points clear.

T-one of voice that is relevant and persuasive for your specific audience.

PERFECT!