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Side Talk No. 02, Steps in Preparation

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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

SIDE TALK No. 2

STEPS IN PREPARATION



NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

STEPS IN PREPARATION

SIDE TALK No. 2

One of a Series of Lessons in
EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

By

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NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
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OUTLINE OF ASSIGNMENT.

SECOND MONTH.

FIRST WEEK

First—Read this Side Talk on “Steps in Preparation.”

Second—Read carefully Lesson No. 5, “Processes of Outlining.”

Third—Read carefully the Introduction, Text Book, “Training of the Voice.”

Fourth—Memorize a new speech, Text Book, “Selected Speeches for Practice.”

Fifth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 5.

SECOND WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 6, “Elements of Effective Delivery.”

Second—Read carefully Chapter 1, Text Book, “Training of the Voice,” practicing the Exercises.

Third—Practice in review the short speeches you have memorized.

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 6.

THIRD WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 7, “Phrasing in Speech.”

Second—Read carefully Chapter 2, Text Book, “Training of the Voice,” practicing the Exercises.

Third—Memorize a new speech, Text Book, “Selected Speeches for Practice.”

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 7.

FOURTH WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 8, “How to Phrase a Speech.”

Second—Read carefully Chapter 3, Text Book, “Training of the Voice.”

Third—Practice in review the short speeches you have memorized.

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 8.

"Speech is the index of the mind."

—Seneca.

STEPS IN PREPARATION

In considering the special topics which come under the title "Steps in Preparation," something is to be said concerning the nature of extemporaneous speaking.

There seems to be an idea prevalent that in extempore speech there is no preparation, whatever. It will readily be seen that this cannot be the case. There are four main processes in speech making: the gathering of material, the making of a plan, the choice of words and the sentence development. One, at least, of these processes cannot be the result of instant creation,—the gathering of material. The recalling of the material may be the work of the moment, but in every case it must have been gathered and stored in the brain, before the speech is to be made. A speech may still be extemporaneous in nature, although, in addition to the gathering of material, one may have had the opportunity

of making a plan for the speech. That is an extemporaneous effort in which the choice of the words and the development of the sentence structure are made while one is on his feet. The speaker may have had his subject given him some time before he speaks, and thus he has had time to make an outline and to assemble his facts under that outline, but he gives it no fixed form as to sentence structure. A speech made under those circumstances where the speaker does not know until he gets up to speak what his subject is, is called an impromptu speech. In this case all of the processes named except that of gathering the material must be carried on while the speaker is before his audience.

In treating further the processes of preparation it is to be understood that that type of speech is under consideration which permits of some time for preparation.

In the successive steps in preparation of a speech, thought must first be given to the choice of a subject. In many instances the subject is assigned by those who have in charge the making of the programme but

very many times the selection of a subject rests with the one to make the address. The question is: In what field of thought shall the subject lie? In this connection four suggestions may be of value. First, let the subject be chosen from a field of thought with which the speaker is very familiar; second, let the subject be one that will be of real interest to the audience; third, let the subject be one that is of vital interest at the time; and fourth let it be one that is really worth while, that is pertinent, that has some relation to the constructive developments of the age. It is not to be inferred that every subject must answer to all four of these limitations. Judgment will have to be used in their application. Two general considerations are very wise,—as a rule the subject ought to lie within both the understanding and the sympathies of the audience.

It will be strange, if in choosing a subject—by whomsoever it is selected—it does not frequently happen, that one has been decided upon which is too large in scope for adequate treatment in the time allotted for

its discussion. The cause of many ineffective speeches can be traced to this mistake,—the taking of a subject so extensive that it cannot be effectively discussed in the time allowed. If it be found, then, that one has fallen into this error, the next step to be taken, is that of narrowing the topic. Study the following illustrations:

1. Charity.
2. The Purpose of Charity.
3. The Purpose of Municipal Charity.
4. The Purpose of Municipal Charity is to Assist the Individual to Assist Himself.

1. Duty.
2. The Duties of Everyday Life.
3. The Highest Duties of Everyday Life.
4. The Highest Duty of Everyday Life Is to Be of Good Cheer.

1. Justice.
2. Justice in the Courts.
3. Justice in the Courts of America.
4. Everyone Should Obtain Justice in the Courts of America.

1. Patriotism.
2. The Need of Patriotism.
3. The Need of Patriotism in a Republic.
4. The Need of Patriotism in a Republic as Related to National Perpetuity.

Suppose one has been asked to make a fifteen minute talk upon any one of the topics numbered one. It is evident at once that no adequate discussion of any one of them could be made in that time. To make a really effective speech upon the topic it will be necessary to narrow it until a small division of the entire thought is indicated. This is what has been done in the illustrations given. It will be seen that in each new subject the field of discussion has been lessened. This narrow field will make recognition of the natural divisions of the thought much easier, thus simplifying the making of a plan or outline.

With the narrowed subject arrived at, the next step is the definition of its terms. In many instances this may not be necessary, but ineffectiveness frequently results from taking it for granted that the terms

are clearly understood. Take for instance, the last subject narrowed, "Patriotism." Is all that the term Patriotism means at once clear? Is it not possible that at the first thought the word may be taken to mean less than it really includes? Does not the idea mean to many no more than defending one's country in times of war? And in reality is it not true that it means far more than this? In an address upon "Patriotism" George William Curtis defined his subject as follows: "Now, as I conceive it, patriotism in an American is simply fidelity to the American idea." But even here ultimate clearness has not been secured, for it might not be the simplest matter to determine what the "American idea" is. So the illustration shows that one must set clearly before his own mind, at least, exactly what is meant by the terms of the subject.

Having defined the terms of the subject in a manner that seems satisfactory to one's self, it will be very wise to decide whether the audience will see them in the same light. As an aid in determining this

question, a restatement of the topic in a more detailed form is suggested. Note this example:

“The place, in a Republic, of Patriotism—that spirit of willingness to serve one’s country, in whatever circumstance she may need it—in relation to National Perpetuity.”

This restatement of the exact limits of the term “Patriotism” will not only enable the speaker to determine whether the audience will gather the meaning he intended, but it will also be a continual reminder to him that the same limits must be observed in the discussion.

At this point another important step must be taken. It is to be clearly determined what the purpose of the speech is, what effects are to be sought in making the speech. A careful use of language carries an unmistakable meaning, and the very statement of a subject lays very definite obligations upon the speaker. Immediately after hearing a subject the audience makes up its mind regarding the subject matter which is to be set before it, and it de-

volves upon the speaker to understand well not only what obligations the subject puts him under, but also what expectations have been aroused in his auditors. If he chooses his own subject he must avoid putting himself under other obligations than those he is willing to assume.

There is an important exception to the point just made. It is possible that once in a while one may desire to keep from his audience the exact idea he intends to unfold. This will justify him in stating the title in such a way as to conceal the exact nature of the discussion. Then, again, as a matter of increasing the interest, the title may be stated in such a manner as to excite curiosity and imagination. Recently a lecturer offered a prize for the best title for a lecture which was to deal with the question of lawlessness in the nation. The one which was awarded the prize was this one: "The Blue Coat and the Red Flag." This subject will surely arouse interest and appeal to the imagination. It will be wise, therefore, so to phrase the subject as not only to state just the exact field of thought

to be developed, but also to compel thought and arouse interest.

In further preparation, one must make a very careful and complete examination of the information he has upon the topic. The first question to ask concerning this information is whether it is clear to the mind. If he is to make his facts and ideas clear to his audience they must certainly be thoroughly clear in his own mind. Clearness is to be obtained whether any other quality is present in the speech or not. Then it must be asked whether the present information is adequate to satisfy the needs of the subject. The discussion of a subject may not be clear to those in front of one because of the inadequacy of the material offered. While occasionally one is guilty of saying too much upon a subject, yet it frequently happens that ineffectiveness results from too great brevity. Of the two evils the former is the lesser.

The information must be tested for correctness. No error can be made in a too thorough application of this test. No explanation is necessary to show the weak-

ness resulting from false information. The facts must be authoritative. In matters of which one has not personal knowledge, too much care cannot be taken to see that the source of information is beyond question. Recently the author heard an address by a young man, in which a newspaper was named as his authority for a statement made. This was cause for much hilarious laughter by the audience. The incident was fatal to the worth of the speech.

It will be well, also, to consider how recent the facts are. If it is known that they are old, it must be considered whether much newer information has not been found. The relative value of new and old information is to be weighed.

It is at the point that has now been reached that many stop in their preparation. For this reason more or less of a jumble of ideas is presented in the speech. The hearer goes away with many facts, and they may be very valuable, but he finds it difficult to see them in effective relation because the speaker has not organized them in a clearly related manner. The organiza-

tion of the facts by means of a clear, logical outline, is one of the most important steps of the series. That is why it is called written or oral composition. It is a composing process, that is a putting together process. It is a mode of building, of construction. Both clearness and force of thought are greatly improved through a well-thought-out and skillfully planned outline. Interest is more easily maintained because a clear plan makes it more easy for the hearer to follow the thought.

Having decided upon a well related plan or outline, one will wish next to mass or gather his facts under the various headings of the plan. Some thought is to be given to the order of the facts. Any order in which they may come to the mind will not do. The same care must be given to determining the correct order of ideas under the divisions of the outline as would be given to securing an effective outline.

Having thoughtfully and carefully done the work of these eight steps, one is now ready to do the final work,—that of memorizing the outline and the facts under the

outline divisions. Too thorough work at this point cannot be done. The difficulties beginners experience are very frequently due to the fact that they fear they will forget their facts and their ideas, and such forgetting is the commonest trouble. Experienced speakers find that they are not free from this failing. The cause is to be found in the lack of a thorough fixing of the plan and the facts in the mind. If, when one is before an audience, he has to gather his facts, make an outline, develop a sentence structure, choose the words, study the audience and adapt his material to both the audience and the occasion, he surely has a rather complex mental task before him. So if the plan and the facts are completely in hand, the mind has been relieved of much effort, and will the more easily take care of other demands. When one confesses that he left out the most important part of his speech, it is an admission that there must have been a poor effort in fixing in the mind the outline and the facts.

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is the result of application."

—Petersen.

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