The NUS Guide To Public Speaking

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SECTION 1.
INTRODUCTION

Thank you for deciding to read this guide. It has been written to help anyone involved with a students' union to improve and develop their speaking in public skills. There are going to be numerous occasions when you are going to be called on to address a group of people - these might be members of the public, the college administration, your electorate, a group of volunteers...the list is endless. This guide is going to tackle the skills involved in speaking to any of these audiences.

You have all experienced listening to speakers - some good ones and some bad ones - and you've all done some 'public speaking' yourselves from time to time. Whatever you think about public speaking, it is a skill that everyone can acquire, and it is something that we can all be good at.

The ability to speak to an audience will be useful during your year of office. Hopefully, this booklet will give you some guide-lines to enable you to feel more confident when speaking in public. It is also designed to supplement the practical training in public speaking run by the NUS. If you have any ideas on how it can be improved then please don't hesitate to let us know.
SECTION 2. PREPARING YOUR SPEECH

Preparation is the key to success!

Too many speakers make the mistake of believing that they can give a good speech off the cuff. To speak well in public it's absolutely vital that you prepare for a speech before the time that you have to give it. Of course, there will be many occasions when you are called on to give an instant response to something. Yet even here, the broad principles of preparation should be called upon and used. We will come back to this point after considering in more detail the preparatory work needed to deliver an effective speech.

If you are having to make a speech that you know about well in advance then you should start this preparatory work a few weeks beforehand. If you have only a few days notice of the issue or subject, then you will have to condense this process into a much smaller period of time. However, ALWAYS try to consider the following points, whatever the occasion:

Where are you speaking?

This may sound very basic but it's vital that you are clear where exactly the meeting is taking place, so you can get there in time to both prepare yourself and to make your speech or participate in the meeting. There is nothing worse than a speaker who arrives late, looking very flustered and out of breath - or maybe it is the speaker who turns up at Portsmouth University when they should have been at Plymouth! Make sure you know exactly how to get to your meeting, and get there in good time!

It is also worth knowing in advance what the room is going to be like, whether you are going to have to use a microphone or not, and whether there are any facilities such as a lectern, table, refreshments, etc.

Who are you speaking to?

This is probably the most important aspect of your preparation. All too often speakers fail to think about the audience - who they are, what they want, and what it takes to interest them. You should start by thinking about who exactly you will be speaking to - you will need to adapt a different approach, say, to a group of College Management and Staff than to a group of Sixth Formers. You might also need to dress differently, depending on the occasion, and use different language!

Your audience will usually be of three general types:

1. **Passers-by** - Mainly interested in something else other than you - going to the shop, queueing at the bank, eating in the refectory, etc.

2. **Captives** - People who are gathered for a common purpose but not directly to listen to you - a seminar or a lecture, for example, or perhaps a UGM.

3. **Volunteers** - People who want to come to meet because they have common interest, e.g. a meeting of a club or society, or group of campaign activists.

In each case, your speech will have to be prepared differently.

1. **Passers-by** - You need to say or do something or appear really sensational to grab their attention.

2. **Captives** - You don't need to grab their attention but you need to maintain interest.

3. **Volunteers** - They are interested to begin with. You need to maintain interest but you can go into more detail in your topic.
Having gauged what type of audience you have, you need to be aware of their attitudes, beliefs and values, so that you have a good idea of how they will response to your speech. Therefore, start by thinking about what the audience wants - it is normally a combination of three factors: information, entertainment and persuasion.

Try to think yourself into the audience's place - try to empathise with them. If you have to do an introductory meeting, think back to when you first arrived at college - the confusion and paperwork, the new people, the bewilderment of a new place to live. Draw on these experiences to frame your speech so you are on the same wavelength as your audience. Think about what might interest the audience, and what experiences they might relate or respond positively to.

The next step is to see how you can relate your speech to the needs of the audience. You can draw on a number of sources:

1. **Physiological.** Food, drink, sleep, survival, improvement of living conditions, in fact anything related to the biological needs of the human body, gains audience interest.

2. **Safety.** Audiences need to feel safe. If there is a 'threat' to their safety audiences can be sold on the solution. This is why law and order and defence are important political issues.

3. **Social Needs.** Audiences want to be loved. Include bits in your speech about why they are important, why their support is crucial, etc.

4. **Esteem Needs.** Audiences demand respect. Tell them how grateful you are for being invited, how intelligent, committed, keen, etc, they are.

5. **Self accomplishment.** Audiences want to know more things, and accomplish more things. Relate parts of your speech to your audience's need of self-improvement. There are three devices for doing this. Firstly you could use

An historical reference, e.g. "It was nine years ago today that Margaret Hilda Thatcher, a chemistry graduate from Cambridge, became Prime Minister of this country. Since that time......" In this introduction there are two bits of trivia, Thatcher's middle name, and the fact she is a chemistry graduate. These are totally irrelevant but satisfy the audience's need to know new things. You could employ a literary reference, e.g. 'There's a language in her eye, her cheek, her lip, nay even her very face speaks. Her wanton spirit looks out at every joint and motion of her body.' Yes, even Shakespeare recognised the importance of body language and this is the subject I want to discuss in this morning's session......"; or you could give a startling statement or fact, e.g. "Every day, 24 hours a day, whilst you are awake, when you are asleep - even as I talk now, a crime is committed every six seconds - Governments recognise a need for law and order, but can they really do anything about it - this is what I want to talk to you about today." Note that in this one, the additional need for security is played on.

**How long do you have to speak?**

This is obviously going to be a critical consideration in your preparation. The type of speech you are going to make is going to be very different if you have 30 minutes as opposed to 2! Sometimes at meetings there is no time limit. However, do think about the audience again - they might not take in anything over 4 or 5 minutes, so plan to keep your contributions concise. Other meetings, such as General Meetings, may well have Standing Orders limiting speeches strictly to 3 or 4 minutes, which isn't much time to convey a complex argument. You might also have to allow time for disturbances that stop your speaking (hopefully applause!). At very formal meetings, you may only get the chance to speak on an issue once, or maybe twice if you can sum up, so it is important to marshal your main points and make them well.

**Why are you speaking?**
This follows on from thinking about your audience, and starts to build up what exactly you are going to say. What is the main purpose of your speech, what do you want people to do after you have spoken (apart from cheer, of course!) In most cases, for us as Student Union Officers, we will be trying to inform a committee or group of students, to persuade students or people at a college meeting to support our position, or to take part in some form of action or, maybe, to change their behaviour or attitude having attended the meeting. In constructing the content of what to say it is always worth being clear about what the main objective of the speech is.

**What are you going to say?**

Having thought about everything else, it is now time to start to construct exactly what you are going to say, before then looking at how you are going to say it. The following two sections look at these issues in some greater detail.

To conclude this section, however much notice you have before having to speak, make sure you consider the above points first. It is useful to divide your preparation into three stages - these are described by Peter Westland in his book ‘Teach Yourself Public Speaking’ as the Remote, the Preliminary and the Immediate. At the **remote** stage, well ahead of the speech, or even when you haven’t a particular time in mind, you should be on the lookout for good ideas, anecdotes, facts, jokes or interesting stories. Westland describes this as a ‘filtering’ process, where good ideas become one with the speakers own thoughts and ideas. The **preliminary** preparation is where you know what you are speaking on, and when. It is at this stage that you order and shape the speech, thinking through your audience, their needs and how to meet them, and how to put all of this into words. The **immediate** stage is the final part of the preparation, reviewing your material, making sure it can fit in the time available, and preparing a good set of notes to enable you to make your speech.

After a while, these three stages, and this whole approach to preparation will become second nature, and a useful well of experience and reassurance to draw upon.

**SECTION 3.**

**SPEECH CONTENT**

The key to generating the content of a speech is to start by thinking in very broad and general terms, and then narrow-in on the key points that you want to put across. As with writing essays or exam papers (aaagh!), it's a mistake to get stuck or bogged down trying to create a really good beginning first - this often leads to "blank-paper-syndrome" - a complete block of ideas. Instead, just start by listing a whole series of points and ideas that come to mind about your subject, then go on to narrow them down and put them in a logical order, and then go back to do the introduction and conclusion. There are a number of standard patterns that can be used for both introductions and conclusions, and we will come to look at these further on in this booklet.

The process you should go through then, should be as follows:

1) **Clarify the main idea you want to put across.**

2) **Generate lots of ideas**

3) **Organise the body of the speech.**

4) **Organise the introduction.**

5) **Organise the conclusion.**

6) **Check transitions from point to point.**

Let's look at each of these parts in more detail:
Clarify your main idea.

The first thing to do is to choose the topic you are going to speak about. Most of the time this will be chosen for you - e.g. a particular motion at a UGM or an induction meeting, for instance. At this stage ask yourself "what do I want my audience to be able to do as a result of my speech?". For example:

* After my speech at least half of the audience will sign the petition.
* After my speech, the audience will give up smoking.
* After my speech, a majority of the audience will vote for my motion.
* After my speech, the audience will know about the welfare services which the Union provides.

Now you're clear on what you want your audience to do, you have to decide on the main idea behind your speech, the one they will remember even if they forget everything else you've said. Not losing sight of this, go on to the next step - the ideas stage.

Generating ideas.

Try to write down any points or ideas which occur to you. Just list as many as you can, and by going over this list think of the other ideas that develop or lead from some of these points. It's at this stage that you will start to remember stories or anecdotes that you can include in your speech - note these down as well. You may even want to follow up some of these points - to undertake some research, to check back through some papers for a quote or decision at a previous meeting, or to recheck your facts.

You can aid your generation of ideas by using Roget's Thesaurus - this is an invaluable tool in improving your public speaking, the content of your speech and your grasp of the English language. Start with your key idea/s and branch off. Here's just an example of starting with one word (TALK) and a Roget's Thesaurus:-

TALK    * ORATION: harangue, sermon, tirade, peroration
        * ORATORY: speaker, orator, Hermes, Cicero
        * PERSUASION: tempt, seduce, disuasion
        * RUMOUR: hearsay, scandal
        * ABSURDITY: joke, pun, jargon, exaggeration, sensless, moonshine, twaddle
        * LOQUACITY: talkative, fluency, garrulous
        * SPEECH: speak, elocution, rhetoric, power of speech, gift of the gab

Suddenly you have lots of avenues and ideas to explore. Some won't be relevant, but many will be. Explore obscure pathways to see where they lead - 'absurdity' threw up some interesting ideas, as did 'speaker' - Cicero for example, could be worth looking up in a book of quotations to give you a quote.

Once you've got all of your ideas, and done your research, it's time to get the points into a logical and coherent order.

Organise the main body of your speech.
Bear in mind 3 important facts:

1. The human brain can only cope with about 7 items of information in any one go.
2. Audiences forget 50% of what you say immediately. A few days later, they forget another 25%.
3. Audiences' minds wander and there is little you can do about it.

Therefore, repeat your main point at least 3 times in a speech so that your audience has at least three chances of hearing and remembering them. Obey the old adage: "Tell them what you are going to say, say it, then tell them what you said." By breaking down your speech into digestible chunks, you should be better able to maintain audience interest. Outline your speech and divide your topic into about 3 or 4 main points which cover your main idea completely, then divide each point into a series of 5 or 6 sub-points which are co-ordinated so they are of equal importance and relate to one another.

Order your points to make sure there is a logical sequence to the main and sub points you wish to make. There are several patterns you can adopt.

*Time Patterns - arrange points or events according to time, e.g., chronologically, or before - during - and after.

*Space Patterns - arrange according to size or importance.

*Topic Patterns - arrange according to types, or categories, e.g:

1. Education in schools
2. Education in FE
3. Education in Universities

*Cause - effect patterns, e.g., the loss of S.U. income (cause) is going to mean an increase in bar prices (effect).

*Climax Patterns - good for creating suspense in an audience who may be uninterested, e.g., events leading up to your main point.

*Problem - solution pattern - can be motivational, and consists of 5 steps:

(1) Attention Step - Draws attention to the subject: "Aren't you totally naffed off with going to see a S.U. film only to find you are choking with smoke from someone behind you?". (2) The Need Step - Establishes the problem: "You know, someone else's smoke is a threat to your health as well as a nuisance.". (3) The Satisfaction Step - Proposes solution: "If we get enough support, the college said they would provide separate smoking and non-smoking areas in the cinema." (4) The Visualisation Step - The results of the solution: "Imagine - clean air and clear viewing in the theatre - and smokers can smoke too". (5) The Action Step - Direct appeal: "Sign this petition".

Now you've done the main part of your speech and you've sorted out the order you're going to say things, you can go back to concentrate on the introduction, which is just as important.

**Organising An Introduction**

Your introduction is obviously going to be of crucial importance, so it's worth spending some time on thinking about what exactly to say. You'll probably be feeling most nervous at this point, so it's a good idea to just keep things simple, and to get your speech going so you can work effortlessly into the main body of your speech. Where appropriate, start by telling people your name and your role, thank people for the opportunity to speak to them, and introduce your subject.
You may want to embellish on this further, but do think carefully about how you use jokes and anecdotes - you may think they’re funny, but will your audience? The worst thing to do is to alienate the audience right at the start! Think about using some of these devices:

**Step One**  
Gain Your Audience’s Attention - **there are several strategies:**

1. **Refer to the audience:** "It’s nice to be invited to a meeting of medical students, a chance I don’t often get..."

2. **Refer to the occasion:** "On this day 21 years ago, Nelson Mandela was sentenced to a lifetime of imprisonment - the crime? - fighting for basic human rights..."

3. **Refer to something familiar to the audience:** "Did you all see the queues at the bank yesterday of new students opening up bank accounts. It’s a sobering thought that many of the same people will be queuing up to open overdrafts later in the term..."

4. **Cite a startling fact or opinion:** "For each and every one of us at this meeting there are secret files on secret computers, run by faceless people who are willing to sell your privacy to anyone with enough money who wants it."

5. **Ask a question. Make it rhetorical:** "Have you ever wondered how the Government can’t afford to run a decent education system but can spend millions on weapons of destruction?" The question you use should be designed to make the audience mentally answer "Yes - why is that?"

6. **Tell anecdotes**

7. **Use a quotation**

8. **Tell a joke**

**Step 2. Preview Your Main Idea/Points**

This will tell the audience what to listen for, and how your speech is organised.

**Step 3**  
Set The Mood And Tone

Set the audience at ease, do not upset them.

**Step 4**  
Make Your Audience Care

State *why* your topic is important to them as individuals, relating if possible to audience needs.

**Developing a Conclusion**

In most cases you won’t want to spend much time on your conclusion. It’s best to use the conclusion to signal the fact that you are coming to a close. This will alert the audience, their attention will pick up, and you can build for a good clap or cheer!

Review your main idea/points, either by repetition or paraphrasing. Make your ending memorable. Try not to end abruptly. Develop an ending, or a signal that the end is nigh! Examples include..."and now in conclusion..." or "to sum up what we’ve been talking about....." but **DON’T** ramble on and on. Make a definite conclusion and don’t tail off in mid-sentence saying..."Well, I suppose that’s all I want to say." Also, try not to introduce new points - the worst thing you can do is to ramble on saying "Oh, and in addition" or "Oh, I forgot to mention..."
The end of your speech is obviously, then, very important. Especially when your speaking time is limited, it's vital to leave yourself enough time for a good, sound ending. There's nothing worse than being cut off just as you are reaching your barnstorming finale!

Transitions

Finish off your preparations by thinking up some smooth transitions which link one part of your speech to another. "Like (previous point) another important consideration in (topic) is (next point)", or "But..... isn't the only thing we have to worry about....... is even more dangerous", or maybe ".... Yes, the problem is obvious, but what are the solutions. One possible solution is...."

Everything is now ready for you to make your notes before actually giving your speech.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEECH ORGANISATION (SUMMARY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOP THE BODY OF SPEECH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide the purpose of the speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider what you want the audience to do/understand as a result of your speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get the main idea to put across.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOP INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain audience attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State what you are going to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set the mood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOP CONCLUSION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make speech memorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIE YOUR IDEAS TOGETHER</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION 4. MAKING AND USING NOTES

Having spent this time preparing your speech, it's now vital that you don't throw it all away by not making some notes. Even the most accomplished speakers, you will observe, will use notes. You should always use some notes, whatever the occasion. If you have plenty of time to prepare then you can look to use some of the
methods below; if not, then just try to jot down your main points, and order them. Doing this will give you the 'security' you need to overcome all those last minute nerves and worries!

It's strongly recommended then, that you make some notes. It's not really a good idea to try to write out your speech in full and then try to read it out - this tends to make your delivery very flat and monotonous, and requires you to be looking down constantly at your notes and not at the audience. It's also very easy to lose your place. It's a good idea to break down your speech into the main headings you used in your preparation and/or a series of key words or phrases that trigger what you want to say in full. Under each main heading you can then list the sub-points you wish to make. You might also want to write out in full a question, set of facts or figures, or a particularly important point. You can get away with reading small sections like this out in full, but don't try it for the whole speech.

You can either set these out on sheets of paper (use one side only, so you don't have to turn them over) or on filing cards, which are very popular for this purpose. Whatever you use, make sure you clearly number the sheets or cards so they don't get mixed up or you'll get lost. You can also staple the sheets in one corner or puncture a hole in each card and hold them together with a treasury tag or piece of cord. In this way, you won't get your order mixed up, and your notes will act as a reassuring source of comfort whenever you feel nervous or apprehensive!

The final consideration is to ensure that the use of your notes doesn't distract from your delivery - that's why small pieces of paper or cards are an advantage as you can easily move from one to the next without any rustling or other disturbance.

SECTION 5.
DELIVERING YOUR SPEECH

When you are speaking there are two messages being sent to your audience:

1. The verbal message, i.e. the content of your speech.

2. The non-verbal message, i.e. how you say your words, and what your body is doing when you are saying them.

**Non-verbal communication constitutes at least 70% of any message you attempt to put across.** This is because non-verbal messages contribute meaning to words. These aspects of public speaking are often referred to as 'body language'. If an audience wants to know how you feel about something, they will look at your non-verbal messages rather than anything you say. For instance - if you tell an audience how grateful you are for being invited to speak, leaning on a table with a blank expression, mumbling to your feet, the audience will ignore the verbal message and will react negatively. This will make you even more introspective, and will reinforce your own negative feelings. On the other hand, if you look as though you are dealing with your subject enthusiastically, the audience will react positively and these positive feelings will be passed back to you.

It is vital then that you think about the non-verbal messages you are giving off or using - the most important being your movements and mannerisms, posture and appearance, and your use of eye-contact. We will look at these in more detail before finally looking at your voice tones and clarity of delivery.

**Movement and Mannerisms**

These, if uncontrolled, indicate signs of nervousness or lack of confidence, which will detract from your delivery. Often, movement and mannerisms become the focus of audience attention rather than what you are saying. You are probably aware of people who do this sort of thing when they are speaking. Examples include playing with chalk or pens, jingling keys or coins in their pockets, adopting a really awkward pose, or wandering incessantly around the front of the room.
You can use movement and mannerisms to express confidence and enthusiasm. Let your involvement in your subject create the motivation for your movement. It can help you maintain contact with all members of the audience.

One way of controlling involuntary movement is to move on purpose when you have to move. Mannerisms are a little more difficult because, more often than not, you don’t think you have them. One way of curing this is to watch yourself on video and then consciously try to control the ones you think could be distracting an audience.

**Posture and Appearance**

Bad posture can create breathing problems, and posture also has a "language" of its own. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posture</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Leaning backwards in a chair</td>
<td>Bored, detached, uninvolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Arms folded, legs tightly crossed</td>
<td>Defensive, resistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Hand covering mouth</td>
<td>Uncertain, nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Head down</td>
<td>Lack of confidence/self belief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A good posture will help you to control nervousness by allowing you to breathe easily. Standing straight makes you more visible and gains you a more positive audience reaction.

**Appearance**

You should be attractive to your audience, but not flashy. Audiences like speakers who are similar to themselves, but “conservatively” so.

**Eye Contact**

Avoidance of eye contact indicates anxiety, nervousness, suspicion or insincerity. Eye contact is the most important facet of speech delivery and, in fact, the more eye contact you use, the more interested your audience will be. In small groups, establish eye contact with each member at least once, scanning around the group casually and resting on one occasionally.

In large meetings, where individual eye contact is impossible, glance across their heads in broad sweeps.

**Sounds, Voice Tones and Rate of Speech**

The more nervous you are, the more quickly you speak and the more unintelligible you become. On the other hand, the more slowly you speak, the more the audience tends to fall asleep. You therefore need to strike a happy medium. It also often helps maintain audience interest to slightly vary your rate of delivery according to what it is you are trying to get across. Normal speaking is about 150 words/minute, but your own rate will vary depending upon your involvement in the message you are putting across. Don't be afraid of short pauses - it will help you gather your thoughts.

Volume can also be another problem. It is controlled by the amount of air passing through your vocal cords, so breathing is important. You should be loud enough to ensure that your audience can hear you, but not in the next room. Many speakers begin to shout and rant as a mechanism to gain attention when they have 'lost' an audience. Don't do this.
Finally microphones are designed to set up to amplify a normal speaking voice. You do not need to shout into them.

Pitch

Nervous speakers sometimes ‘squeak’ and, if you speak too quickly, your pitch will rise. A good posture will help control pitch.

Remember that the use of pitch, volume and rate are to emphasise. Whenever any of these three change, there will be a point of emphasis in the speech.

SECTION 6.
OVERCOMING COMMON PROBLEMS

Nerves

It is absolutely natural to feel nervous at the start of a speech - in fact nerves can be a help at times. Athletes and musicians use nervousness to help them perform. It can help you think more quickly and express ideas more energetically.

Stage Fright

It is not the event that causes 'stage fright', it is the beliefs or fears you have about the event. They stop you thinking clearly and they make you want to do anything to make the fear go away. More often than not, this results in speeding up your delivery, which causes more mistakes, and increases your anxiety. Remember, your fears are usually irrational. Here are some examples:

1. "If something can go wrong, it probably will". This leads to worries like forgetting what you want to say, or the audience thinking you are stupid, etc.. Try to take a realistic look at the situation - you can’t forget what you are going to say because you have made some notes; why should the audience think you’re stupid? - after all, they’ve made the decision to attend, and they probably respect the fact that it is you up there and not them!

2. "Everything must be perfect or my speech will be totally ruined". It is unrealistic to think that everything in a speech should be flawless. Don’t over exaggerate small mistakes you make. Like most things you do, you should view the speeches or talks you give as part of an ongoing learning process. Whenever you do make a mistake, and all speakers do, learn from them, and build these lessons into your next speech. Don’t decide to give up! You only get better by doing it, and that means making mistakes!

3. "I mustn’t upset the audience". You do not need to gain total audience approval. There are always different types of people in the audience who will react to what you say in different ways.

In concluding this section:

1. Be rational. Think about your fears. Are they justified?

2. Concentrate on the audience rather than yourself.

3. Be positive - You know what you’re talking about
   - You are happy to be talking.

SECTION 7.
DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS AS A SPEAKER
It does not take much effort to find ways of improving your public speaking. As stated earlier, the only real way is by actually doing it, but at the same time to be critical - recognising your strengths and weaknesses and being prepared to learn as you go on. There are a number of areas you could work on.

**Expanding your word power**

It might sound too obvious, but speeches are made up of words! We use words to convey meaning from one person to another. Often the messages we are trying to transmit are complex or technical. We therefore need to ensure that the words that are giving meaning to our messages are clear, exact and readily understood. Essentially then, we need to brush up on our understanding and correct use of the English language. This needn't be as painful as it sounds! Making sure you read a range of 'good' books is sufficient. You can build on this by taking an interest in words - there are numerous reference books on the origins of words, dictionaries of difficult or obscure words, phrases, fables or eponyms which are interesting to read and always serve you well in pub quizzes! Get a good dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus. You don't have to pay a fortune for these - you can hunt them down fairly easily in any second-hand bookshop (I found my Public Speaking book by Peter Westland, which I have drawn on extensively in this booklet, in a second-hand shop in Falmouth and paid £2.00 for it!). Trying to do crosswords, especially the Guardian's quick crossword, can also be a fun way of expanding your word power.

**Your choice of words**

Having committed yourself to ever increasing your vocabulary, the next step is to think more carefully about what words to use. It obviously depends on what you are trying to achieve. Peter Westland describes this nicely - "Words are to speech what clothes are to the body" - they can help set a mood or form a background to the main idea being conveyed. You must think what effect your words will have on your audience - could one word rather than another better achieve your purpose, especially if you are trying to persuade a (possibly hostile or sceptical) audience. Try to read some famous speeches and reflect on the choice of words used. This might mean dusting down some of your old English school books to look at some of Shakespeare's best passages - Shylock's famous speech in the Merchant of Venice (persuasion) or Henry V's rousing appeal to his troops before the Battle of Agincourt (persuasion and encouragement). There are obviously many more sources to draw on.

Quotations are also a useful source to draw on and perhaps to use (sparingly) in a speech. There are many good dictionaries of quotations around - these are often split into modern and other quotes.

**Jargon!**

There are many occasions when you should seek to avoid jargon. However, you'll also find yourself in meetings where jargon is being used and to fit in you'll need to master it quickly. Every group or profession has its own particular language, jargon and abbreviations. Don't be afraid to ask for help or clarification. Early on in your year, get hold of a list from the college of the abbreviations and obscure terms used in college life.

**Drawing on other speakers' experience**

Apart from trying to improve your own style, try to examine other speakers and identify what devices they are using, which ones are working and which are not. There are plenty of opportunities to do this; politicians on TV, speakers at meetings, college meetings or even in a lecture. Don't set out to change your own style but do look out for ideas and approaches that can complement what you do.

There are often occasions when you can observe speakers in a meeting format on the radio or TV, particularly useful are the Union Conferences, Party Conferences and Yesterday in Parliament. This gives you the chance to not only watch the accomplished speakers but 'ordinary' delegates and people.
If you are particularly interested, you can get hold of tapes of conferences or famous speeches from the library, or specialist bookshop. There are also many books on the subject.

SECTION 8.
IN CONCLUSION

We hope that you have found this guide helpful. Your involvement in your Students' Union and NUS will develop many of your skills over the coming year. One of these will be public speaking. The central message on this guide is that it is only by actually doing it that you can begin to improve your abilities. Practice, and a willingness to constantly learn and develop, will improve your performance greatly.

Good luck and, most of all, enjoy your public speaking!

APPENDIX

References and Sources

Much of this booklet is based on past work undertaken by the NUS Training Unit, particularly Jim Dickinson, Tony Horrocks, Mike Day and Penny Chalton. Numerous handout have been incorporated into the text.

Books that have been used for reference, which you might like to follow up, are as follows:

3. 'Teach Yourself Public Speaking' by Peter Westland. English Universities Press. 1950.
4. 'The Speaker and Debater'. English Universities Press. 1950.
1. **Prepare.**

A. **Know your audience.**
Here is the point: if you want to persuade an audience of one or one thousand, know as much as you can about each recipient of your message.

B. **Anticipate questions about your credibility.**
By planning your message and knowing your audience, you can prepare to address the audience's doubts about you or your "case." Always look for the weaknesses in your contentions or your credentials, and be ready to address them. Ask yourself, "Why would this audience not want to listen to me on this issue?" Then ask yourself, "What can I do to overcome this resistance?" Whatever you decide is the best way to attack your obstacle, do it early in your presentation.

C. **Visualize winning.**
If you are giving a speech in an unfamiliar setting, go early and stand where you will give your talk. Go alone, and take your time to get comfortable with the surroundings. Imagine giving the presentation in the same room, filled with warm, appreciative people. Close your eyes and hear the applause. See the smiles. Feel the victory!

2. **Be humble.**

Arrogance repels. Smugness is ugly. We don't like to listen to it.

It is hard to define what makes a person likeable, but the "like factor" is important in persuasive communication. Even if you are not a natural at warmth and humor, you can still improve your likeability by observing basic rules of manners and etiquette. The "magic words" from nursery still work: please, thank you, you're welcome. These words are especially effective when said with sincerity and an honest smile.

Can humility be learned? Yes, because humility is an attitude. If humility does not come naturally to you, then choose to work on your humility. A humble attitude is a choice. If you have the desire to improve your attitude, try cultivating your humility.

Try being disarmingly honest-- about difficulties or problems and their emotional effects. Audiences really listen and it can be a useful bridge in your speech.

3. **Communicate on multiple levels.**

Speak to the head and to the heart. Different people respond to different types of messages. A well planned talk will appeal to reason, common sense, and emotion. Try to hit them all, and weave them together.

Communicate with a range of expression, using sight, sound, and movement to appeal to as many of the senses as you can. Help your audience see and feel -- as well as hear -- your message.

To touch the audience's hearts and minds, be especially careful of your choice of words. Words are powerful. The wrong word at the wrong time to the wrong group can put a chill on your speech that fire and brimstone cannot thaw.
4. **Take full advantage of primacy and recency.**

   A. *Primacy.* What is first heard and seen -- the first impression -- sticks. An opinion or attitude, once formed, resists change.

   How do you take advantage of primacy? Start strong.

   Starting strong means not saying "good morning" or "I'm glad to be here today" or some other cliché time waster. Starting strong means using the first words, the first sentence, to grab the audience's attention and to start the persuasion process.

   B. *Recency.* What's heard last stays "ringing in their ears," and is remembered best. In trials, the lawyer who gets the last word treasures the chance to send the jury off to the deliberation room with a resounding, emotional BANG!

   People act on emotion, so finish with a memorable, emotional flourish.

5. **Apply the "Rule of Three."**

   There is a rhythm to our language. Eloquent, thoughtful, and effective speakers have learned that certain patterns of speech carry more impact than others.

   Bad speakers tend to write in redundant pairs. Cease and desist; devise and bequeath; insist and demand. But good speakers are aware of the power of threes.

   "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."
   "Preserve, protect, and defend."
   "Government of the people, by the people, for the people."

   The rhythm of threes is poetic, it is artistic, and it is dramatic.

   Learn to profit from the impact of the "Rule of Three."

6. **Grasp the power of words.**

   Use simple, strong language.

   Don't try to impress with complex words. "Love" is a powerful word. "Honor" is a powerful word. "Respect" is a powerful word. Don't dilute the strength of your message with bureaucratic, stuffy, or pretentious prose. Reject clichés.

   Simple, clear, punchy words create a picture in your listeners' minds. Your audience will not remember the words; they will remember the images their minds created with your words.

   Finding the right words takes work. Don't expect the best words to be the first to come to your mind. Keep digging for the truth in your message, and keep trying to find the right words to convey your
meaning.
7. **Tell the story.**

Anecdotes sell; statistics bore.

The best speakers know that stories are interesting. In law, every case that ends up in court has a story; successful courtroom advocates focus on the story.

Which of these two versions of an event is better?

A. *Vague and legalistic:* "The defendant on the occasion in question failed to exercise due care and negligently collided with another vehicle, causing severe harm."

B. *Specific (tells the story):* "Bob Smith got himself drunk that Saturday night, ran a red light, and crashed into Jane Benson’s car, paralysing her for life."

Both versions are accurate, but the one that tells a story is the one that holds the audience's interest.

8. **Some great words to use**

1. **Can:** Everybody responds immediately when you show confidence in them. "Yes, you can!" is a positive, upbeat statement that people like to hear.

2. **Guarantee:** Nobody wants to make a mistake, so your guarantee becomes their safety net and encourages them to hear more of what you have to say.

3. **Easy:** Nobody wants things to be more difficult. Tell people that what you're saying is easy to understand or easy to do, and they'll automatically listen.

4. **Quality:** When you speak of quality, you promise the listener something worthwhile, enduring and out of the ordinary.

5. **Health:** People are vitally concerned about their physical and psychological well-being. Tell them you have a healthier way to do something.

6. **Urgent:** Tell someone you have an urgent message and they immediately fear the worst. "Is something wrong with my kids? My wife? My job?"

9. **More great words to use**

**You:** Our favourite subject is none other than ourselves. To get results, say "You will benefit."

**Today:** People have already forgotten yesterday, and can't do much about tomorrow. Say, "You can save with this new, easy, proven, opportunity today!"

**Money:** Dollars interest everyone. People want to know how to make money, save, and invest. Powerful: "This can mean money in your pocket."
Love: It's the strongest emotion in the world, and as mushy as it sounds, love does make the world go round - which is why phrases such as "You'll love this."

New: Find a new way to do anything and people are immediately interested. The word arouses your listener's curiosity.

Opportunity: An opportunity is a chance for something good to happen. When you use the word, you imply the consequences will be highly favourable.

Win: Everyone wants to be a winner.

10. The Apathy Staircase

Remember if you’re trying to put forward an argument, use this structure:

Experience: What you have actually seen, heard or done - “I was talking to sports players the other day and they were saying the pitch was awful…”

Injustice: “That’s unacceptable. At other Universities the pitch is excellent, and we all pay the same fees”

Visualisation: “I believe that all students should have the right to excellent sports facilities- pitches that we can play on”

Action: “So I emplore you- for perfect pitches we can all play on, Vote Tim “Crusher” Mallendar for Sports Sabb