

Evaluator

The Evaluator appraises a speech, giving useful commendations and recommendations.

Purpose

The main purpose is to help the Speaker improve. Secondary purposes are to help everyone else in the audience improve, and to further hone your own public speaking skills. Otherwise you might as well just have a private chat with the Speaker afterwards!

Evaluating a Prepared Speech

Before the Prepared Speech

Read the pages of the manual concerning the speech and familiarise yourself with the speech objectives. The manual can be used as a 'cheat sheet' for your evaluation.

Ask if the Speaker wants you to look out for anything else in particular.

During the Prepared Speech

Listen carefully. Making too many notes can distract you and is unnecessary; the audience do not want you to repeat or summarise the speech - they have just heard it!

Ensure that you have written down clearly the main points you want to make (or, if you don't use notes, have them firmly in mind) so that they can be structured into a coherent Evaluation Speech.

Your Evaluation Speech

Give commendations. Praise the good aspects of the speech, without adding reservations which cancel it out.

Give recommendations. Doing this usefully yet tactfully is the main challenge of an evaluation. In the same way that in a soccer match it is a foul to go for the player rather than the ball, consider it a foul to go for the speaker rather than the speech.

If you cannot think of any recommendations you can put forward alternative approaches for consideration. (This can be a useful device for evaluating an experienced speaker.)

Structure commendations at the beginning and end, with recommendations in the middle. This is often referred to as the 'sandwich' technique.

Be specific. Rather than spouting general platitudes, detail specific elements that were successful and specific suggestions for enhancement.

All comments should be expressed as your personal opinion (for example, "I think ..." or "My view is ...") and not a universal judgement or the voice of God. Without ignoring the speaker, address all the audience. Expressions like "I believe we could all learn from the way in which ..." make everyone feel involved.

Don't try to cover too many points. You can meet up with the Speaker afterwards and go into more detail, covering aspects more appropriately addressed only to the Speaker.

Above all, bear in mind that everyone feels hurt by naked criticism of their efforts - not just you!

Evaluating Table Topics

A Table Topic is shorter than a normal Prepared Speech, so a Table Topics Evaluation should be correspondingly briefer for each speaker than a Prepared Speech Evaluation. In other respects, the same guidelines for Evaluating a Prepared Speech (shown above) apply.

A suitable Table Topics Evaluation routine for each Speaker is a 'mini-sandwich' as follows:

- one commendation;
- one recommendation;
- one commendation.

Bear in mind that some members, particularly newer ones, find it much more difficult to give an impromptu speech than a prepared one. So you need to be extra-sensitive. For example, a nervous Topics Speaker who can barely stand up will be disheartened to hear a detailed thesis on displaying better body language.

Evaluation Contests

Before entering an Evaluation Contest, study the Judging Criteria (shown towards the bottom of this page). In particular, note the scores for Recommendations (30%) and Summation (15%). Contestants who neglect these features are often surprised by how low they are ranked.