

Speeches of Introduction and Keynote Addresses

Brief: Speeches of introduction set the tone for featured speeches, such as keynote addresses that reflect the main theme of a conference or gathering.

Learning Objective: Identify the attributes of speeches of introduction and keynote addresses.

Key Terms:

- Curriculum vitae: A detailed written account of one's education and experience used to seek positions in academic or educational environments, typically including academic credentials, publications, courses taught, etc.
- Keynote address: A speech that sets or reflects the main theme of a conference or other gathering.

The Speech of Introduction

Sometimes you'll be called on to introduce a featured speaker. It's important to keep in mind that your speech of introduction will be no less significant than the featured speech. Because you'll be speaking first, whatever you say will set the tone for what's to come. The information about the speaker and their topic should provide context for their presentation. The audience will be counting on you to fill in important details about the speaker and why their topic matters.

Preparing a Speech of Introduction

Speeches of introduction are usually expected to be brief and are always prepared ahead of time. The introductory speech usually has three components:

- background information about the main speaker
- an introduction to the speaker's topic
- an invitation to warmly welcome the speaker

Preparing a speech of introduction is easier if you're knowledgeable about the speaker. If you happen to be good friends with the speaker, remember to keep your focus on the task at hand—giving them a professional introduction. Avoid sharing unrelated personal anecdotes.

There are times when you may have to introduce a speaker who you know little or nothing about. If so, start by conducting a Google search to discover basic information about them that is relevant to their speech, such as their professional experience or publications. Once you understand a little bit more about them, contact them to see if they can provide you with a professional bio or curriculum vitae (CV).

Note that Internet information isn't always up-to-date or accurate. The last thing you want to do is to provide inaccurate information as you're introducing a speaker, so see if you can meet the person ahead of time, whether it is in person or over the phone.

Keynote Address

The keynote address is a speech that reflects the essential or common theme of a convention, conference, or other large gathering. Most conferences, expositions, or conventions are organized around a central idea, and the keynote address encapsulates that idea or message.



For example, organizers of a conference with the theme “Looking Forward—Looking Back” might want the keynote speaker to celebrate the history of that organization, recount its past accomplishments, predict future directions of the organization, and invite audience members to embrace the future mission and vision.

The keynote speaker is usually invited to speak because of their expertise, which is related in some way to the conference theme. In addition, keynote speakers must be dynamic, accomplished public speakers who connect with their audience in a meaningful way because, regardless of the conference theme, keynote addresses are also expected to inspire and motivate audience members.

From Concept to Action

Imagine that you've been selected to introduce a public figure you admire. Maybe they're an author, a performer, or a politician? Consider what you already know about them. Then conduct a quick Google search to learn additional information. After you've collected some additional information, ask yourself, “What information would I want to be sure to include? And what information should I leave out?” Reflect on why you made those choices.

OER IMAGE SOURCES:

“Meeting Addis Ababa Ethiopia Hall Conference.” Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/meeting-addis-ababa-ethiopia-hall-83519/> Accessed 9 June 2019. [CC0]

OER TEXT SOURCES:

“Speeches for Special Occasions.” Lumen Learning. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-communications/chapter/speeches-for-special-occasions/> Accessed 9 June 2019. [CC BY-SA 4.0]