

Award Speeches

Brief: A speech to present an award introduces the award itself, tells a little about its history and meaning, and introduces and names the actual awardee. A speech to accept an award thanks the awarding individual or organization, acknowledges the significance of the award, and formally accepts the award.

Learning Objective: Identify the attributes of award speeches.

Speech to Present an Award

Similar to the speech of introduction, the primary purpose of a presentation speech is to give recognition to the recipient and their accomplishments pertaining to that specific award. Depending on the event, presentational speeches might vary in length and content.

Here are a few guidelines:

- Make sure you share the recipient's name at the appropriate time. If the recipient is known to everyone, then their name should be mentioned right away. If the announcement is a surprise, then it is better to hold off mentioning the recipient's name until the end.
- Remember to use the specific name of the award, mention the organization that's granting the award, and point out the award's purpose and significance. If the award is named in honor or memory of someone, you may describe why that award was named for that person in the first place.
- Be sure to personalize the speech to make the award and event more meaningful for the recipient and the audience. Let the audience know how the recipient met—and perhaps surpassed—the criteria for the award.
- Finally, if you're expected to physically give the award to the recipient, you might want to practice ahead of time holding the award in your left hand while using your right to shake the recipient's hand.

Speech to Accept an Award

If you've been nominated for an award or honor, you'll want to prepare some remarks—even if you don't anticipate winning. Many award winners have been surprised and caught unprepared because they assumed they would never win.

Acceptance speeches may vary in length. For a multi-award event, such as the Academy Awards, winners are given a brief ninety seconds to make their remarks. At other events, particularly when there is a single awardee, winners have substantially more time to speak. In some cases, awardees also play the role of keynote speaker.

In your remarks, be sure to thank the awarding individual or organization. Depending on the award, you might speak about your experience and your feelings about the work that was necessary to achieve the award. If others have helped you in your endeavors, give them a quick thanks by name as well, including your spouse, partner, or children as appropriate.



Like any speech, consider your audience and the context of the speech. Don't drone on and on, but don't cut your speech short either. Your audience is there because this award and its recipient—you—matter to them. Be sure to show your audience how much the award matters to you, too. Don't be afraid to display some emotion. Above all, be sure to exude sincerity and speak from your heart. Share how the award will make a difference in your future.

From Concept to Action

Imagine that you've just won an award. Maybe you've won a scholarship or have been selected as employee of the year? Create a brief outline of your acceptance speech. What would you say? Who would you thank? How would winning this award make a difference in your life? Practice giving your acceptance speech out loud. Don't be afraid to visualize your best future. And then work hard to make it happen!

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