

4-H Public Speaking

Tips for Introducing & Thanking



These are helpful hints for introducing and thanking speakers at 4-H club programs, project meetings, awards programs, etc. As well they are helpful for introducing and thanking people at 4-H rallies.

Introductions should be approximately one minute. To introduce a speaker:

- Mention the subject of the speech and briefly why it was chosen;
- Tell the audience the speaker's name and something about him/her without too much praise;
- Leave the details of speech to the speaker, just introduce the speaker and topic;
- Speakers do not introduce themselves.

Introducing a Speaker

The purpose of the introduction is to establish a basis for a two-way relationship between the audience and the speaker. It allows the speaker time to collect his or her thoughts, puts him or her at ease and gives him an origin from which to start his talk. The introduction will turn the spotlight of the audience's attention on the speaker thus indicating the program is beginning.

Your job as an introducer is to interest the audience in what the speaker is to say and interest the speaker in his audience and arouse in the speaker a fresh appreciation of his subject. Sell the speaker and his topic by introducing him or her as a person who has something to say, who can say it with authority and to whom the audience can listen with confidence.

Guidelines for Introducing a Speaker

There are four basic pieces to an introduction puzzle. Once you have put these pieces together, you have a pleasant flowing introduction. These pieces are used in all introductions; however, the length varies depending on the person you are introducing and who your audience is. A well-known personality generally requires a shorter introduction because you do not need to spend as much time building credibility with the audience. The more unknown the speaker, the more you will have to arouse interest in him and his subject.

Step 1 - Announce the topic giving the exact title.

Step 2 - Tell the audience why the topic is important to them by telling some experience which shows its practical value. Give a few brief sentences about what the speaker will say, remember, your job is to introduce the speaker not to give his speech.

Step 3 - State the speaker's qualifications to speak on the topic. Build on his experiences and achievements, interests and background. Name the fields in which he has done most of his work, especially those relating to his topic. Tell where the speaker came from originally and where he lives now. You may wish to contact the speaker ahead of time to obtain the information you need.

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Step 4 - End the introduction by formally presenting the speaker to the audience. This should be left to the end as it is likely to bring applause and interrupt the introduction. It also causes the speaker to rise in response to his name and stand while the introduction is being completed. Be sure to include his occupation, title and position as the audience will want to know. Pause for a few seconds before announcing the speaker's name, continue to face the audience as they are the ones who need to hear the name. Then look at the speaker, and remain standing as the speaker comes to the place from which he is to speak, then sit down. If you're not sure how to pronounce the name, check with the speaker before the meeting.

Do's for the Introducer

- Be brief - the audience has come to hear the speaker, not you. Keep it to no longer than a minute.
- Be natural, relaxed and sincerely enthusiastic, but don't overdo it or gush. Use humor only if it suits the occasion, is in good taste and creates friendship.
- Speak loudly, clearly and distinctly to be heard easily. Maintain eye contact.
- Take time to prepare and plan your introduction. Organize your thoughts and have the key words written down. You may want to check the introduction you plan to make with the speaker.
- Suit the nature of the introduction to the tone of the speech. Someone who is speaking on a serious occasion or is a stranger should be more formally introduced.
- The last word in your introduction should be your speaker's name.

Don'ts for the Introducer

- Memorize the introduction word for word. Have key words written down.
- Use dull, stiff phrases or be repetitive of previous introductions.
- Embarrass your speaker with flowery stories or by an elaborate buildup. This gives the speaker the added task of redirecting the attention of his audience away from his personality to his topic.
- Exaggerate your speaker's qualifications - compliment him graciously.
- Entertain the audience with humor at the expense of the speaker.
- Spotlight yourself - remember the speaker is giving the talk.
- Apologize for the fact that the speaker is a substitute or is not well known.

Tips on Thanking a Speaker

A thank you should be approximately one minute. To thank a speaker:

- Offer thanks on behalf of the audience not yourself;
- Briefly thank him/her for what he/she has given in terms of information, ideas, entertainment, and inspirational value;
- Refrain from repeating the speech.

Guidelines for Thanking a Speaker:

- Thanking a speaker is a relatively simple task. Briefly, in only two or three sentences, give a sincere thank you on behalf of the audience. Comments should be appropriate to the occasion.
- The "thank you" can't always be prepared in advance, so listen closely to the speaker. During the speech, jot down one or two key ideas of information presented by the speaker. This indicates you were listening and thus compliments the speaker. Watch the audience's reaction. You may want to refer to special items of interest to them that the speaker touched on in his presentation.
- Reflect the friendly manner and acknowledge the care and time put into preparation, if worthy. Address the speaker and the audience. Thankers do not introduce themselves.
- If the meeting ends with the conclusion talk, formally thank the speaker. A common courtesy would be to accompany him off the platform and give him any assistance he might need with equipment, helping him with his coat or walking him to the door.
- If asked to thank someone during a tour, it may not be possible to make a detailed thank you. Call the people to attention and give a brief thanks to the speaker which is usually followed by the groups applause.
- In some instances, the chairman may call on you to thank the speaker. You may remain in the audience, or go to the front of the room, however, be sure that you can be seen and heard by both the speaker and the audience. This should be prearranged so you will know what to do in advance.

Do's and Don'ts of Thanking

- Don't give a summary of the talk, take issue with any remarks or add items;
- Don't introduce yourself;
- Don't allow the speaker to sit down with no recognition of his contribution;
- Do be short;
- Do thank the speaker on behalf of the audience.