

Rotary Youth Speaks in District 1190 – Cumbria and Lancashire

Guidance to Teams

General guidance

The Rotary Youth Speaks competition simulates a typical speaker meeting of any Rotary Club – or of many organisations for that matter. A Chairperson welcomes an outside speaker that he/she has probably only just met and introduces him/her with a bit of biographical information and his/her topic explaining its relevance to members and why they should find it interesting. After questions to the speaker following his/her talk, the chairperson invites a member who he/she has previously warned, to propose a vote of thanks to the speaker ending with a call for a round of applause.

The three team members in Youth Speaks - chairperson, speaker and proposer of the vote of thanks - need to behave as a cohesive team. Support each other; thank each other; listen to each other intently – react to each other appropriately (even though they have heard it all before!).

The most important judging criterion is the speech itself. A poor speech – weak content, poorly argued, disjointed, badly structured, repetitive, even boring, lacking supportive information or lacking conviction – however well presented or however well the other two team members perform - cannot win.

Remember it is not the team's speech nor the team's topic even though all three of you may have helped decide the topic and prepare the speaker's talk on the subject. It is the Speaker's topic and his/her speech alone. So the Chairperson introduces the speaker and his/her topic. And the Proposer of the Vote of Thanks praises the Speaker for an excellent speech on his/her topic.

None of the team should read a script. If you have to have notes – and please do have them if you feel more comfortable - make them on small cards with short phrase prompts only. Learn what it is you are going to say and rehearse and rehearse again. Prompt cards, if used, should be there simply for emergencies. Especially in the later stages of the competition.

All three should consider what humour to inject. Good and relevant humour greatly improves all three contributions. The audience will want to feel entertained as well as informed and inspired.

All three will be judged on effective use of voice, clear enunciation, easy manner and natural gestures. Also whether the personality of the individual comes over to the audience. So relax, enjoy it and be yourself.

Audio-visual aids or props of any description are NOT allowed and the topic must not be political nor religious in nature.

We are not looking for a lecture – the speaker must engage more with the audience than would typically be the case with a lecture – but also, on the other hand, it must not be too theatrical. Big gestures and whole body movements must be limited so as not to distract the audience. However, hand and lower arm gestures to emphasise points are to be encouraged.

At the event a set of coloured lights will be used to guide you in the timing. A green light comes on as each team member starts. An amber light comes on when the chairperson and the vote of thanks proposer have 30 seconds left and for the speaker one minute left. And a red light comes on when you should have finished. If the red light comes on whilst you are still talking you need to finish within say 10 seconds or you will lose points.

Lastly – if it is an evening event please do not say ‘good morning’ and vice versa.

The roles of the three team members

Chairperson

The **Chairperson** has a maximum of two minutes to welcome the audience, introduce the speaker and the topic and inform the audience of the relevance and expertise of the speaker to the subject of his/her speech. The judges will look for:

- A business-like, authoritative yet courteous, control of the meeting.
- The creation of a friendly and receptive atmosphere. Use humour if possible – about each of the three team members possibly.
- Do NOT steal the limelight from the speaker – the chairperson is not the star. And do not start to give the speech. It is not your speech. Just introduce the topic and its relevance and the speaker. To emphasise - it is not “our subject”, it is not the team’s subject, it is not the chairperson’s subject. It is the speaker’s subject. It is his or her speech and topic alone.
- Pay attention to the four duties specified as follows –
 - 📌 At the outset - two minutes to welcome the audience, introduce the team (all three members) and the topic, and comment on the suitability of the Speaker to speak on the chosen topic. Perhaps giving a little flavour – a very little flavour - of what we can expect - whetting the audience’s appetite. Setting the tone. You must tell the audience why they should listen to this speaker on this topic – its relevance to all. Finally handing over to the speaker. All in two minutes. Then whilst the speaker is talking listen with rapt attention.
 - 📌 After the Speaker has finished, saying thank you to the speaker, then inviting the questioner – perhaps by name – to put the question. Then thanking the questioner for it, repeating and summarising it for the Speaker then inviting the Speaker to answer it. This gives the Speaker time to think! But do not summarise the preamble, the context of the question that the questioner has said. Only summarise the question itself by starting with “Mr (or Mrs) XXXXX wants to know”.
 - 📌 After the speaker has answered the question, saying ‘thank you’ to him/her then inviting the Proposer of the Vote of Thanks to do just that.
 - 📌 Thanking the Proposer, then, on behalf of the team, thanking anybody that you feel needs to be thanked – Rotary, the judges, the timekeepers, the provider of the venue, your parents, your teachers, other competitors, but briefly. And then thanking the audience for their kind attention and drawing the session to a close.
- But in all of this – remember to inject a touch of lightness – a bit of humour.

Speaker

The **Speaker** has six minutes for the prepared address and a maximum of two minutes to consider and answer a question that will be posed after the address by a Questioner.

- Choice of topic for the speech is crucial to success. As the speaker you should preferably choose a topic that already interests you and you already know something about perhaps. You may even feel passionately about it. This will make preparation easier, the resulting talk more informative, persuasive and you more enthusiastic.
- Enthusiasm, even passion, is important – vital even. But it is not theatre so try to stand still and use only lower arm and hand gestures and facial expressions consistent with what you are saying to emphasise points. And neither is it a sermon so do not preach to (or at) your audience. Nor is it a lecture so engage with the audience with relevant comment, smiles and eye contact. Getting the style of address right is important.
- The speaker needs to construct the address that should include an introduction, the main subject matter and a summary and/or a conclusion. Researching around the topic may be important to gather quality material - facts, quotes and statistics perhaps - for the talk.
- The content of the speech and the flow, logic and weight of the arguments developed will be given great importance. A weak argument, however good the presentation, will not produce good marks. You do not have to present both sides of an argument although, if you feel it strengthens your message, you may.
- The nature of the impact of the speech on your audience is an important factor to decide beforehand. What is your aim? Do you want to make them think? Or make them laugh? Do

you want to give them fresh ideas, new information or insights? Do you wish to change their view or attitude about something? What is your aim. Then, after rehearsing, ask yourself “Am I achieving it?” At the beginning maybe and certainly at the end of the speech the audience need to be clear on what your aims are.

- At the start, engage the audience and bring them into your world immediately. Perhaps making a statement that has immediate impact. Makes them sit up and listen. Do it with your eyes and well as your voice. Be enthusiastic and enjoy it.
- The answer to the question should be courteous, to the point, full but not unduly wordy. It should avoid merely repeating part of the talk already presented but introduce new ideas and new material if possible. Not always easy. The speaker will not be penalised if he/she asks the question to be repeated. Beforehand prepare answers to possible questions. Work on this with your team and your teacher.

Proposer of the vote of thanks

The **Proposer of the vote of thanks** – a very important team member - has two minutes in which to propose the vote of thanks to the speaker, on behalf of the audience, remarking on the content of the address, its presentation and the answer to the question. The audience should then be invited to show their appreciation to the speaker by a round of applause.

- This person is a vital and important member of the team as it falls to him/her to persuade the judges - and the audience - that they have just listened to a first class talk and an authoritative and relevant answer to the question.
- The primary duty of the Proposer is to express to the Speaker the appreciation of the audience on behalf of the audience. And at the end to call for a round of applause for the speaker and to lead it - not just sit down but clap then sit down. If he/she does nothing else he/she **MUST** do this.
- In real life a vote of thanks is given by somebody who has just heard the speech for the first time and it will be spontaneous, genuine and fresh. Even though the vote of thanks proposer here has heard the speech before (many times perhaps!) they need a) to listen with rapt attention to every word of the speech as if for the first time by looking at the speaker throughout– even making some small facial gestures of surprise and amusement as appropriate - and b) make the vote of thanks appear spontaneous and genuine. You may be able to think of ways to do this. One way perhaps is to make comments that relate to the specific event – the location, the judges, the day, the weather, your team’s position in the proceedings, the other teams, any unrehearsed aspect of the chairperson’s or speaker’s performance – mistakes or otherwise, etc. And of course the question asked and the answer given which will be different and spontaneous on the day.
- Reference should be made to the content of the address - perhaps bringing out aspects of the speech that were particularly praiseworthy again making out that they were new to you and refreshingly interesting - and referring to the quality of the answer to the question. Perhaps summarising the speech and/or bringing out an aspect of the speech that made an impression on you personally and why. Perhaps also expressing a personal view on what has been said - but very briefly. You are not the speaker and it is not your speech - it is the speaker’s speech - so make any comments on the content of the speech itself both brief and personal. Do not repeat the speech nor enlarge on it.
- During much of the Proposer’s remarks it is appropriate to look at the speaker quite a bit since that is who you are thanking – who you are speaking to – but also look at the audience part of the time too since it is them that you are speaking on behalf of. And the judges are there too!
- The Proposer should not thank any others involved – only the speaker - such as Rotary and the judges. This will be done by the chairperson if he/she considers it appropriate.
- Finally – and this is essential - the Proposer should invite the audience to express their appreciation of the Speaker in “the usual way” - a round of applause. Lead it, smiling. Then sit down.

The Judges

There will be three qualified judges who will be selected and appointed by the organisers of the particular competition. Judges may be drawn from teachers or lecturers of English, teachers of public speaking, speech and drama, members of the acting profession or public speaking societies.

The judging will be impartial and fair. There is a mark sheet available for judges who will primarily take into account -

The Chairperson's management of the meeting (25 points)

The Speaker's ability to present and develop an argument and to answer the question (50 points)

The quality and courtesy of the Vote of Thanks (25 points)

Included within the marking will be the importance of teamwork.

Over-running and under-running of the allotted times will be penalised: one point for every complete 15 seconds of over-run and one point for each complete thirty seconds of under-run for each team member. The time-keeper will notify the judges.

After all the teams have presented and the judges have conferred, they will comment on the performance of each team in open session directing their comments to each team in turn. They may wish to comment on the performance of the team as a whole, or on each member of the team, or both. Comments will be encouraging yet give clear and constructive guidance. After the session is over the judges may be available to give personal face to face feedback or guidance in writing to the specific teams moving on to the next stage of the competition. This may help them to succeed at the next level. If a team and their teacher want either or both of these please ask at the end.

However, the judges will not discuss marks or how they have been allotted. The decision of the judges is final. No correspondence or discussion will be entered into following the event.

This briefing note has been prepared by Rotarian Richard Lea of the Rotary Club of South Ribble. Any queries (or comments or useful suggestions) please call me on 01772 379753 or email me on richard@lea-cars.co.uk.

Quotes from the winners of the all UK and ROI Final of Rotary Youth Speaks in May 2011 from Windermere School

"All three of us on the team would like to thank both yourself and Rotary International in general, for the fantastic opportunity to take part in the Youth Speaks competition. We never expected to get so far, nor to experience such a diverse range of challenges! The highlights were undoubtedly both the conference in Harrogate (which was the most incredible experience), and, of course, winning the final in Cranleigh School, which left us all on a high for several days afterwards! At each stage, however, the level of enthusiasm and support from the members of the Kendal Rotary Club was unbelievable, and very much appreciated.

For those taking part next year, we feel that the secret is to know what it is that you will say, and how you will say it. In many ways, less is more, and it is more important to choose a subject that you genuinely enjoy and know in great detail, rather than to over-rehearse a speech in which you have little interest. Many thanks once again; it was great!"

Richard Flint, Proposer of the Vote of Thanks.

"I think that the concept of a Public Speaking competition is a fantastic way for students to improve their confidence. My favourite part of all of the competitions had to be the question though! Performing the same speech time after time can become quite routine, so having a questioner to really stretch your knowledge of your subject was easily the most interesting bit. I would urge any new competitors not to over rehearse their speeches as it is so evident when they are performed. Instead, not rehearsing too much, keeping it fresh and making slight adaptations to the circumstances of the event really worked for us!"

Poppy Bullard, Speaker

“During their final year in the Sixth Form we saw Pippa, Poppy and Richard mature – gaining noticeably in confidence, particularly when speaking in public. In part this was due, in Poppy and Richard’s case to being Head Girl and Head Boy respectively, but we have no doubt that the three of them benefitted greatly from taking part in Rotary International’s Youth Speaks competition. They did not expect to progress beyond the first round! At each level of the competition, they relied less on notes and were able to ad lib to make their presentation sound relatively fresh and not over-rehearsed.

That Rotary International gave them this opportunity is greatly appreciated, and schools should welcome the chance to put teams forward. They may not win, but they will all grow in capability as a result of the competition, through learning to influence audiences, speak clearly with well-prepared content, and to improve through constructive comments.

For all students, the rewards include better communication skills and a good entry on CVs. We are grateful to Rotary International for their very genuine interest in youth development. The great effort of Rotary in this district, in particular, to support this and other youth initiatives cannot be faulted.”

Paul and Cecilia Flint, parents of Richard Flint, Proposer of the Vote of Thanks

“Rotary Youth Speaks gave the students from Windermere the opportunity to grow both as individuals and as part of a team. It was inspiring to see the quality of their argument develop and their confidence soar as each round progressed. In today’s competitive world the ability to express yourself effectively is of paramount importance. By taking part in Rotary Youth Speaks the students learned skills that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

As their teacher what impressed me the most, however, was the way the three students worked together as a team and supported each other every step of the way. It was a privilege to work with them.

I would like to thank Rotary first of all for giving students the opportunity to develop these skills but also for the support they gave the team in every round of the competition. The organisation was first rate and the whole experience could not have been better.

I am so impressed with the quality of the presentations I heard in each round. And the quality of Judging too – very important to me. We should be proud of all the young people who took part.”

Jo Pattison, Teacher, Windermere School

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