

# SPEECH EVALUATOR

## SPEECH EVALUATOR TOP TIPS:

- ▶ **Evaluate delivery not content!**
- ▶ Focus your efforts on three key areas max (body language, structure, voice etc)
- ▶ Have record cards ready as you'll be taking notes
- ▶ **Deliver your evaluation in the third person\*\***
- ▶ Give as much written feedback as you can!
- ▶ Approach the speaker you'll be evaluating beforehand

*"True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information"*

Winston Churchill

Speech evaluations are at the core of the Toastmasters educational programme. Your recommendations will enable speakers to become aware of what skills they should develop further. While your just as important commendations will be tools speakers can leverage further in future speeches.

In order to successfully perform this role, it is crucial that your focus your attention on the speaker alone and don't get unnecessarily distracted. Be ready to take a fair bit of notes too, but not so many that you lose sight of what happens on stage.

**\*\* In the Pathways "Evaluation & Feedback" transcript, Evaluators are encouraged to deliver feedback directly to the Speaker. NOTE: This is **not** the way we typically do this in District 91 nor in City Women Speakers. Please give feedback in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person and direct the feedback to the entire audience, not towards the Speaker.**

## WHAT WILL I LEARN?

Being a speech evaluator is a fabulous way of developing your critical thinking, listening and feedback giving skills, in addition, to being highly transferable outside of Toastmasters. These skills will help improving your own public speaking skills too. Indeed, you might become aware of things you are doing yourself by looking at others, pick-up ideas to trial in future speeches and also becoming more aware of what makes a good speech.

Since you'll be doing a "speech on a speech" the stage time will help in gaining experience and confidence to be used in your own future speeches.

## BEFORE THE MEETING

Familiarise yourself with the objectives of the project and speech you'll be evaluating beforehand

Consider liaising with the speaker you'll be evaluating by e-mail or phone. Ask them to share the PDF of their project with you so that you understand the objectives. Also ask if they have their own additional personal objectives based on previous feedback, such as speaking more slowly/more loudly/ getting to the point quickly/having an clear & obvious message etc.

## DURING THE SPEECH

Watch and listen carefully to the speaker as they deliver their speech. Your attention should be focused on the speech alone.

Well-chosen words and beautiful sentences are only one of the building blocks of a great and memorable speech. Key areas to observe include but are not limited to:

- ▶ **Speech structure** – Is the speech easy to follow? Is there a clear message? Is there enough signposting to highlight what the core message/content of the speech is?
- ▶ **Speech material** – A strong and memorable speech will stand out by its material. Is the subject of interest to the audience or more important has the speaker crafted in its speech in a way to make it relevant to the audience?
- ▶ **Use of language** – While the grammarian will also be looking for this. Specific and evocative language can add extra emphasis to a speech. If someone is delivering a speech on a technical subject, is the language simple enough for everyone in the audience to understand?
- ▶ **Vocal variety** – Vocal variety can take many forms. It can include emphasising one word over others in a sentence e.g. “There was a door leading to a **dark** corridor”. Saying one sentence or part of a sentence with a different pace for added emphasis. The use of various “voices” in dialogue to distinguish characters. Lastly but most certainly not least the use of pauses throughout the speech.
- ▶ **Body language** – Is the speaker standing still or moving around a lot? What is the speaker posture? Straight or crooked? What about the use of hands? Body language covers a lot! The one key characteristic of a confident speaker is an open stance on stage with arms lying alongside the body. What’s out for the use of facial expressions too such as a lot can be conveyed through them.
- ▶ **Message of the speech** – Does the speech have a clear message typically expressed at its conclusion? A memorable speech should have an actionable message that can be understood by everyone.
- ▶ **Eye contact** – Someone once said “*the eyes are the gateway to the soul*” strong eye contact is a very important tool to build an emotional connection with an audience. Good eye contact is neither fleeting or staring and lasts the duration of a typical sentence or. Good eye contact also includes everyone in the room.
- ▶ **Use of the stage** – Standing still and being anchored does convey confidence but purposefully using the stage also adds strength to the speech. One possible of the stage is moving backward, forward or sideways for each different part of a speech.
- ▶ **Emotional connection** – Did the speech trigger something in you? How did it make you feel? Could you picture yourself in the speaker’s shoes or connect with him or her in some way?

It is important to remember that different speeches have a different purpose and that as such not everything should be given equal consideration. For example when evaluating a speech whose objectives include using vocal variety. Be especially on the look-out for good and bad uses of vocal variety. Similarly, for an interpretive reading project eye contact and use of the stage are less important than vocal variety or language use.

Don’t take too many notes, when observing a speech as it can distract you from the bigger picture and overall message of the speech itself. Similarly focus your observations on some key areas and don’t try to observe everything at once. **Focus your attention on the speaker’s objectives.**

## DELIVERING YOUR EVALUATION

It must be remembered that in effect an evaluation is a “*speech on a speech*”. Structure and focus are consequent key. **Deliver your evaluation in the third person** as everyone in the audience benefits from a speech evaluation, not just the speaker.

- ▶ **Use Commend – Recommend – Commend** – Begin your evaluation with a positive introduction about the speech reminding us of what its key purpose was. Move on with some of the strong points the speaker already has. Follow up with a few recommendations and finally tie everything together with commendations and a summary. This way the speaker can leverage both for maximum impact in his or her next speech.

- ▶ **Have six specific points maximum** – Don't spread yourself too thin by trying to squeeze everything you saw about the speech in your 3 min evaluation. Instead be very specific if commenting on vocal variety "I liked the emphasis on the voices of each character and on key words like gigantic within sentences" is much better than "there was great vocal variety"
- ▶ **Use positive language throughout** – During your evaluation avoid using expressions like "I think" "you should have" "you didn't". Instead frame your comments in a positive way "I noticed that Suzy had limited eye contact with the audience. I would suggest in her next speech that she moves her eye contact from person after each sentence".
- ▶ **Link back to the speech's objectives** – Your evaluation should be peppered with references to the speech's objectives. Indeed, 2 to 3 of your specific points should relate directly to the speech's objectives.
- ▶ **Your evaluation is a speech too** – Techniques on vocal variety, body language or speech structure apply just as much for evaluations as they do for normal speeches. You're your own delivery to bring attention to particular points of the speaker's delivery.
- ▶ **Close it off with a summary** – Conclude with a short summary of what you've just said highlighting the key commendation and key recommendation.

If you miss something in your verbal evaluation don't worry! You can always include it in your written evaluation or talk to the speaker afterwards!

## WHAT IF THE SPEAKER FAILS THE SPEECH'S OBJECTIVES?

You might sometime evaluate a speech where the speaker is clearly unprepared, fails in his or her delivery, fail the speech objectives or even all at the same time. This can be a very tricky situation to be in as speech evaluator, since you have to find commendations and recommendations. In these situations, **honesty is the best policy**. Do this face to face, one-to-one rather than during your 3-minute evaluation. Remember, the objective of evaluation is to build the speaker up, not tear them down.

- ▶ **Find and accentuate the positive** – If someone gives a speech on a very technical subject using cluttered visual aids. The positive there is the speaker's knowledge and mastery of the subject. This is something they can harness, if they redo this speech.
- ▶ **Invite them to redo the speech** – There's nothing wrong with repeating a speech a second time. Indeed, some of the most experienced speakers in Toastmasters do this all the time. It can take very little to turn an average speech into a good speech.
- ▶ **Be very specific in your recommendations** – You need to explain why you felt that the speech objectives were not met and what could have been done instead. Think of the leverage effect, you want the speaker to harness the positive to correct the negative.

It is advised that you discuss in more details why you feel the speech did not meet the objectives with the speaker afterwards. Be positive and encouraging, but don't hesitate to explain your reasoning in more detail.

## WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Fill the speaker's evaluation page with as much details as you possibly can give. It is important that these pages are thoroughly filled-in as speakers can always refer back to it later. Don't hesitate to give your notes to the speaker as well for extra written feedback.

Remind the speaker to collect his/her feedback slips from audience members too since these represent other points of view in addition to yours!