Writing, Practicing and Memorising Your Speech

There isn't one "right" way to speech. Experiment with different approaches to gathering your thoughts and drafting a speech. Here are some methods to try:

- Draw a Mind Map of your topic
- Speak your thoughts to a voice recorder or video camera then transcribe later
- Write your speech out by hand
- Write each idea on an index card and shuffle them around to explore the sequence.

You may write your speech out in full to practice what you are going to say. Making the left and right margins wide, and the line spacing double makes it easy to mark up comments for revisions and practice.

Become familiar with the Word Count function in Microsoft Word. You can time your speech by using the guideline of 100 words taking 1 minute of speech time. Therefore a 5 to 7 minute speech should be no longer than 700 words.

When writing a speech you are writing spoken English. The words should sound good, so get in to the habit of reading sentences out loud.

Practice

Using your printed speech, rehearse by reading the speech out loud. Mark any changes on the paper for the next revision. Regular practice of reading the speech out loud multiple times, recording/videoing, then editing and reprinting, will help polish the speech.

Practice with a stop watch to measure the duration of the speech. Note where the 5, 6 and 7 minute points are in the speech as this is particularly important in speech competitions.

Memorise or not?

A speech should not be memorized verbatim, but instead, you should memorise the key points of the speech and maybe the opening and closing sentences. Memorising the opening will help you get comfortable starting the speech, and memorising the close will help you finish with confidence.

Annotate your printed script with keywords and pictures to help you remember the sequence. As you practice speaking from the script and mark up the key points, the speech will become part of your memory. When you deliver the speech it doesn't have to match what you wrote, but it should follow your main ideas.

Your written speech is a framework for your actual performance. Make sure you have the framework in place and you will have a solid foundation for your performance.

Pathways Note: More information in Level 1 project - Icebreaker.