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John D. Orr

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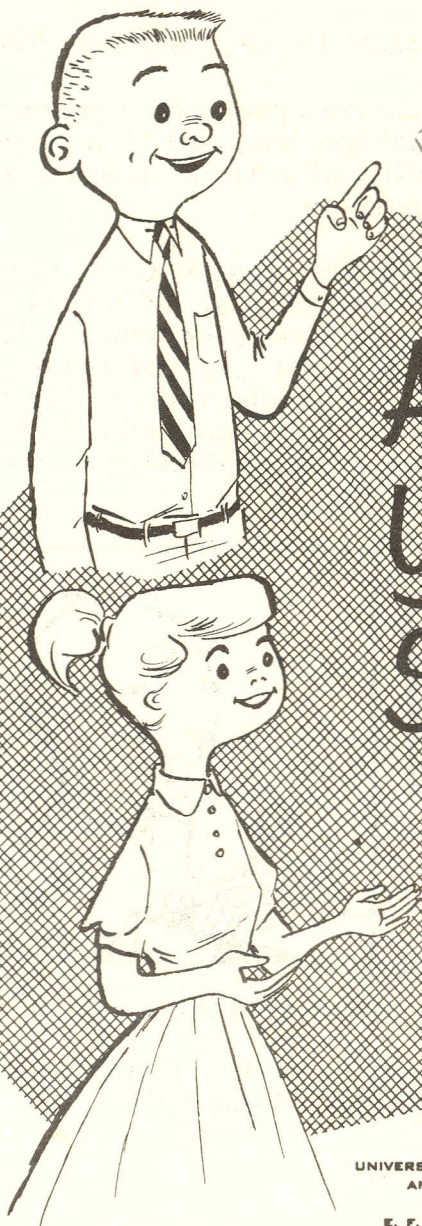
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AS YOU SPEAK

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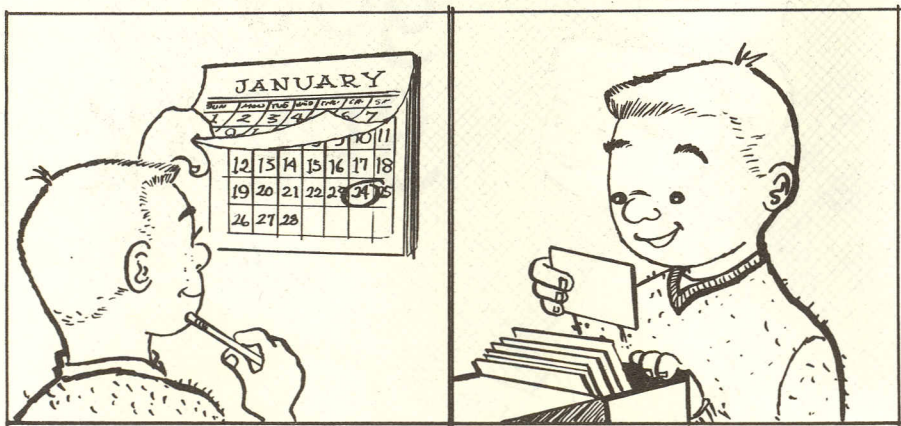
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AS YOU SPEAK.....

By John D. Orr, Assoc. State Leader, 4-H and YMW

In a democracy, effective speech is important. Self-government, individual freedom, and constructive action depends on the ability of a nation to speak and write with freedom and purpose.

Four-H club members who participate in public speaking contests, give demonstrations, judge products and give reasons, conduct business meetings, or take part in group activities are learning and acquiring habits of good speaking. Thought and care in the formation of these habits will help club members take their places in social, business, professional, community, and national activities.



SELECTING YOUR SUBJECT

A good subject is timely, specific, identified with the audience, interesting, and pertinent.

(1) Select your topic early.

(2) Build a card file of pertinent information about your topic.

(3) Break down the larger topic to find a small enough topic to handle.

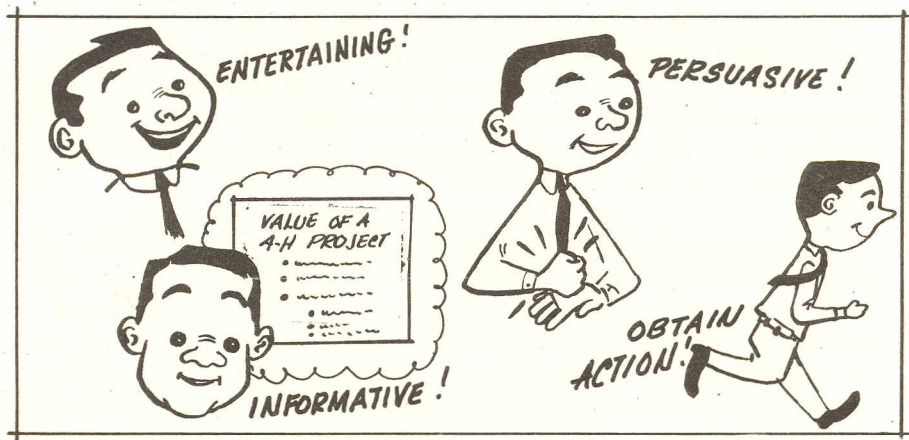
(4) Answer these questions: a. Do people need to know about the subject? b. Is there a way to solve the problem? c. What is the solution? d. Can I help make the solution become workable?

In the 4-H Timely Topic Speaking Contests, the most common fault of participants is that they fail to identify themselves with their audience. When talking to 4-H audiences find a subject interesting to that audience. Too often, the speech sounds as if it were prepared for an audience other than 4-H.

Another common fault of participants is that they cover too much in their eight minute talk. As an example, some will choose the topic of safety and try to solve all the problems of this broad field in eight minutes. It would be more practical to take just a small part of the larger topic and adapt it to your 4-H audience. Connect your 4-H club experiences, goals, and ideals with current topics that are vital to you.

ORGANIZATION OF YOUR SPEECH

The purpose of a speech is to communicate, and its effectiveness must be judged by the reaction of the audience. A speech may be given to entertain, inform, persuade, or to obtain action.



The speech to entertain may contain only one step -- to gain and hold attention.

In the speech to inform, the outline probably would have the introduction, need, body, and conclusion steps.

In the speech to persuade, the speaker would probably use five steps: (1) Introduction, to gain attention. (2) Need, create a feeling for action of some sort. (3) Body, satisfy that need by suggesting a proposal and proving its soundness. (4) Solution, make the audience feel, "I can see myself doing this." Conclusion, review the main points in a quick, cleancut conclusion.

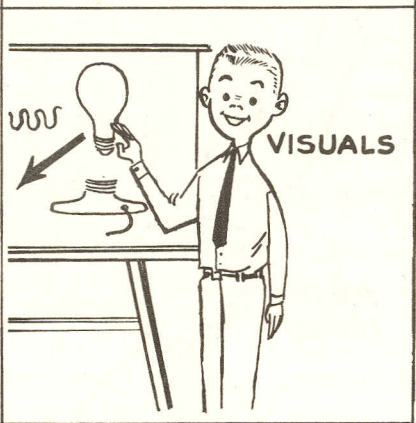
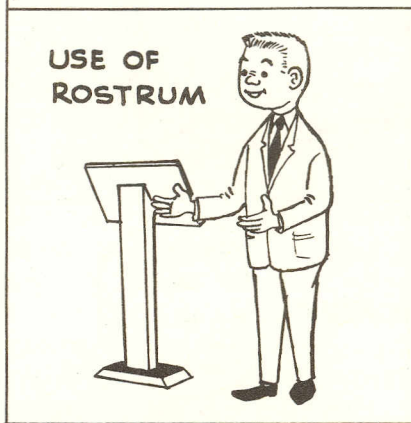
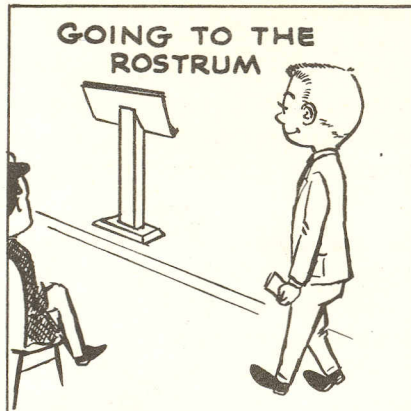
Organize your speech so that it will be within the limits allowed by your host. Many speakers take advantage of the hospitality of their host and run over the time allowed. Ask or find out the time you will have for your presentation, whether it is a demonstration, oral judging reasons, a 4-H Timely Topic speech, a talk to your club meeting, television, radio, or a guest speaker at a business or professional meeting.

YOUR PHYSICAL BEHAVIOR BEFORE GROUPS

While Seated: Be attentive, both feet on the floor, sit up straight, and listen to other speakers.

Going To The Rostrum: Get up without hands touching the chair, walk naturally to the rostrum, establishing eye contact with your audience as soon as possible. Have a friendly feeling toward your audience. Don't hurry to jump in, but wait for the stillness within yourself.

Standing On The Platform: If right-handed, stand with your right foot about one inch ahead of your left foot, feet two to four inches apart. If left-handed, reverse. Stance is important in speaking, just as it is in athletics. It helps the speaker step forward easily, counteracts the rocking tendency and lets the speaker gesture without feeling over-balanced and awkward.



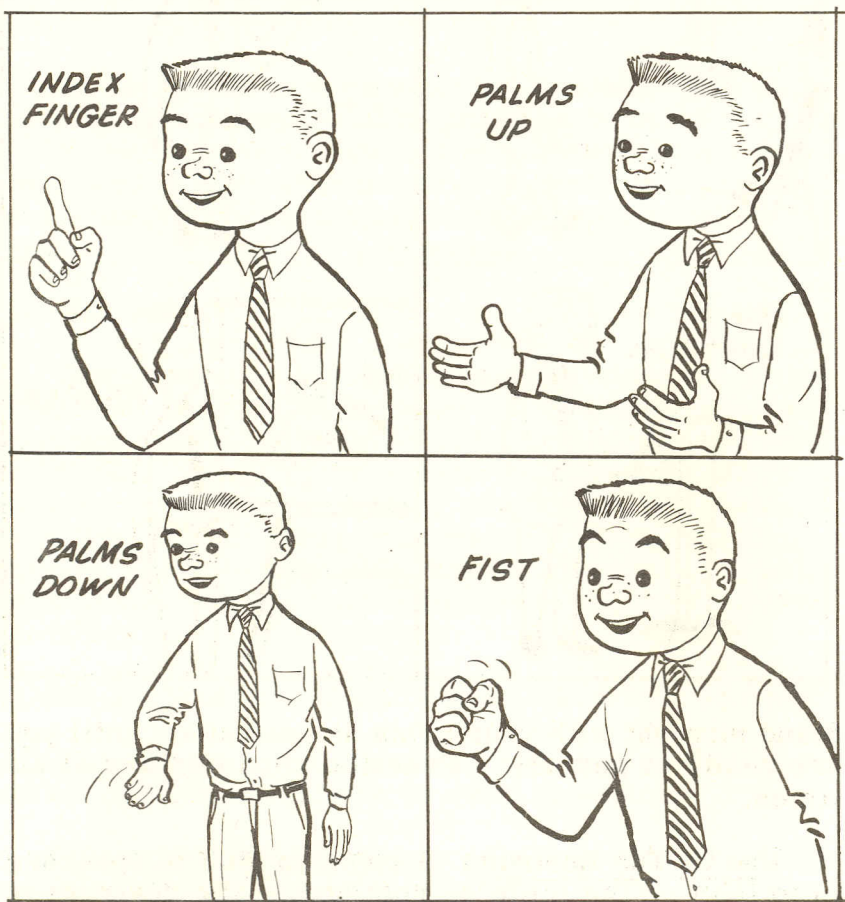
Stand straight with your arms at your sides until you are ready to gesture. Practice good posture at all times.

Use Of The Rostrum: A common fault of speakers is to lean on the table or rostrum. The rostrum is to be used only for notes and outlines and not as a crutch. Use of notes for short talks, other than giving oral judging reasons, is questionable.

Visuals: Television has adopted the use of visuals. Take a cue from this media and use attractive visuals. The 4-H demonstrator has long used visuals for his presentation. Be alert to new ideas presented on television and by other speakers and use those ideas too. The 4-H Timely Topic Speaking Contest is restricted to speaking only, and does not encourage the use of visuals.

GESTURES

A gesture is used to help point out thoughts, emotions, and areas of emphasis. Do not confuse good gestures with impulsive hand movements.



The four basic hand gestures are: (1) The index finger, (2) Palms up, (3) Palms down, and (4) The fist.

The index finger is used to point out, indicate direction, challenge, count, or perhaps to stress a point.

The palms up gesture is used to appeal to your audience; or present an idea, request, or solution. Many times it is used in combination with the finger gesture.

The palms down gesture is a calming gesture or if done in a downward slice it can be used to reject or to condemn.

The fist gesture is reserved for use with expression of strong feeling, such as anger or determination.

Facial expression conveys your inner feelings. A pleasant feeling is conveyed in a pleasant expression. Frowns, sometimes the result of over-concentration, tend to make people believe the speaker dislikes them. Your day to day living and practice will influence your posture and facial expression.

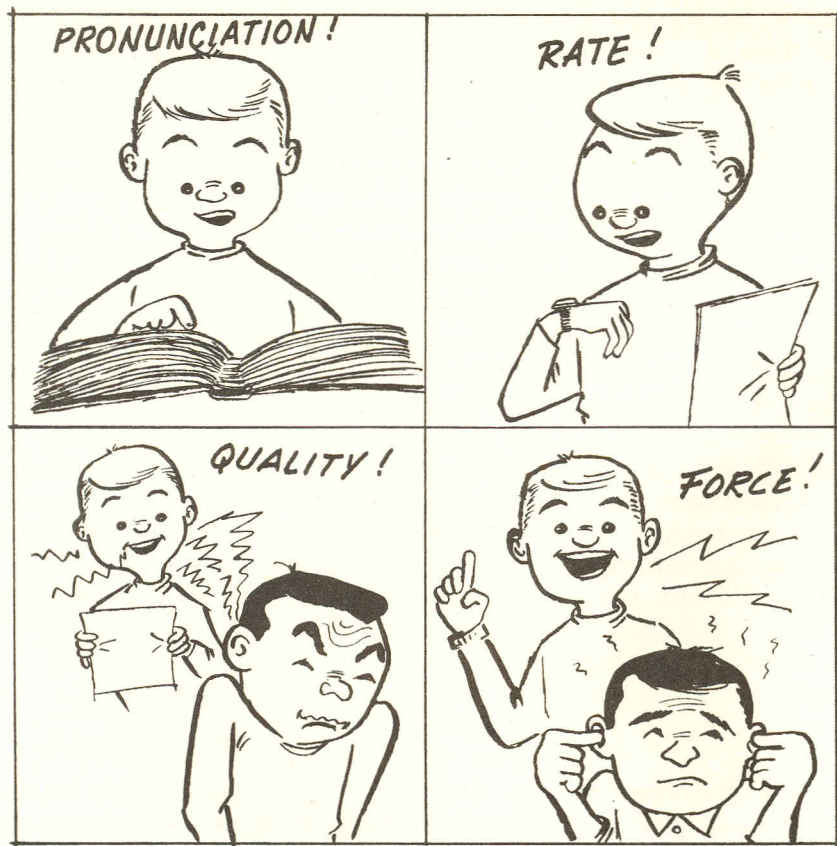
Good gestures are: natural, definite, timed, appropriate, and enthusiastic. For better gestures, try to get the elbows well out from the body and use up some energy. Develop your gestures in a self-disciplined manner. Practice before a mirror.

YOUR VOICE

Effective words, ineffectively said, carry little meaning and no action. To develop a better speaking voice, it may be necessary to obtain professional help. Just as you may need help to become a better piano student, you may need help to acquire a better speaking voice.

A good speaking voice is: (1) Expressive: It is capable of portraying various shades of meaning and feeling. (2) Pleasant in tone: Carries a sense of friendliness. (3) Natural: It reflects the personality of the speaker. It has an honest sound. (4) Vital: It has life, force, and strength, even though it may not be a "Big Voice."

Breathing: A pleasing voice comes from a relaxed condition and controlled, disciplined breathing. Choir singing, solo singing, and band participation may be of help. Short sentences will help you put the pauses and periods where they belong in relation to your breathing habits.



Pitch: Pitch is the level of speech. Have someone help you get the right amount of variety for a pleasing effect. To help hear yourself, stand facing the corner of a room so that you can hear your tones bounce back at you from that corner. Place stress on different levels of pitch to hear the difference.

Vocal Climax: Emphasis, force, and feeling rise steadily in power, until they reach a point where the strongest appeal is made. In a short speech perhaps only one vocal climax should be planned.

Pronunciation: Look up the correct pronunciation of words in the dictionary. Watch words such as just, government, set, and athlete.

Articulation -- Enunciation: Pronounce and speak

so that the audience hears all the words. Whenever possible, use words whose meaning is clear. Tongue-twisters are good practice, and will help you to pronounce all the vowels, but cut difficult words and phrases out of your prepared speech.

For practice in enunciation and articulation try this popular practice. "Ladies and gentlemen. You are about to witness the most startling, sensational, and soul-shaking performance of aerial skill ever presented to a palpitation public --- The thrill of the century --- The slide for life."

Rate: The rate of speaking is the number of words spoken per minute. Most people speak 120 to 180 words a minute. Let us compare a good speaker to a good automobile driver. If a man drives at a very high speed continuously, he may loose control of the car, but if he drives according to conditions of the highway he will drive slowly, then occasionally more rapidly, as the need arises. Few drive at the same monotonous speed, but many speak that way.

Quality: Words that describe the good quality in a speaker's voice might be: mellow, clear, stable or steady, or pleasingly deep. Undesirable qualities might be: thin, husky or harsh, nasal, guttural, or shaky.

Pause: Just as the stop signs give a pause in our driving pattern, so the effective pause helps in our speaking pattern. Do not confuse the effective pause with memory lag.

Force: Few speakers would think of shouting during all of their speech. Force is varied mostly for emphasis. Avoid explosive use of force.

YOU BE THE JUDGE

The reason for entering contests is too often the ribbon or the prestige of winning the event and not the value of the activity. You be the judge and place yourself in his position. Evaluate all contestants by the score card and try to see yourself in the same light as

the rest of the contestants. Good speakers are the result of much practice. Contests offer that opportunity.

When possible, three judges are used to judge contests. (1) A professional person with experience and training in public speaking, such as a speech teacher, minister, or lawyer. (2) A businessman or representative knowing business conditions. (3) A farmer, rancher, or housewife who understands the objectives of the Agricultural Extension Service and farm and home problems.

Judges should be as clear as possible in giving reasons to avoid misunderstanding. Contestants should be given an opportunity to counsel with the judges. However, no judge should be expected to justify his placings to contestants on a comparative basis.

SUGGESTED SCORE CARD FOR TIMELY TOPIC SPEAKING CONTESTS

Subject and Contests ----- 20%

Timely, specific, identified with 4-H audience, interesting to a 4-H audience, and accurate.

Organization ----- 15%

Identify the steps of your speech on the written copy to be available for the judge to read before the contest.

Physical Behavior ----- 15%

Personal appearance, poise, approach to the stage, eye contact, stance, and transition movement.

Gesture ----- 10%

Timed, natural, definite, appropriate, and pleasant facial expressions.

Voice ----- 20%

Pitch, articulation, rate, quality, and force.

Effect on the listener. ----- 10%

Attentiveness and response of audience.
Courtesy, inner strength, and fluency of
speaker.

Use of time allotted ----- 10%

Eight minutes are allotted for each 4-H
Timely Topic Speaking contestant. Three
points are taken off for each full one-half
minute that the speaker goes overtime.
The judge can make allowance for speeches
that last less than six minutes. Time be-
gins with the first word spoken and ends
with the last word spoken.

"No knowledge we ever acquire is so important as
a knowledge of what to say and how to say it; except,
perhaps a knowledge of what not to say, and when not
to say it."

Author Unknown