

PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Public speaking is a necessary skill for political activists. There's obvious advantages in being able to speak effectively: you can put across your viewpoint and persuade others to accept it, a very useful political skill., you can speak for others - represent them to the state or to other people, which is a major goal. Ability to speak easily, confidently and persuasively exerts political influence and leadership in itself, even among people who may not agree with your politics. Finally, you need to be able to speak because as a Republican, you'll be called on to do it often and you might as well do it well.

Related Skills: You should make it your business to know how to organise a public meeting & speaking platform and also how to set up and use the amplification/public address systems you have. (Notes on "Using a Microphone", "Setting up Amplification Equipment" and "Organising a speaking Platform" available from Sinn Fein Education Dept.)

General Points: Before you open your mouth and certainly before you step onto a platform, you'll want to consider your audience. Who are they? What background information will they have? What is the probable attention span? Are they Old, Young, Male, Female, Political Activists or more Casual Supporters? Dont forget that 51% of Ireland's people are Female, so dont direct your speech solely to Men's interests. What time limit have you? Dont hesitate to ask if you are the only speaker and expected to cover all points, or if you are one among several and expected to cover a specific topic. Be clear about what you want your speech to achieve: Is your purpose to get your listeners to join up, to work, to donate, to vote for you, to pick up a banner and follow you on a march? But the most important consideration when thinking about your audience beforehand is why do they need to hear you? Why are you speaking to them? ("Because someone asked me" isnt a good enough reason.) What do you have to say that they must know? Tell them that and nothing else. Dont bore them or insult their intelligence.

Tips for Specific Situations

Typical situations requiring Republicans to speak include:

- *Canvassing at Church Gates/After Mass Meetings (Elections)
- *Making Announcements to advertise a Meeting or Rally
- *Indoor Meetings (Comhairle Ceantair, Ard Fheis)
- *Outdoor Public Meetings

Church Gate Canvassing

Time Available - very little; often people must hear you as they are walking past to their Cars. You can sloganise (one of the few times it's OK); you don't have time to argue the points.

Give the Facts:

- Name of Candidate and Party
- 2 Date of Election
- Method of Voting ("X" or "No. 1")
- Give 1 or 2 reasons why it is in their interests to vote Sinn Fein

Repeat - don't forget, if you're speaking to people as they walk past, you're speaking to a constantly new audience. (In case people stand to listen, you should prepare a 3 - 5 minute speech using the guidelines suggested for speaking at a Public Meeting) Using this formula, then, a typical Church Gate canvas speech might go something like this:

"Vote Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein candidate for Europe, No 1 on June 14. Join with people throughout Ireland and say No to British rule, No to the Loyalists veto, No to high prices and unemployment, No to exploitation by EEC. For one nation, one people - Vote Danny Morrison Sinn Fein, No 1 one June 14."

(Obviously you should pick out the most persuasive 2 or 3 points to mention, not necessarily those suggested)

SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY

Indoor Announcements - Advertising a Rally or Meeting

This is an ideal opportunity to practise speaking skills and getting used to speaking before a crowd.

1. Call for attention and wait until you get it
2. Give the Facts - announce the meeting/rally, day, date, venue or place of assembly, time, speaker and that Sinn Fein is organising it.
3. Speak slowly, dont rush.
4. Dont be afraid to pause - it gains attention. Ask for a minute's silence where appropriate.
5. Before you conclude - Repeat Facts.
6. If time permits - speak about the purpose, try to motivate people to attend.

Using this formula, a typical announcement advertising a march might be:

"Can I have your attention please?" (Repeat if necessary)
"Sinn Fein is holding its 3rd Annual May Day March and Rally on Monday May, 7th, assembling at 2.30pm in Westland Street and marching to the Guildhall. Main speaker will be Sinn Fein EEC candidate Danny Morrison (Pause)

IF
TIME PERMITS "Every year since the Hunger Strike, Sinn Fein in Derry has organised a May Day Rally to mark international workers' day as a fitting commemoration to the ongoing spirit of those 10 Republicans who gave their lives for the Irish people in the 1981 Hunger Strike. Can we have a minutes' silence in memory of their great sacrifice?"
(Pause)

On May Day we demand "self - determination" and "the right to work" "Join us in the spirit of the Hunger Strikers and with workers all over the world, in demanding the right to work and self-determination for the Irish people.
(Pause)

"Come out and march with Sinn Fein on Monday, May 7th, assembling at the Bogside Inn at 2.30pm to march to the Guildhall to hear Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein's candidate for Europe.

Speaking at Indoor Meetings (Comhairle Ceantair, Ard Fheis, Trade Union, Community Groups)

Few people prepare what they say; as a result, they waffle and waste people's time. It is very important, especially at Public Indoor Meetings such as Trade Union + Community Group Meetings, and the Ard Fheis now that the press is allowed in throughout, that we present a competent image through reasoned speaking and logical debates.

Exercise: Speaking to a motion - Propose a motion and make a few points in favour of it.

For example: "That all members of Sinn Fein, without exception, sell AP/RN."

1. Introduce yourself - not only your name, but who you represent. (e.g. That you are mandated to speak for people)
2. Having worded the resolution carefully, read it out clearly. It's important that everyone understand every word of the motion so they know what they be voting on.
3. Present your argument. This doesn't need to be long; be concise.

It is a good idea to pre-empt the opposition by taking their main plank and demolishing it ("There are people who will say 'X' then counter it) When they come up to argue, their arguments will sound weak because people will have heard it before and it's already been answered.

Go on to use your arguments. Be concise.

Give your arguments in order of increasing importance.

4. Conclude:

Stress the importance of your motion in 2 or 3 words.

Repeat the motion

Ask them to vote Yes or No clearly

Tips:

- Make sure you've got your facts right.
- Give examples, from your own experience - but be brief.

OUTDOOR PUBLIC MEETINGS

Preparing a Talk:

Preparation is the key to success. If you know you've got a good speech, that you're telling people something fresh that they need to know, your enthusiasm, confidence and sincerity will show and may be caught by your audience. There's one mortal sin: to bore people. So consider why they need to hear you? Simplicity is vital: make every word count.

Other Considerations:

Know your audience: Speak to people as if on a 1 to 1 basis. Who will you be speaking to: their background, interests, their current familiarity with your topic and their probable attention span.

Time available: Sometimes you'll be given a time limit by the organisers of the event. But always get your message across as briefly and simply as possible. Avoid "padding" your speech - its obvious when its done. Avoid political harangue - its boring and very easy to ignore.

Advantages of being brief:

- You can pay more attention to delivery; you dont need to rush.
- You're less likely to wander if every word counts.
- You're less likely to be quoted out of context.

"NERVES" Adequate preparation has everything to do with confidence. Be sure to allow plenty of time to prepare your speech. Its been estimated that it takes 1 hour preparation for every minute of speaking time. If you're well prepared, know and believe its important for people to hear, simple relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises should be enough to let you appear calm even if you dont feel calm. Stand still. All good speakers feel some tension; they use this to give a sharp edge to their performance.

Constructing a Speech

All speeches have a beginning, body and ending.

1. A good start gets attention, arouses interest, gets the group to identify with you and makes them realise you're worth listening to. Spend some time thinking up a good opener. Dont be afraid to use humour - but be careful; it can fall flat.
2. A good body of material convinces. List the points you need to make and support them with 2 or 3 accurate facts. (Jolt the listeners, if you can - cite facts with impact-value) Dont wander. Remember: appeals to emotion best follow facts.
3. A good ending leaves them with something to take home and tells listeners exactly what you want them to do.

TIPS -

Use of Quotes:- Dont, very often. You can say it in your words better. The quote may have been memorable on that day but it is TODAY'S audience and situation you're speaking to. Prepare well enough and they'll be quoting your speech. Occassionally quotes can be useful: be sure they're brief and easy to understand, not hackneyed or cliches. Quotes are the one part of your speech its OK to read. Quotes are especially useful if humourous or startling.

When you begin - Wait for the noise to die down (applause, coughs) Look at the listeners - speak to them on a 1 to 1 basis. Dont rush. Look over the entire audience, but project your voice to the back of the audience.

Pauses - Use them - they let people respond (claps, laughs etc.)

Formal language - dont use it - sound natural. Dont try to sound "posh"; aim to be understood clearly.

Enthusiasm is catching; as is energy and conviction. And its much more convincing than try to act or force expression into your speech

Using notes - Enthusiasm doesnt give you the right to ramble.

Put headings on note cards so you dont read speech.

Rehearsals - Run through your speech to try it out - sometimes it reads well but needs revision to sound well. But dont rehearse to the point of losing your spontaneity. Dont try to memorise it Test it out on a friend or family member and ask for constructive criticism.

Summary:

- Prepare thoroughly, allowing plenty of time
- Begin and End well.
- Construct your speech intelligently and get facts right.
- Check length, timing and delivery
- Use conversational, not formal speech
- Speak slowly
- Speak dont read
- Let your natural enthusiasm and expressiveness come through

USING THESE NOTES:

- * Take every opportunity to speak
- * Practise preparing speeches whenever possible. Speakers will be glad of your help
- * Debate is an excellent way to build up your speaking skills. Why not organise one on a regular basis in your Cumann?