

How to help your child write a speech (without doing it for them)

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It's hard for parents to help kids with homework without doing it for them. It can be especially difficult to work out where to start when your child is preparing a speech for school.

You might find your child is procrastinating more about getting started with a [speech](#) than about other homework. This could be because they are anxious about it.

Having something that they want to say to their class can help to increase your child's confidence and motivation when they deliver the speech. A positive speechmaking experience can increase confidence for next time, which is why some schools teach public speaking in a systematic way.

It's important to keep in mind that public speaking has two parts to it: writing the speech, and delivering it.

Here are some tips for how to help your kid with both aspects of preparation.

Writing the speech

First, help your child find something they want to say to their audience.

When a child is delivering a speech to the class, they are being listened to, observed, and watched by their peers. Most other classwork is only read by the teacher. In a speech, they are sharing their ideas with the whole class.

That's why it is really important they own what they are saying, and say it in their own words.

It's key they own the topic (if it is a free choice of topic) or that they own the stance they are taking (if the topic is set by the teacher).

As a parent, it's tricky to support your child to find their own words to say—but it's very important you don't write the speech for them.

Help them to think about what they care about and what they think is important to share with their class.

Apart from the fact the teacher will spot a parent-written speech a mile away, if your child has no ownership of their speech, they will not care about communicating the ideas to the class.

Next, help your child to think about organizing their ideas.

It's good to have a hook or a catchy introduction into the main idea of the speech. That could be a rhetorical question, an anecdote or an amazing fact. They can then think of around three main points about the topic.

Ask your child questions that help them to think about some examples or evidence that support their ideas.

Finally, help them to finish their speech. Often, the ending might return to the beginning to round off the point being made—a kind of "I told you so"!

Delivering the speech—4 tips for parents

1. Encourage your child to focus on communicating their idea to their audience.

If they focus on sharing their ideas, rather than worrying about themselves, everything will come together. Encourage them to think about looking at the audience and making sure everyone can hear them.

2. Practice the speed of delivery and time their speech.

One of the easiest things to practice that makes a big difference to the delivery of the speech is the pacing.

The big tip is to slow down. When speakers feel nervous they tend to speed up, sometimes just a little—but often students will deliver their speeches at breakneck speed, racing to just get it done so they can go and sit down.

I've listened to thousands of student speeches and have never heard one delivered too slowly. But I have heard many that sound like a horse-race call.

3. Be an affirmative audience to their speech.

Listen to your child practice when they feel ready to share with you, but don't push them if they are resistant.

Focus on building their confidence by talking to them about the moments you felt they were connecting with you as an audience member. Be appreciative of their jokes or show you share their feelings about ideas they care about.

Your children seek your approval—don't be stingy with it.

4. If they are feeling confident, suggest they work on nuancing their delivery.

Once they are feeling confident about delivering the speech, the child can add variety and texture.

For instance, they might slow down for emphasis on certain words, add a pause after asking a question, or think about some moments where they

might speak more softly or loudly.

Variation will add interest to the delivery of the speech and help to grab and keep the audience's attention. It also helps further convey your child's ideas.

Good support takes time

It's hard to get the balance right when supporting your [child](#) to prepare their speech. The trick is to understand that it will take more than one sitting.

So, plan for a few chunks of time, and work on building their ideas and enthusiasm.

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