

# How to Introduce a Speaker

Even before you start speaking to an audience, you should know that good introductions are *crucial* to effective speeches and presentations because an audience assesses the caliber of a speaker right from the start. A rule of thumb suggests that an audience's assessment of a speaker is largely formed in the first 30 seconds of a talk. You can get those 30 seconds off to a good start by providing a sparkling introduction.

Create the right atmosphere for a speaker to be well received by the audience from the start through a sparkling introduction. It is remarkable how many introducers ramble when they introduce a speaker – they give their life history. In fact, words of introduction are fumbled more than any other aspects of a speech because the introducer doesn't know how to do it well.

Maximum impact comes from a concise introduction, when the audience is told why the speaker was invited. This approach cuts out the fumbling background information that is given in many introductions. The safest approach for an introduction is to write out a script (sample below) below.

The recommended way to make an introduction of a speaker is:

1. Be brief. It's not necessary to speak for more than one minute – preferably less
2. Speak informally – as you would to good friends. Look around the audience.
3. Be enthusiastic about your task. Make your introduction sparkle. You owe it to the person you are introducing and to your audience to be animated in your brief talk. Act as though it is a real privilege to introduce this speaker – feel happy about it – talk with real excitement.
4. Avoid Stale Phrases such as: "It is indeed a pleasure ... a man who needs no introduction ... we are gathering here tonight ..." Also, avoid giving the Speaker false starts by announcing their name too many times during the introduction.
5. Above all, be warm and sincere.

Here is a proven "**TIPS**" formula to use for a 30-60 second introduction.

<b>Topic</b>	Firstly, speak of the topic, giving the exact title of the talk.
<b>Importance</b>	Tell the audience why this topic is important to them.
<b>Present Speaker</b>	Tell the audience your speaker's qualifications. As the final two or three words of your introduction, give the speaker's name. Be sure to say it clearly and distinctly.

**SAMPLE:** Imagine you are due to introduce John Smith, a certified public accountant, as speaker at a business lunch. You can't go wrong with this (unless you read it verbatim and in a clumsy way!):

<b>T (Topic)</b>	<i>"Today we are here to listen and learn on 'How to avoid the mistakes of unsuccessful businesses.'"</i>
<b>I (Importance)</b>	<i>"In its latest business survey last month, the Bureau of Statistics reported that unsuccessful businesses fail for three main reasons. Since we are all business people, we are eager to learn how we can avoid these three pitfalls and ensure our businesses remain viable."</i>
<b>PS (Present Speaker)</b>	<i>"Our speaker has had a distinguished career in accounting. Seven of his articles have been published in The Accounting Review and The Journal of Accounting Practice, and he is on the board of the National Institute of Chartered Accountants. He has studied the Bureau's report and has some important advice for us today."</i>  <i>"Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome [pause]" or, "I am pleased to present [pause] JOHN SMITH!"</i>

# Distinguish Yourself When You Introduce a Speaker

If you give it careful thought and preparation you will make the Speaker's presentation even more successful ... and as a bonus you will also establish your professionalism as an introducer.

REMEMBER an introduction serves two purposes:

1. It acts as a bridge, a transition from one part of a meeting to another. It gives the audience time to make a mental and emotional shift.
2. It prepares people for the speaker, heightening their sense of openness and anticipation.

Your task is to introduce the speaker, not to take center stage. The spotlight is on you for only a few moments so that you can help make it shine ... where it really belongs, the speaker. So keep it brief. For informal gatherings 30 seconds is plenty. For larger events, aim for no longer than a minute. Under certain conditions -- for a very formal event with a very important speaker -- you may need two minutes.

## 1. Research.

If at all possible, talk to the speaker at least a week in advance of the event. Find out what he or she will be talking about and why it has relevance to your audience. Then learn as much as you can about the speaker's experience, education, life, interests, and accomplishments -- whatever helps establish the speaker's credibility on the topic he or she is addressing.

NOTE: Many speakers can send you a resume or their own written introduction. Be sure you receive it in plenty of time to review to help you prepare your own remarks, but do not read it verbatim. (It is usually too long and self-aggrandizing.)

Lastly, and MOST IMPORTANTLY make sure you know how to pronounce the speaker's name.

## 2. Prepare a 3-part outline.

A good introduction tells people why the speaker is talking about this subject at our event.

The first part of your introduction should state a common issue or interest that the audience shares.

The second part briefly (in a sentence or two) states how today's presentation will help them solve that issue or help enhance their interests even further.

And the third part of your introduction establishes the speaker's credentials -- convinces the audience that the speaker knows what he or she is talking about.

## 3. Your performance.

Walk to the podium with confidence. Arrange your notes quickly and adjust the microphone, so that your mouth will be close enough to it. Take a breath. Look at the audience and smile.

Your skillful introduction will create a pleasant harmony between subject, audience, occasion, and speaker. And then comes your critical moment as an introducer--the moment of presentation. At the end of the last sentence of your introduction, with a climactic intonation of unmistakable finality, announce your speaker's name. Announce it clearly and with sharply increased volume. Continue to face the microphone and your audience as you deliver the speaker's name, so that their name is not lost through a premature turn of your head. Then swing swiftly about and face your speaker with an alert expression of friendly welcome on your face. Remain standing in this position until the speaker rises and acknowledges your introduction.

ALWAYS remain at the podium until the speaker arrives. Shake their hand and step back from the podium, handing it over symbolically to the speaker. Then sit down. **Your skillful work is done.**