

The Art of Writing a Speech for the Selective Test Exam

A comprehensive guide to crafting compelling speeches

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Understanding Speech Writing for the Selective Test
3. The Structure of an Effective Speech
4. Persuasive Techniques
5. Crafting Engaging Openings
6. Creating Powerful Conclusions
7. Language Devices and Rhetorical Techniques
8. Addressing Different Audiences and Purposes
9. Time Management for Speech Writing
10. Practice Strategies and Exercises
11. Sample Speeches with Annotations
12. Checklist and Self-Assessment

1. Introduction

The ability to write and deliver a compelling speech is a valuable skill that extends far beyond the Selective Test Exam. It is a craft that combines critical thinking, persuasive writing, and effective communication—all essential skills for academic and professional success.

This guide will take you through the entire process of speech writing, from understanding the requirements of the Selective Test to crafting powerful openings and conclusions, employing persuasive techniques, and practising effectively.

While preparing for the Selective Test Exam, remember that speech writing is not just about following a formula. It's about expressing your ideas clearly and persuasively, engaging your audience, and making them think or feel differently about a topic.

Why Speech Writing Matters

Speech writing helps develop critical thinking, persuasive language, audience awareness, and the ability to structure arguments coherently—skills that are valuable across all academic subjects and later in life.

2. Understanding Speech Writing for the Selective Test

The speech writing component of the Selective Test assesses your ability to:

- Understand and respond to a given topic or prompt
- Develop a clear and coherent argument
- Use persuasive language and techniques
- Structure your ideas effectively
- Demonstrate creativity and originality in your approach
- Show awareness of your audience

Speech prompts can be divided into several categories:

Type	Description	Example
Persuasive	Convince the audience of your perspective	"School uniforms should be compulsory."
Informative	Educate the audience about a topic	"The importance of conservation."
Motivational	Inspire the audience to take action	"Why we should all volunteer in our community."
Reflective	Share personal thoughts or experiences	"A moment that changed my life."

Important Note

Unlike a standard essay, a speech is written to be heard, not read. This means you need to consider how your words will sound and how they will engage listeners. Use direct address, rhetorical questions, and varied sentence structures to maintain interest.

3. The Structure of an Effective Speech

A well-structured speech typically follows this three-part format:

Introduction (10–15% of your speech)

- Grab the audience's attention with a hook
- Clearly state your topic
- Establish your credibility or connection to the topic
- Preview your main points
- Present your thesis or main argument

Body (70–80% of your speech)

- Develop 2-3 main points or arguments
- Support each point with evidence, examples, or reasoning
- Use clear transitions between points
- Address counterarguments if appropriate
- Maintain a logical flow and progression of ideas

Conclusion (10–15% of your speech)

- Summarise your main points
- Restate your thesis in a fresh way
- End with a memorable statement, call to action, or thought-provoking idea
- Create a sense of closure

Structure Example: Speech on "The Importance of Reading"

Introduction: Start with a striking statistic about declining reading rates, introduce yourself as an avid reader, and state your thesis that reading is crucial for intellectual development.

Body:

- Point 1: Reading improves vocabulary and language skills (supported with examples)
- Point 2: Reading develops critical thinking and analytical abilities (supported with evidence)
- Point 3: Reading cultivates empathy and understanding (supported with personal anecdote)

Conclusion: Summarise the benefits of reading, restate why it's important, and end with a call to action encouraging everyone to read for 20 minutes daily.

4. Persuasive Techniques

Effective speeches often employ these persuasive techniques:

Ethos (Ethical Appeal)

Establish your credibility or moral authority on the topic.

Example: "As someone who has volunteered at animal shelters for five years, I've witnessed firsthand the difference proper care makes in an animal's life."

Pathos (Emotional Appeal)

Appeal to the audience's emotions to connect with them and make them care.

Example: "Imagine a world where children no longer have access to libraries, where the magic of discovering new worlds through books is lost forever."

Logos (Logical Appeal)

Use facts, statistics, and logical reasoning to support your arguments.

Example: "Research shows that students who read for pleasure 30 minutes daily score 13% higher on standardised tests than those who don't read regularly."

Other Persuasive Techniques

- **Repetition:** Reinforce key ideas by repeating them
- **Rule of Three:** Group ideas in threes for impact and memorability
- **Anecdotes:** Use short, relevant stories to illustrate points
- **Rhetorical Questions:** Pose questions that prompt reflection
- **Inclusive Language:** Use "we" and "our" to build community
- **Contrast:** Highlight differences between options or scenarios

Balancing Persuasive Appeals

The most effective speeches use a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos. Too much emotional appeal without facts can seem manipulative; too many statistics without emotional connection can feel dry and impersonal.

5. Crafting Engaging Openings

The opening of your speech is crucial—it's your opportunity to capture attention and set the tone. Here are effective ways to begin:

Startling Statement or Statistic

"Every minute, 20 hectares of forest are lost forever—that's equivalent to 27 football fields disappearing while I deliver this sentence."

Thought-Provoking Question

"Have you ever wondered what the world would be like if every child had access to quality education?"

Powerful Quotation

"Nelson Mandela once said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.' Today, I want to discuss how we can harness this weapon."

Relevant Anecdote

"Last summer, my eight-year-old cousin taught herself to code using only library books and free online resources. Her determination made me realise how powerful curiosity can be when nurtured properly."

Scenario or Hypothetical Situation

"Imagine waking up tomorrow in a world without plastic. No toothbrushes, no phone cases, no food packaging. How would your day unfold?"

Openings to Avoid

- Generic greetings: "Hello, today I'm going to talk about..."

- Apologies: "I'm not very good at this, but..."
- Dictionary definitions: "According to the dictionary, leadership is..."
- Irrelevant stories that don't connect to your topic

6. Creating Powerful Conclusions

A strong conclusion leaves your audience with a lasting impression and reinforces your message. Here are effective ways to conclude:

Call to Action

"Let's all commit to reducing our plastic use by choosing one single-use plastic item to eliminate from our lives this week. Small changes, when multiplied by millions, make a tremendous difference."

Circle Back to the Opening

"I began by asking what our world would look like if every child had access to quality education. Having explored the benefits and challenges, I believe we now know—it would be a world of greater innovation, compassion, and prosperity."

Powerful Visual Image

"Picture a future where our city parks are teeming with native birds, where children grow up knowing the songs of bellbirds rather than just the hum of traffic. This vision can become reality if we act now."

Forward-Looking Statement

"As we move forward into an increasingly digital world, let's ensure that human connection remains at the heart of our interactions. Technology should enhance our humanity, not replace it."

Memorable Quote

"In the words of Jane Goodall, 'What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.' Today, I hope I've helped you decide."

Crafting an Effective Conclusion

Your conclusion should feel like a natural culmination of your speech, not an abrupt stop. Avoid introducing entirely new ideas at this stage. Instead, synthesise and reinforce your main message in a memorable way.

7. Language Devices and Rhetorical Techniques

Using language devices and rhetorical techniques can elevate your speech from good to outstanding. Here are some valuable techniques to incorporate:

Technique	Description	Example
Alliteration	Repetition of initial consonant sounds	"We must make meaningful, memorable moments."
Anaphora	Repetition of words at the beginning of successive clauses	"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields..."
Metaphor	Comparison between two unlike things	"Education is the key that unlocks the golden door of freedom."
Simile	Comparison using "like" or "as"	"The task ahead of us is like a mountain: challenging but conquerable."
Tricolon (Rule of Three)	Three parallel elements of similar length	"Government of the people, by the people, for the people."
Rhetorical Question	Question asked for effect, not requiring an answer	"If we don't act now, then when? If we don't stand up for this cause, then who will?"
Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration for emphasis	"I've told you a million times to reduce your carbon footprint."
Personification	Attributing human qualities to non-human things	"Nature is crying out for our help and attention."
Juxtaposition	Placing contrasting ideas side by side	"We spend money we don't have, on things we don't need, to impress people

Technique	Description	Example
		we don't like."

Using Language Devices Effectively

Language devices should enhance your message, not overshadow it. Use them purposefully and sparingly for maximum impact. Too many rhetorical techniques can make a speech feel contrived or artificial.

Voice and Tone

The voice and tone of your speech should be appropriate for your audience and purpose:

- **Formal:** For serious topics or official contexts
- **Conversational:** For connecting with peers or in community settings
- **Authoritative:** When establishing expertise on a topic
- **Passionate:** When trying to inspire or motivate
- **Reflective:** When sharing personal insights or experiences

8. Addressing Different Audiences and Purposes

A skilled speech writer adapts their content and style to suit different audiences and purposes. Consider these factors:

Audience Factors

- **Age:** Vocabulary and examples should be age-appropriate
- **Knowledge Level:** Adjust technical terms and background information accordingly
- **Interests:** Connect your topic to what matters to your audience
- **Values:** Consider what your audience cares about and respects
- **Potential Objections:** Anticipate and address concerns they might have

Speech Purposes

Purpose	Key Features	Example Topics
To Persuade	Strong arguments, evidence, emotional appeals, call to action	"Why we should ban single-use plastics", "The case for longer school holidays"

Purpose	Key Features	Example Topics
To Inform	Clear explanations, facts, examples, visuals if possible	"How solar panels work", "The history of our school"
To Entertain	Humour, stories, engaging delivery, relatable content	"My most embarrassing moment", "Life lessons from my pet"
To Inspire	Emotional appeals, aspirational language, personal stories, vision of better future	"Overcoming obstacles", "How one person can make a difference"
To Commemorate	Respectful tone, shared memories, acknowledgment of significance	"Celebrating our school's centenary", "Remembering important historical events"

Adapting to Different Audiences: Topic "Environmental Conservation"

- For Younger Children:** Focus on relatable examples like protecting animal habitats, use simple language and vivid imagery, include interactive elements.
- For Teenagers:** Connect to their concerns about the future, use social media references, emphasise how they can make a difference, discuss how environmental issues affect things they care about.
- For Parents:** Focus on creating a better world for children, discuss practical family actions, connect to health and wellbeing, address economic concerns.
- For Community Leaders:** Emphasise long-term community benefits, provide specific policy suggestions, include data on economic advantages, address implementation challenges.

9. Time Management for Speech Writing

In the Selective Test Exam, you'll have limited time to craft your speech. Here's how to manage your time effectively:

Planning Phase (25% of your time)

- Analyse the prompt carefully
- Brainstorm main points and supporting evidence
- Decide on your introduction and conclusion approaches
- Create a simple outline

Writing Phase (60% of your time)

- Write the introduction
- Develop your main points in the body
- Craft your conclusion
- Add transitions between sections

Revision Phase (15% of your time)

- Check for clarity and coherence
- Improve word choice and sentence variety
- Correct spelling and grammar errors
- Ensure your speech addresses the prompt fully

Common Time Management Pitfalls

- Spending too long deciding on a topic or approach
- Writing an overly detailed plan
- Getting stuck on perfecting the introduction
- Including too many points without adequate development
- Not leaving time for revision

Word Count Guidelines

For a timed writing task, aim for approximately:

- Introduction: 50-75 words
- Body (3 paragraphs): 250-300 words
- Conclusion: 50-75 words
- Total: 350-450 words

This is roughly what a Year 6 student can write in 40-45 minutes while allowing time for planning and revision.

10. Practice Strategies and Exercises

Effective practice is key to improving your speech writing skills. Try these exercises:

Timed Writing Exercises

- Set a timer for 40 minutes and write a complete speech
- Alternate between different types of prompts (persuasive, informative, etc.)
- Practise under exam-like conditions (no distractions, limited resources)

Targeted Skill Development

- **Introduction Practice:** Write five different introductions for the same topic
- **Conclusion Practice:** Write three different conclusions for the same speech

- **Language Devices:** Revise a basic paragraph by adding rhetorical techniques
- **Argument Building:** Take a position and develop three supporting points with evidence

Revision and Feedback

- Exchange speeches with peers and provide constructive feedback
- Read your speech aloud to identify awkward phrasing or unclear points
- Revise a speech you wrote earlier to improve its effectiveness
- Ask a teacher or parent to review your work and suggest improvements

Practice Prompt Ideas

- "Should homework be abolished?"
- "Is technology making us more or less connected?"
- "The importance of preserving indigenous languages"
- "Should all students learn to code?"
- "Are competitive sports good for children's development?"
- "Should junk food be banned from school canteens?"
- "The value of learning from failure"
- "Should schools start later in the day?"
- "Is social media harmful to young people?"
- "The benefits of learning another language"

11. Sample Speeches with Annotations

Sample 1: Persuasive Speech

Topic: "Should schools ban mobile phones?"

Introduction:

Imagine walking into a school playground and seeing every student's face illuminated by the glow of a screen, oblivious to the world around them. This scene is increasingly common in schools across the country. **[Opening with a vivid image]** While mobile phones have become an integral part of our lives, I firmly believe they should be banned during school hours. **[Clear position statement]** Today, I will explain how phone bans can improve academic performance, enhance social interactions, and reduce cyberbullying in our schools. **[Preview of main points]**

Body:

Firstly, mobile phones are a significant distraction that harm academic performance. According to research published in Educational Psychology, students who don't use phones in class score 6% higher on tests than those who do. **[Evidence/statistics - logos]** Think about it: every notification, every temptation to check social media, every game app pulls attention

away from learning. As students, our primary purpose at school is to learn, and phones directly interfere with this goal. [Reasoning]

Secondly, banning phones would improve face-to-face social interactions. When I look around my own school, I see friends sitting together but barely talking, each engrossed in their phones. [Personal observation] Remember when lunchtime meant playing games, sharing stories, and actually connecting with each other? [Rhetorical question] Digital connections should enhance our real-world relationships, not replace them. School is where we learn crucial social skills that will benefit us throughout our lives. [Value-based argument] Finally, school phone bans can reduce cyberbullying and its harmful effects. When phones are removed from the school day, online harassment that occurs during school hours is eliminated. [Logical consequence] One school in Melbourne reported a 90% decrease in cyberbullying incidents after implementing a phone ban policy. [Specific example] As someone who has witnessed the devastating impact of cyberbullying on a close friend, I believe we must take every possible measure to create safer school environments. [Ethos and pathos combined]

Conclusion:

In conclusion, while mobile phones are useful tools, they don't belong in our classrooms or playgrounds. [Restatement of position] By banning phones, we can improve our academic performance, strengthen our real-world social connections, and create safer school environments free from cyberbullying. [Summary of main points] So next time you enter the school gates, imagine the possibilities of a day unplugged—a day where we are fully present, engaged, and connected with the people around us rather than the devices in our pockets. [Memorable closing image]

Sample 2: Inspirational Speech

Topic: "The Power of Perseverance"

Introduction:

"I've failed over and over again in my life, and that is why I succeed." These powerful words from basketball legend Michael Jordan remind us that failure isn't the opposite of success—it's part of it. [Opening with a quote] Good morning, everyone. Today, I want to talk about perseverance—that remarkable quality that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things. [Topic introduction] Together, we'll explore how perseverance shapes our character, how it transforms obstacles into opportunities, and how it ultimately leads to success that feels earned and meaningful. [Preview of main points]

Body:

Perseverance isn't just about reaching goals—it fundamentally shapes who we are. Think of perseverance as a muscle that grows stronger with every challenge we face. [Metaphor] When we persist through difficulties, we develop resilience, self-discipline, and confidence that extend far beyond the specific challenge we overcame. These qualities become part of our character, serving us in every aspect of life. [Explanation of broader impact] As author

Angela Duckworth discovered in her research, perseverance—or "grit" as she calls it—is a better predictor of success than talent or intelligence. [\[Expert reference\]](#)

What makes perseverance truly powerful is its ability to transform obstacles into opportunities. Every setback contains a lesson, every failure provides feedback, and every challenge creates growth. [\[Tricolon/Rule of Three\]](#) Consider Thomas Edison, who famously made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts before inventing the light bulb. When asked about his failures, he replied, "I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps." [\[Historical example\]](#) This perspective transforms how we see obstacles—not as roadblocks, but as stepping stones on our journey. [\[Reframing\]](#)

Finally, success achieved through perseverance carries special significance. Think about something you worked incredibly hard for—something that required multiple attempts, countless hours, and unwavering determination. [\[Direct address to audience\]](#) Now compare that to something that came easily. Which achievement gives you more pride? Which taught you more? Which do you value more deeply? [\[Series of rhetorical questions\]](#) When we persevere, the journey itself becomes meaningful. The struggles, the doubts, the small victories along the way—all become part of a story that's infinitely more satisfying than instant success. [\[Emotional appeal - pathos\]](#)

Conclusion:

Perseverance isn't glamorous. It's showing up when you don't feel like it. It's trying again when you've already failed. It's taking one more step when you feel you can't go on.

[\[Anaphora - repeated sentence structure\]](#) But in that quiet, consistent effort lies incredible power—power to shape your character, transform obstacles into opportunities, and achieve success that truly matters. [\[Summary of main points\]](#) So the next time you face a challenge that seems insurmountable, remember that perseverance isn't just about reaching the destination; it's about becoming the kind of person who refuses to give up along the way.

[\[Inspirational closing thought\]](#)

12. Checklist and Self-Assessment

Use this checklist to evaluate your speech before submitting it:

Content and Structure

- ☐ Does my speech directly address the given topic or prompt?
- ☐ Does my introduction grab attention and clearly state my position or purpose?
- ☐ Have I included 2-3 well-developed main points in the body?
- ☐ Is each main point supported with evidence, examples, or reasoning?
- ☐ Does my conclusion effectively summarise my main points and end memorably?
- ☐ Have I used clear transitions between paragraphs and ideas?

Language and Style

- ☐ Is my language appropriate for the intended audience?
- ☐ Have I used varied sentence structures to create rhythm and flow?
- ☐ Have I incorporated effective rhetorical techniques or language devices?
- ☐ Is my word choice precise, vivid, and varied?
- ☐ Have I maintained a consistent voice and tone throughout?
- ☐ Have I used direct address to engage with the audience?

Persuasive Elements

- ☐ Have I established credibility on my topic (ethos)?
- ☐ Have I appealed to emotions appropriately (pathos)?
- ☐ Have I used logic and evidence effectively (logos)?
- ☐ Have I anticipated and addressed potential counterarguments?
- ☐ Is my message clear and compelling?

Technical Aspects

- ☐ Is my spelling correct throughout?
- ☐ Have I used correct grammar and punctuation?
- ☐ Is my handwriting neat and legible (for handwritten exams)?
- ☐ Have I avoided repetitive words or phrases?
- ☐ Is the overall length appropriate for the time constraints?

Final Tips for Success

- Read widely to expand your vocabulary and knowledge base
- Study speeches by skilled orators to understand effective techniques
- Practise regularly using different prompts and time constraints
- Get feedback from teachers, parents, or peers
- Review marking criteria to understand what examiners are looking for
- Stay calm during the exam and manage your time carefully

Conclusion

Mastering the art of speech writing is a journey that extends far beyond exam success. The skills you develop—persuasive communication, critical thinking, audience awareness, and effective expression—will serve you throughout your academic career and beyond.

Remember that great speeches don't just convey information; they move people to think, feel, and act differently. Whether you're writing to persuade, inform, inspire, or entertain, your words have power. Use that power thoughtfully and effectively.

With practice and persistence, you'll develop your unique voice as a speech writer. Keep refining your skills, seeking feedback, and studying great speeches. Each speech you write is an opportunity to grow and improve.

"Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel." — Ralph Waldo Emerson
