



Write a Speech in 5 Steps.

A simple writing process with fill-in templates for any speech event, from oratory to class presentations. Use it to go from a blank page to a script you can practice in about a week.

The five-step overview

STEP	GOAL	SUGGESTED TIME
1. Aim	Decide your purpose and audience	30 minutes
2. Gather	Collect stories, facts and sources	1 to 2 hours
3. Shape	Outline the structure	45 minutes
4. Draft	Write in a speaking voice	1 to 2 hours
5. Polish	Cut, read aloud, time	Several short sessions

Times are suggestions. A younger student may need more breaks; an experienced one may move faster.

Step 1 and 2: Aim and gather

Start with a purpose statement. Fill in the template:

Purpose template

After my speech, my audience will understand / believe / do _____. They need to hear this because _____.

Then gather material in four buckets: **stories** (a scene with a person and a moment), **facts** (numbers or findings with a named source), **examples** (concrete cases) and **quotes** (short, cited, within your league's limits). Write sources down as you go so you never lose track of where a fact came from.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Step 3: Shape the outline

Use this skeleton for most speeches:

- 1 **Hook.** A story, question or surprising image in the first 20 seconds.
- 2 **Thesis.** One sentence stating your main idea.
- 3 **Preview.** Name your two or three points.
- 4 **Main points.** Each gets a claim, support and a short wrap-up line.
- 5 **Conclusion.** Echo the hook and leave a final thought or ask.

Template for each main point: Claim: _____. Proof: _____ (source). Example or story: _____. So what: _____.

Step 4: Draft for the ear

Speeches are heard once, so the listener cannot reread. Write the way you talk.

- ◆ Use short sentences. If you run out of breath, split it.
- ◆ Say numbers simply: 'about one in three' beats a long decimal.
- ◆ Repeat key words on purpose so ideas stick.
- ◆ Use transitions that point forward: 'Here is why that matters.'
- ◆ Use 'you' and 'we' to include the audience.
- ◆ Avoid words you would never say in conversation.

WRITTEN STYLE	SPOKEN STYLE
Utilize	Use
It is imperative that we	We need to
A significant proportion	A lot of
In conclusion, it can be seen that	So here is what matters

Step 5: Polish and test

- ☐ Read aloud and mark where you stumble
- ☐ Cut any sentence that does not serve the main idea
- ☐ Time a full run and compare to your limit
- ☐ Check every fact and name against its source
- ☐ Ask one listener to repeat your main point
- ☐ Strengthen the first and last sentences
- ☐ Mark pauses and key words in the script
- ☐ Save a clean final copy and a sources list

A rule of thumb

Speaking pace varies by person. Time yourself reading aloud to learn how many words fit your limit, instead of guessing.

Want a second set of eyes? Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA High School Unified Manual (speechanddebate.org) · NSDA Speech and Debate Glossary. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

BOOK NOW →