over the course of our lives include expressing thanks; introducing a speaker or an honored guest; speaking in recognition of a person, group, or organization; making a commemorative speech; and speaking to entertain people.

Speech of Acceptance

A speech of acceptance is a speech expressing thanks for an award or honor. In many cultures, calling attention to ourselves is considered to be in bad taste. Many of us have been taught this norm. Even so, there are times in our lives when we cannot help being the center of attention. One of them is when we are singled out publicly for some recognition or award. For some, this becomes a dilemma. On one hand, they know they need to accept the recognition or award in a fashion that recognizes and pays tribute to those responsible. On the other hand, they don't want to appear as if they expected the recognition or award and prepared their remarks well in advance of the event. All too often, therefore, they do not prepare or rehearse their response and end up appearing humble but tongue-tied. Believe us: Most audiences would prefer to hear someone accept recognition in a fashion that is both gracious and articulate. Being well spoken does not mean that we are self-absorbed or glib. The thank you also needn't be long.

A good speech of acceptance should serve four functions. First, it should either be brief or within the time constraints imposed by the situation, as is the case when we are one of several people being recognized. Second, it should be genuine and heartfelt. Audience members can typically tell by the speaker's non-verbal behavior whether expressions of gratitude are sincere. Third, it should reciprocate the recognition by praising the people or group who have singled us out. Fourth, it should engender liking. People like people who like them. It's well worth the effort to make audience members feel liked and attractive.

Speech of Introduction

A speech of introduction briefly sets the stage for an upcoming speaker. Speeches of introduction are designed to meet two objectives. The first is to enlist the audience's attention and interest. The second objective is to reinforce or induce audience perceptions of credibility. Perhaps the most unusual speech of introduction we have heard was in 1998 when James Carville and Mary Matalin, a married couple who represent the liberal and conservative ends of the political spectrum, debated each other at our university. They were supposed to be introduced by political consultant Ed Rollins. However, he was unable to attend. So Carville, in what appeared to be an impromptu speech, introduced his own wife and adversary for the evening, praising her as "my best friend, and the best wife any man could have." His introduction set the stage for a spirited and entertaining debate between the oddest of couples in contemporary American politics.

Although we may never introduce our own opponent in a debate, it is likely that at some time we will be called on to introduce a speaker to an audience. Usually, the audience is favorably disposed toward the speaker or they wouldn't be there. However, sometimes a speaker is not well known and needs a buildup of credibility before the speech. In any case, a good way to look at a speech of introduction is to remember the three basic principles of introducing any speech: Open with impact, connect with the audience, and focus on the upcoming presentation.
Open With Impact

Our first task as an introducer is to build enthusiasm for the main speaker. A lukewarm or trite introduction is worse than none at all. Thus, look for a way to capture the audience’s attention immediately. Sometimes humor, a brief anecdote, or a moving story will fill the bill.

Connect With the Audience

Why should the audience listen to the speaker? What’s in it for them? Just as we must connect with the audience in our own speeches, the same is true in a speech of introduction. What special qualifications does the speaker have? Why is the topic of special concern to the audience? We need to answer these questions in terms the audience can relate to if we want them to be motivated to listen. Focus on the speaker’s competence and character. Even if a speaker’s credibility is established, we should reinforce the perception by mentioning one or two examples that clearly emphasize competence and character. If the speaker’s credibility has yet to be established, mention at least one thing that addresses the speaker’s competence on the topic and one that addresses the speaker’s good character.

Focus on the Upcoming Presentation

Finally, it is the introducer’s task to focus the audience’s attention on the upcoming presentation. Make sure you know the speaker’s topic, and coordinate your introduction with his or her speech. Nothing is worse than preparing an audience to hear a speech on one topic only to have the speaker announce that the topic has been changed. There are also some general guidelines that you should follow for a speech of introduction.

**Tips and Tactics**

**Guidelines for a Speech of Introduction**

- **Be brief.** The audience came to hear the speaker, not the introducer. A one- or two-minute introduction is sufficient for most speech situations. For a particularly lengthy or formal speech situation, the introduction might be longer, but in no case should it exceed about 10 percent of the speaker’s time (six minutes out of an hour, for example).

- **Don’t steal the speaker’s thunder.** Although you want to prepare the audience for what is to come by focusing their attention on the topic, you should not discuss the substance of the speech topic. Again, the audience wants to hear the speaker’s views on the topic, not yours. Your job is to create an appetite for the upcoming main course, not fill up the audience with hors d’oeuvres.

- **Be prepared: Work with the speaker in advance.** It is best to talk to the speaker or a representative about your role as introducer. Are there specific points to be stressed? Is there anything the speaker wants to avoid? Some speakers may even want to preview your introductory remarks or may provide written suggestions for you.